

PRESS RELEASE

Tertis and Aronowitz International Viola Competitions celebrate outstanding talent

Winners' Tour

2 - 4 October 2025

Wigmore and Menuhin Halls

Hartlepool Art Gallery



(Photo: Thomas Jackson – TyneSight Photographic)

Xunyu Zhou - winner of the Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition with Sam Rosenthal - winner of the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition January 2025 pictured in Sage 1 @ The Glasshouse International Centre for Music on 25 January 2025

In October the viola world will be celebrating the winning talents of **Xunyu Zhou, winner of the Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition and Sam Rosenthal, winner of the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition**. The gifted young prizewinners embark on a short tour of the UK with the highlight concert taking place at **Wigmore Hall on Friday 3 October at 13.00** performing a Tertis inspired programme alongside renowned pianist Sophia Rahman including Frank Bridge, York Bowen and Arnold Bax.

Menuhin Hall (2 October @19.30) and Hartlepool Art Gallery (4 October @17.00) programmes include additional repertoire by Errollyn Wallen, Gyorgy Ligeti and Benjamin Britten. Xunyu, a student of Tabea Zimmermann in Frankfurt and Sam of Nobuko Imai at Kronberg Academy are already multiple prizewinners at international competitions.

Xunyu has commented that “winning the Aronowitz competition was an incredible honour and a truly unforgettable experience for me. I’m very grateful to the jury and the organisers for the opportunity. It gave me a huge boost of confidence and motivation. I’ve become more focused and inspired in my practice and I now approach my studies with even more discipline and energy. It also gave me a broader perspective, hearing amazing young violists from different countries. This whole journey has made me even more certain that I want to dedicate myself to music in the long term.”



(Photo: Thomas Jackson – TyneSight Photographic)

Xunyu Zhou performing at the final of the Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition in January 2025 with Royal Northern Sinfonia at The Glasshouse International Centre for Music

Xunyu has also told us that she is really looking forward to the tour in October – “it feels like such a special opportunity. Performing at Wigmore Hall is a dream come true; it’s one of the most beautiful and historic concert halls in the world. And visiting Hartlepool, Lionel Tertis’ birthplace, is very meaningful for me as a violist. I feel honored to be part of this journey that celebrates his legacy and connects young musicians with such a rich history.”

Tertis competition winner Sam Rosenthal says: “It was a wonderful honour to receive first prize in the Tertis International Viola Competition in January. It was a fantastic celebration of the viola and the great tradition of English music, and I am beyond excited to share some masterpieces of the viola repertoire at the legendary Wigmore hall in October. The tour also includes a visit to Hartlepool, and it will be so meaningful to perform a programme completely inspired by the great Lionel Tertis in his own birthplace!”



(Photo: Thomas Jackson – TyneSight Photographic)

Sam Rosenthal - winner of the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition in January 2025, with Royal Northern Sinfonia at The Glasshouse International Centre for Music

Louise Lansdown, Executive Artistic Director of both Tertis and Aronowitz International Viola Competitions said: “We are thrilled to be able to promote these two outstanding young violists and are proud of their magnificent wins in our double viola competitions earlier in 2025. Tertis and Aronowitz competitions are honoured to be able to contribute meaningfully to the careers of these two artists whilst simultaneously cherishing the unsurpassed British viola legacy of Tertis and Aronowitz. The future is bright. Please join us to celebrate the viola in all its glory for this special occasion.”

Sophia Rahman, official pianist for the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition since 1994 writes: "Having been an official pianist for nine Tertis competitions since 1994, and for several including the inaugural Aronowitz competition in 2014, I am absolutely thrilled to be playing for the winners of the 2025 competitions, Xunyu Zhou and Sam Rosenthal, in this brilliantly devised mini-tour taking place in the Menuhin School, where I was a student, London's iconic Wigmore Hall and the birthplace of Lionel Tertis himself, Hartlepool.

I had the pleasure of playing in Gateshead this January for the 2025 Tertis edition, and count myself privileged to have been given a unique insight into the level of preparation and the incredibly high standard of performance that is required to be accepted as a participant in this fantastic celebration of all things viola, masterminded by the sparkingly dynamic Louise Lansdown and her amazing team. I wish Sam and Xunyu a wonderful tour, and the Tertis and Aronowitz communities many more years of bringing exceptional talent to wider attention."

