

CLASSICAL *music*

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Britten Sinfonia • Helping hands for musical youth

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 management 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 play-

ing 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]

The National Youth Orchestra

Last summer, shortly before it reached its 60th birthday, the National Youth Orchestra (NYO) found itself on stage at Glastonbury. This was a first for the NYO and a first for one of the world's foremost rock music festivals. The NYO works with 150 musicians aged 13-19 at any one time. Following selection at auditions that take place around the UK, the players take part in three two-week residential courses during the Christmas, Easter and summer holidays. Here they work with a team of NYO professors and rehearse for public concerts. These take place at the end of each course in high-profile venues such as the Barbican, Bridgewater Hall, St David's Hall, Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall and Birmingham's Symphony Hall. During the courses, NYO members take part in masterclasses with visiting musicians, learn about different musical traditions and styles, and play informally together. Young players who compose have the opportunity to try out new work with their peers and the NYO Composers Class is now open to non-playing members as well.

In an effort to increase its impact on young musicians beyond the orchestra, since 1998 the NYO has been holding open days around the country, during which members play with local young musicians who can play to Grade 6 or its equivalent – whether or not they have passed an exam. These events give NYO members a valuable opportunity to share their skills and experience and other young people the chance to find out more about what being in the NYO involves.

The National Children's Orchestra

The National Children's Orchestra (NCO) is half the age of the NYO and caters for ages seven to 13. Here too, places are awarded following auditions in different parts of the country. An annual cohort of around 500 young musicians is organised into age-related groups, each of which takes part in at least one week-long residential course outside term time. The main orchestra and the under-13 orchestra meet during the Easter and summer holidays while the under-12 and under-11 orchestras and the training orchestra (a string orchestra for seven to tens) meet for a week in the summer. All courses end with performances and the two senior orchestras play to the public in a professional venue. On 31 August 2008, the NCO will be out in full force at Symphony Hall, Birmingham for its 30th anniversary concert.

Growing gains – on a break from the NYO



National Youth Orchestra of Wales

The National Youth Orchestra of Wales (which is not part of the NYMO group because it does not work in England) was founded in 1945, making it the world's oldest youth orchestra. Its 115 players are older too, ranging from 13 to 21. The NYOW meets for 12 days in August and since 2000 it has been collaborating with the National Orchestra of Wales on joint concerts and recordings.

The NYOW is now administered as part of National Youth Arts Wales, a joint venture of the Welsh Joint Education Committee and the Welsh Amateur Music Federation, which, between them, also manage Wales's Youth Brass Band, Youth Choir, Youth Jazz, Symphonic Brass and Youth Wind Orchestras, as well as National Youth Dance and Youth Theatre programmes.

The National Youth Orchestras of Scotland

The National Youth Orchestras of Scotland (NYOS) runs six orchestras: the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, Camerata Scotland, the National Children's Orchestra of Scotland, the National Youth Jazz Orchestra of Scotland, NYOS Futures and NYOS Strings. As well as running the annual residential courses familiar to young musicians in England and Wales, the NYOS offers exceptional young musicians the opportunity to perform at home and abroad, in its 'pre-professional chamber orchestra', Camerata Scotland. It also runs a year-round programme of workshops in Scotland's school system.

While Youth Music's remit does not extend to Scotland, in 2002 it helped to fund research into gaps in provision for young musicians. The result, a year later, was a commitment from the Scottish Executive to establish the Youth Music Initiative, a five-year programme of work worth £37.5m. The YMI is being managed by the Scottish Arts Council and an evaluation of its first three years is now available from the council's website [www.scottisharts.org.uk].

National Association of Youth Orchestras

The membership of the Edinburgh-based National Association of Youth Orchestras (NAYO) is the UK's umbrella body for youth and student orchestras, including the national youth orchestras. Every August, the NAYO runs the Festival of British Youth Orchestras which, this year, resulted in 23 youth orchestra concerts in Edinburgh, as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and 20 in Glasgow, at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama.

South Asian Music Youth Orchestra

The South Asian Music Youth Orchestra (SAMYO) was set up in 2002 to provide the country's best young players of classical Indian music with an opportunity to work together towards public performances, in the way that the long-established youth orchestras do. Typically, players of Indian classical music work in small ensembles but SAMYO works with up to 20 young musicians at a time and, unusually, brings together Hindustani (or North Indian) and Carnatic (or South Indian) musical styles on the same platform. As a result, much of the repertoire is commissioned or specially arranged and is proving highly popular with audiences. SAMYO (which is managed by the Liverpool-based Milap Festival Trust) meets for a week during the Dartington International Summer School and then tours. The next UK tour is taking place this autumn and winter.

National Youth Choirs of Great Britain

National Youth Choirs of Great Britain (NYC) is an umbrella body for seven youth choirs working with young singers up to the age of 22. The National Youth Choir, for ages 16 to 22, runs an Easter and summer residential course, each lasting ten days and followed by a concert. Every course includes solo and group tuition and according to the NYC website, 'a substantial number of members of this choir will go on to make a career in the singing profession'. The National Youth

Training Choir serves a younger group (13-18), some of whom will go on to join the National Youth Choir. They attend two seven-day courses during the year, also followed by public performances.

For its youngest members, the NYC organises four regionally-based groups: a boys and girls choir in the north and a boys and girls choir in the south. These regional groups were created in 2002 to identify and encourage potential members of the National Youth Training Choir. Boys can join at the age of nine and stay until they are 14 or until their voices break. The girls can join at 11 and stay until they are 16, unless they move on to the Training Choir, which can be at any time from the age of 13. The four choirs meet as one group for a week at Easter and then separately in the summer, completing each course with a public concert. Auditions are held in eight different English locations, during November and December.

Aldeburgh Young Musicians

Aldeburgh Music has launched a new programme of advanced music training for exceptionally talented young musicians aged eight to 18. Part of a national network, Aldeburgh Young Musicians aims to provide a programme encompassing performance, composition and technology. It functions through a range of intensive residential courses, where participants have the opportunity to interact with up-and-coming and established professional musicians.

Aldeburgh Young Musicians is intended to bridge the gap between Aldeburgh's current education work in schools and the more advanced Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme. During 2007, the project's pilot year, four intensive residential courses are offered to young musicians from the eastern region. A more extensive programme is planned for 2008, which will include the provision for advanced instrumental tuition and ensemble opportunities, as well as intensive weekend and holiday courses. This year courses have included Contemporary Music & Composition and Creative Strings Performance, with a course on Creative Musicianship taking place in February.

See www.aldeburgh.co.uk for further details.

Music for Youth

Music for Youth, founded in 1971, offers a different kind of opportunity for young people with ambitions to play or sing music. Every year, groups of different types and musical styles compete for a place in Music for Youth's National Festival. Entry to the regional heats is free of charge and places are offered on a first come, first served basis. Judges select the best of them to take part in the National Festival and they repeat their performances at the Schools Prom at the Albert Hall in the autumn. At the last count, 100,000 people applied to take part in the regional events, suggesting that young people's appetite for making music is undiminished.

For further information about opportunities for young music makers, go to www.youthmusic.org.uk and follow links

