



# New England String Ensemble

Federico Cortese, Music Director

## **NESE Director Announces Resignation**

By Gary Band

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Wakefield - After 15 years since he and John Bumstead founded the renowned Wakefield-based New England String Ensemble, Chestnut Street resident Peter Stickel will step down from the post of executive director by June 30.

The organization has produced over 200 performances, including more than 25 world or Boston premieres. The orchestra has received numerous awards, including grants from National Endowment for the Arts, the Koussevitzky Foundation of the Library of Congress, the Copland Foundation, and Meet the Composer. It has appeared on the Bank of America Celebrity Series, and was recently invited by WGBH to inaugurate its new Fraser Performance Studio.

A musician with an undergraduate degree from Bucknell, coursework in music therapy, a master's in holistic health from Lesley University and additional work at the Soma Institute of Neuromuscular Integration, Stickel will soon go to work as a structural integration therapist at the Lakeside Clinic across the parking lot from the NESE headquarters in the Lakeside Office Park. He did this work in the 70s and 80s before founding the ensemble in 1994.

Keeping up his credentials and in touch with industry professionals, Stickel said it is a good time to step down, with a numbers of factors in his life and that of the ensemble drawing him back to the healing work he did before.

"Running a non-profit for 15 years has been a 24-hour concern and a bit of a scramble at times," he said. "It's all been worth it and I'm so proud of the concerts we've put on and the students we've taught. But that kind of work is not something that people can sustain for their whole working careers. With it running so well, now is the time for me to think about making the changes that would correspond to another rhythm of life."

At 50-something, Stickel said he has developed the ensemble to a point where the board members are doing more of the fundraising work and that it's good for the organization to have new perspectives.

"I'm at an age when I'm thinking about what I want to be doing for the rest of my life and this is what I want to do and where I think I can make the greatest contribution."

Also known as "rolfing," the work he'll do involves working with patients for 90-minute sessions treating people in four general categories: athletes and musicians, those with specific physical issues such as Multiple Sclerosis, arthritis, and general aches and pains, and those with emotional and/or psychological conditions.

As the ensemble's founder, Stickel said he will still care about it, miss it and expect it to continue to grow and thrive. He'll still be involved at some level, but says there's a point when you have to "let go of your baby."

He says he will most the tie between the sound the orchestra makes, the reaction of the audience and the visible connection people make with the music. "I'll miss feeling instrumental in helping create feelings like that," he said. "I'll also miss working with families and the kids, the competitions, and trying to close the gap between those with support and those without."

"It breaks me up every year to see the young people who have mustered through it all, their focus, commitment, love and effort to achieve the pretty high level of mastery they do," Stickel said. "New England String Ensemble has a unique mission in what it does to develop string players into professionals and adults who have the language of music."

Upcoming concert programs include Winter Contrast, featuring Schubert's Death and the Maiden, on Feb. 8 at the Rogers Center for the Arts in North Andover and Feb. 9 at Jordan Hall in Boston, and Nordic Landscapes with Icelandic violin virtuoso Judith Ingolfsson on April 12 and 13 in Andover and Boston, respectively.