Aronowitz Jury Chair Jo Cole comments: "Chairing the distinguished and congenial jury for the CAIVC in January was a highlight of 2025 for me, yet to be surpassed. The occasion was a celebration of hugely talented and eager young violists, playing from their hearts. The chance to hear the performance of the worthy winner, Xunyu Zhou in recital is not to be missed."

Tertis Jury Chair George Caird writes: "The Tertis and Aronowitz International Viola Competitions, held in Newcastle in January 2025, brought together many of the finest young viola players in the world today for a week of exceptional music making with a real festival atmosphere. Congratulations to Sam Rosenthal and Xunyu Zhou for their success in winning these competitions and all best wishes go to them as they develop their careers further. Their concerts in Menuhin Hall, Wigmore Hall and Hartlepool Art Gallery will mark significant milestones for their futures."

At the end of the tour Tertis and Aronowitz International Viola Competitions in partnership with the British Viola Society and Hartlepool Borough Council will launch their inaugural Viola Day on Sunday 5 October at Hartlepool Art Gallery. Guest artists include Xunyu, Sam, Louise Lansdown and Chrissie Slater (Festival and Education Director for the competitions). This will be the first of sixteen Viola Days that are planned across England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland between now and the next iteration of the competitions in January 2028. As the birthplace of Lionel Tertis, Hartlepool will begin a journey to honour this iconic British musician. 2026 sees the 150th anniversary of Tertis's birth - watch this space for commemorative plans.

Councillor Pamela Hargreaves, Chair of Hartlepool Borough Council's Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee, said: "Following the great success of our very first Lionel Tertis celebratory concert earlier this year, we are incredibly thrilled to further strengthen our relationship with the Tertis and Aronowitz International Viola Competitions, the British Viola Society and the Glasshouse, Gateshead, by hosting these two fantastic events.

We are absolutely delighted to welcome competition winners Sam Rosenthal and Xunyu Zhou to Hartlepool for what I have no doubt will be an exceptional concert on the Saturday, followed by the very first Viola Day on the Sunday, which I'm sure will be truly inspiring for viola players of all ages and abilities.

We are immensely proud to call Lionel Tertis one of our own and there could be no finer way to celebrate his legacy. This further cultural accolade for Hartlepool in hosting these events echoes our ongoing multi-million pound physical revitalisation of the town."

Invited guests will be treated to a celebratory reception hosted by Tertis and Aronowitz International Viola Competitions in the Bechstein Room, Wigmore Hall post concert with the opportunity to meet the performers.

Thursday 2 October 2025, 7:30pm

The Menuhin Hall, Yehudi Menuhin School, Surrey

- **York Bowen – Sonata for viola and piano No. 1 in C minor, Op. 18**
Performed by Xunyu Zhou with Sophia Rahman. Often referred to as “the English Brahms,” Bowen’s sonata is a virtuosic and passionate work full of late-Romantic colour. Xunyu will also perform two movements of Ligeti’s solo viola sonata and Britten’s haunting *Lachrymae*.
- **Arnold Bax – Sonata for viola and piano**
Performed by Sam Rosenthal with Sophia Rahman. A sweeping and atmospheric sonata from one of Britain’s most distinctive early 20th-century voices. In addition, Sam will perform Errollyn Wallen’s “Lavinia” and Frank Bridge’s *Allegro Appassionato*.

Yehudi Menuhin School and all their wonderful violists, including new Director of Music, British violist Rosalind Ventris are looking forward to welcoming Sam and Xunyu to the school on 2 October.

Friday 3 October 2025, 1:00 PM

Wigmore Hall, London

Making their Wigmore Hall debuts, **Sam Rosenthal** (USA) and **Xunyu Zhou** (China) along with pianist **Sophia Rahman** showcase the expressive depth of the viola through the lense of Tertis-inspired British repertoire:

- **Frank Bridge – Lament for two violas**
A poignant and lyrical opener performed by both artists.
- **York Bowen – Sonata for viola and piano No. 1 in C minor, Op. 18**
Performed by Xunyu Zhou. Often referred to as “the English Brahms,” Bowen’s sonata is a virtuosic and passionate work full of late-Romantic colour.
- **Arnold Bax – Sonata for viola and piano**
Performed by Sam Rosenthal. A sweeping and atmospheric sonata from one of Britain’s most distinctive early 20th-century voices.

