



balancing the masterclass books: 'Money is my regular headache. Life is not as it was ten years ago in Russia, and St Petersburg is in a special situation as we go too fast into the market economy. We have to take account of this and make our programmes affordable for our participants. My task is to make a balance, so they can work with the best musicians in St Petersburg, take part in a very professional faculty and experience beautiful venues, and yet make it affordable.'

Kostyuchenko's determined management has delivered several sponsorship deals to provide a limited number of PGMA student bursaries, although she concedes that raising additional private income is tricky without a tradition of corporate support for arts and education projects. To date, she has been able to count on the St Petersburg State Orchestra to serve as the academy's house band. 'Of course, we have to pay people and, just as anywhere in the world, this is never easy. We offer not just masterclasses, but also a complete cultural programme. Many people dream about coming to St Petersburg and we try to give them as much as possible, including trips to the Hermitage and the Mariinsky and to hear the Kirov Opera. Our workshops are like improvement courses, not classes for beginners. We try to select people with experience, but we're very flexible to the needs of individuals who want to take part. The idea is to make a programme that suits each participant.'

Looking ahead, Kostyuchenko says that she hopes to engage other conductors to lead masterclasses. The PGMA will also expand its reach by greater use of video and digital technologies. 'We want to broaden our repertoire options, to make it more attractive for international participants,' she adds. 'Our basic accent has always been expressed in Russian repertoire, but that will shift in future and become more varied.'

Ennio Nicotra says that he will continue to develop Musin's pedagogical approach to match the PGMA's short-course format. In brief, he has already distilled the Musin technique so that its essence can be shown during an intense series of masterclasses. Nicotra has also made a DVD, ready for release in April, and gives further insight into the Musin technique with video clips on the Musin Society website. He wants, above all, to make conductors and players see how different gestures and movement patterns can affect the clarity of communication and directly influence the sound produced.

'I have created a synthesis of Musin's teaching,' he says. 'I did this by considering my difficulties as a student and predicting the problems that students are most likely to experience when they come to the course. The level of orchestras today is much

higher than it used to be, and there are fewer rehearsals. This means the conductor has to demonstrate his charisma and technical command immediately. An orchestra will kill him if that is not there at once.' The PGMA sessions have a practical focus, says Nicotra. They exist to confront the frustration caused by bad conducting technique and develop the confidence that goes with achieving good results quickly in rehearsal.

'When a conductor has his own orchestra, then you can see a magical affinity developing. I remember how the Kirov Theatre orchestra was when Gergiev became its music director. It's impossible to believe now that this is the same orchestra that I knew 14 years ago. It's one of the world's best today. Not everyone, though, has the luck to lead his own orchestra. Learning Musin's technique helps conductors who have to do the job in the best way in the short time available.'

Ennio Nicotra suggests that today's orchestras frequently overlook the circumstances of young conductors and the learning opportunities available to them. The era of working through the ranks from opera house repetiteur and assistant conductor to become Kapellmeister and music director, if not entirely past, is heading towards its final chapter. 'I think orchestral musicians need to recognise this and understand their part in developing communicative relationships with different conductors. The orchestra is based on communication and, therefore, interaction.'

What can Peter the Great Music Academy students expect for their money? In addition to knowledge of the Musin technique, says Nicotra, they will also lean more about the theatrical and psychological aspects of conducting. 'It's an unbelievable experience,' adds Johan Michael Katz. 'Ennio doesn't beat you over the head. He's very *simpatico* and allows you to hear what is there right away when you follow his technical advice. It can be about starting at zero, as it were, and building a technique with which you can communicate or it can be about refining what is there already. In Perugia, which is very intense, you can end up with an hour or an hour and a half with the pianos. I went through every single bar of *L'après midi d'une faune* and, in April, will get the chance to try it again with the orchestra. The beauty is that this is done without pressure; rather, it exists for the learning experience. Look, conductors stay to watch their colleagues in action. That doesn't happen unless they're really hooked!'

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