

Tuning in to youth music

Youth music in the UK is enjoying unprecedented attention from policy makers, funders and the media. With 'children and young people' a high-profile government priority and 'taking part in the arts' easing its way to the top of the agenda of all four of the national Arts Councils, the number and range of opportunities for young people to make music together are on the rise. **Phyllida Shaw** offers a rough guide to some of the organisations that are helping to make things happen.

Youth Music

The National Foundation for Youth Music burst on to the scene in 1999, propelled by the promise of £10m per year from Arts Council England's lottery budget. With its focus on stimulating music making outside school hours and in any genre (classical, non-western, rock, jazz, techno – anything goes), Youth Music reveals the need, and potential, of young people, with and without formal training, to make music and through its research, publications, recordings and events, it shows what can be achieved by investing time and money in young people.

Youth Music funds the activities of organisations that share its priorities. It has done this through grants programmes that are open to application, through partnership programmes to which organisations are invited to apply, and through its Youth Music Action Zones (YMAZs). Its current priorities will remain in place until 2010. They are: early years (music making for children under the age of five); singing and vocals (for young people of any age); children and young people at risk (recognising that music can provide young people with positive experiences and more choices in life); the transition from primary to secondary school; and supporting the professional development of music leaders, for which read anyone with the skill and motivation to inspire young people to make music and help them to do so.

The diversity of Youth Music's programmes, its regional and musical coverage, and the determination of its manage-

ment team and board have helped to establish the organisation at the forefront of music making outside the formal education sector in England. An early example of its ability to attract media attention was the instrument amnesty – an appeal to anyone with an unused but working instrument to 'hand it over' to be used by young people without instruments of their own. The amnesty produced 6,000 usable instruments worth more than a million pounds. Youth Music later provided funds to repair and buy instruments, recognising that without access to instruments, millions of young people would not be able to take up the music-making opportunities being offered to them. Of particular importance to the classical music sector, Youth Music has promoted the playing of neglected orchestral instruments, contributing £1m to support lessons in six neglected orchestral instruments: the oboe, bassoon, French horn, double bass, trombone and tuba.

Since 2003, Youth Music has been responsible for administering the National Youth Music Organisations (NYMO) Fund. Jointly financed with Arts Council England and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (formerly the Department for Education and Skills) Music and Dance Scheme, the NYMO Fund contributes to the running costs and artistic development of selected national youth music organisations, some of which are featured below. [For a complete list of NYMOs see www.youthmusic.org.uk]