

overseas students constituted nearly 39 per cent of the full-time roll and represented 45 nationalities. Teaching staff too come from a rich variety of cultural backgrounds, and the exhilarating atmosphere that this fascinating cross-cultural diversity produces is immediately evident to anyone who comes into the School during term-time.

But the School's internationalism neither begins nor ends with a set of internal statistics, and the high proportion of overseas students is not the product of any aggressive marketing strategy focused on financial gain.

Two recent surveys demonstrated that the most potent magnet for attracting aspiring candidates is word of mouth. Most students, even those from abroad, make their application on the strength of a recommendation from one of their teachers or from a past or present student at the School, or because they themselves have already had contact with a member of the School's teaching staff. And a reputation on the basis of word of mouth is the product as much of activities outside the School as of the work done within its premises in the Barbican.

That much is happening within the School is clear from the termly programme events that it publishes. The diversity and extent of the events listed in these programmes is breath-taking but what is on show in these performances represents only one aspect of the School's activities.

In an interview in *Classical Music* in September 1996 the Principal, Ian Horsbrugh, said: "After their time at the

Guildhall, our musicians have got the rest of their lives where hopefully they'll keep on learning. If we've given them the inquisitiveness and curiosity to go out and face the world not as they'd like it to be but as it is, and to take advantage (in the best sense of the word) of all the opportunities that the music business provides, then we've done our job."

In an expanding Europe, where the natural contours of the landscape are increasingly replacing man-made crossing points between countries, and in a world as a whole which has its sights set on the new Millennium and

### **'The Guildhall's most potent magnet for attracting aspiring candidates is word of mouth'**

beyond, these thoughts remain as relevant today as they were three years ago, perhaps even more so.

The School's connections with many of its European counterparts are well-established. Participation in the European Union's Polyphonia, Socrates and Erasmus programmes places it in a strong position to facilitate student exchange programmes across Europe and, under the Socrates programme, it is also involved in curriculum development initiatives in chamber music and teacher training.

There is no room for complacency, however: a response to the dynamics of the

outside world involves constantly seeking out new opportunities for contacts and exchange, and staff and students alike play an important part in this process.

Staff from the Guildhall School are in demand world-wide for masterclasses and concerts, and these events in turn promote the good name of the School and foster interest and new contacts.

In recent years students have been involved in several particularly high-profile projects both in Britain and abroad. There were the performances of Britten's *War Requiem* in St Paul's Cathedral in 1995 conducted by Richard Hickox and of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* in the Barbican Hall conducted by Sir Colin Davis.

In 1996 Mstislav Rostropovich invited the School's student orchestra to play at his festival in Evian – the first time such an invitation had been issued to a European music college. In

February 1998, to celebrate the first British Presidency since Austria joined the EU, a string group from the School gave a concert at the British Embassy in Vienna at the invitation of the Ambassador. Last autumn, together with fellow-students from three other leading European conservatoires, Guildhall students took part in a collaborative staging of Lully's tragic masterpiece *Thésée*. Directed by the undisputed master of Baroque musical theatre, William Christie, the production toured to eight major European venues in five countries. And the pattern is set to continue: in July 2000 Guildhall students will join with students ▶

**The student orchestra of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama**

Richard Olivier