Saturday 4 October 2025, 5:00pm

Hartlepool Art Gallery, County Durham

An amazing opportunity to recognise the legacy of the late great Lionel Tertis who was born in Hartlepool and gave so much to music and especially to the viola. This will be followed on the next day by the competitions' inaugural Viola Day aimed at all ages and stages of local violists to have the amazing opportunity to work with the winners of both competitions: Sam Rosenthal (USA) and Xunyu Zhou (China).

- **York Bowen – Sonata for viola and piano No. 1 in C minor, Op. 18**
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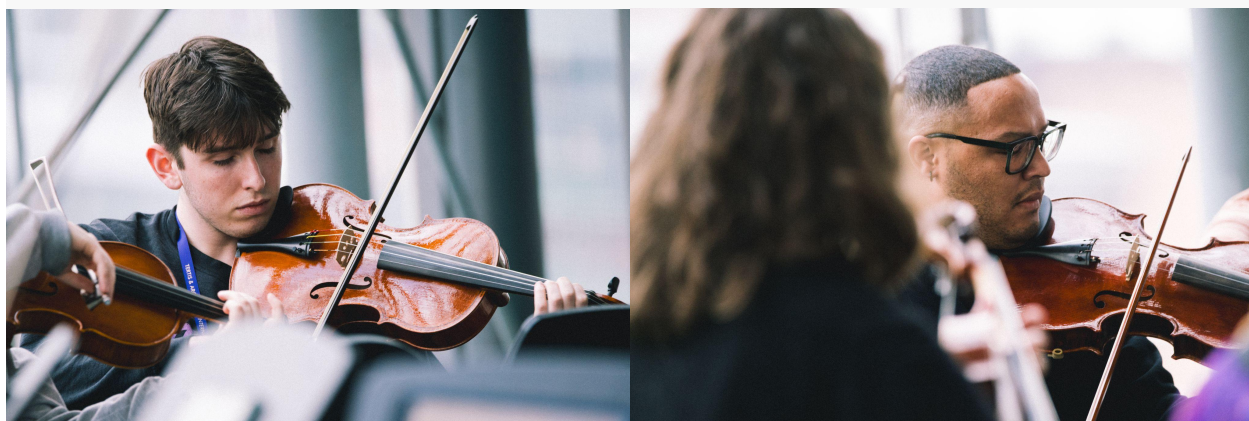
First Viola Day – Hartlepool Community Hub Central

Celebrating Lionel Tertis and the Voice of the Viola

Sunday 5 October 2025, 10:00am - 5:00pm

VIOLA DAY

With Tertis 2025 winner Sam Rosenthal and Aronowitz 2025 winner Xunyu Zhou and Louise Lansdown. Event managed and co-ordinated by Chrissie Slater.



(Photos: Thomas Jackson – TyneSight Photographic)

Photo 1. The live competitors from the Tertis Competition performing in Sage 1 on 25 January 2025. Photo 2 and 3 are of viola ensemble and luthier exhibition sessions between 19-25 January.

We're thrilled to announce the very first **Viola Day in Hartlepool**, honouring the town's proud connection to the legendary violist **Lionel Tertis**. This exciting day will be filled with music, learning, and community spirit.

Whether you're a seasoned player, an enthusiastic beginner, a composer, or simply curious, **Viola Day** offers something for everyone:

- **Inspiring workshops** to boost skills and technique
- **Performances** of compositions and arrangements written especially for viola ensemble
- **Opportunities to connect** with the **Tertis** and **Aronowitz International Viola Competitions** and the **British Viola Society**
- **A warm, collaborative atmosphere** for viola players of all ages and stages

Coordinator, Chrissie Slater said: "Our aim is to celebrate the viola's unique voice in the music world, encourage confidence in viola players, and shine a spotlight on Hartlepool's place in the global viola community."

Tickets:

- Day Ticket – £55 (plus booking fee)
- Student Day Ticket – £25 (plus booking fee)

Come and be part of this exciting first chapter – let's put Hartlepool firmly on the viola map!

For further information please contact: Jack Gillett admin@tertisaronowitz.co.uk