

## **RUSSIA'S WODER CHILDREN**

*A documentary by Irene Langemann*

Their names are Lena, Nikita, Ira and Mitya. They excel at concert performances which would shatter the nerves of even adult pianists. Their vibratos, runs and cascading arpeggios are simply breathtaking. The maturity these children display, even when performing the most difficult of piano pieces, is quite astonishing. Their amazing talent is founded, however, on hours of practice every single day and is the result of a long-standing tradition in the erstwhile Soviet Union.

The roots of this tradition date back to the thirties. In the midst of Stalin's reign of terror, music education was elevated to the status of an important state mission. Since then, no other country has produced as many virtuoso musicians as Russia. This was also the time when the Central Music School at the Moscow Conservatory first opened its portals. Even today, it remains the most sought after institution to attend in order to obtain a musical education. Ira, Mitya, Nikita and Lena are all pupils at this school. Lena, who has been performing concerts all over the world since she was nine years old, does not even possess her own piano on which to practice. Lena is now seventeen and is experiencing the fate of many a child prodigy: no longer a child, she is simply not as sought after as she used to be. There are, after all, so many first class adult musicians around.