

2012

Jazz Services' Will Michael Awards

Introduction

These Diplomas are awarded annually by Jazz Services in association with the National Music Council Local Authority Music Education Awards Scheme which has been running for over forty years. They matter because they do two things. They are the only means of according national recognition to those music services and schools who demonstrate an outstanding commitment to jazz education. And secondly, they matter because they give national recognition to those field practitioners who are delivering jazz education and especially those who are helping to combat the widespread jazz phobia among classroom music teachers and instrumental tutors.

The Diploma is named in honour of Will Michael who, until his death in 2008, was a hugely respected jazz educator on the national stage and joint architect of this jazz education awards scheme; he was also an invaluable member of the Jazz Services Education Panel.

So far as England is concerned, this is the last time the Awards are made in the name of local authority music services. The National Plan for Music Education came into force in September 2012 and the music services underwent transmogrification into music education hubs; in some cases this meant a large scale merging with several close neighbours and severing of the tie with the local authority. Preparations for these changes represented large scale organisational turbulence which didn't augur well for music service participation in the Awards scheme. In the event, we were heartened to receive a respectable number of submissions and look forward to a bumper crop next year by which time the new hubs will no doubt be humming jazz grooves galore!

As usual, there is a cloud on the horizon. This time in the form of the Government's decision to exclude the arts, and therefore music, from the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) which will replace GCSEs in 2017. Jazz Services has joined with all the other national music education bodies in campaigning against this retrograde step.

To conclude this introduction, my esteemed colleagues on the Jazz Services Awards Panel (Dr Catherine Tackley, Andrea Vicari and Bill Martin) and I, on behalf of Jazz Services would like to thank:

- all those colleagues most of whom, above and beyond the call of duty, are spreading the jazz gospel nationwide;
- Yamaha Music Europe – UK for their very welcome support this year and the National Music Council of the United Kingdom, of course; and an especially big thank you to
- The Royal Academy of Music for their generosity in once again hosting the Awards' presentations.

Our report is set below.

Ivor Widdison

Chair, Jazz Services' Education Panel

We received the following submissions:

Bolton continued to employ a jazz specialist tutor. He directed the junior and senior jazz orchestras at weekly rehearsals and at five concerts in the year. He also directed two weekly ensembles in two different high schools. The music service provided jazz technique notes for all woodwind and brass teachers along with their schemes of work. Provision was made in schools as part of the music curriculum for pupils to hear live jazz and to study recordings.

We make no apology for drawing attention once again to how very small (school population 16,000) the **East Renfrewshire** education authority is. Nonetheless, jazz education abounds, helped no doubt first by the fact that the Instrumental Music Service (IMS) has held on to the four instrumental tutors who obtained Advanced Diplomas in Jazz from St Andrews University and secondly by the influence of the Richards, Ingham and Michael whose contribution to the development of jazz education in Scottish schools has been massive.

The IMS commitment to CPD and INSET is further evidenced by its support for the long-serving director of the jazz big band in taking the Graduate Diploma in Jazz at St Andrews. His learning to that end is already cascading down among all IMS staff.

A large proportion of the IMS staff use technology in all of their lessons and can provide backing tracks using I-pads, laptops, or MP3 players; online access to one of the Real Books is also utilised by the staff for lesson use and by the band directors for the jazz ensembles which continue to meet weekly at the Saturday Music Centre. Those bands involve students from seven secondary schools and many pupils from primary schools. The main bands are in constant demand for civic and public performances in a variety of settings.

The Jazz Combo, with its emphasis on improvisation, which we highlighted in our report last year, has continued to flourish; indeed its recordings have been broadcast on local radio. This sort of progressive development is to be expected when residential weekends are provided with opportunities for intensive improvisation practise and chart execution polishing! Improvisation workshops are also a feature of the five-day primary music residential course provided by the IMS and involving at least 100 pupils. One invariable outcome of that is a flood of applications to join the junior big band. Interestingly, it emerged that far and away the best improvisers this year were the string players! That must be a first!

Glasgow, to their credit, maintained their free tuition policy, one of the few Scottish authorities to do this; and of course it is a long time since music service provision was free in England! For the fourth year running, the Education Service and the Glasgow International Jazz Festival have worked in partnership to take Brass Jaw on a tour of City schools. This year 400 pupils and students were engaged in concerts and workshops involving that wonderful ensemble. The value of effective partnerships was evidenced by the success of the City Council, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow Life, the International Jazz Festival and private donors in raising funds to enable the Glasgow Jazz Summer School to happen. The tutorial team comprised experienced jazz musicians and educators and was open to all aged 15 plus. All classes, which include theory, ear training and ensemble playing, are held in the City Halls and participants can attend selected performances at the Jazz Festival free of charge.

Lincolnshire's support for their Youth Jazz & Rock Academy is undiminished . Over six days 14-19 year-olds come together to form four ensembles including a jazz orchestra. The horns from that orchestra also make up horn sections as required for funk/fusion, r&b and contemporary rock groups. Ex-academy students continue to return from their music conservatoires and act as peer mentors.

Academy participants are introduced to the business side of music performance by virtue of a social marketing platform which allows members to earn points by recruiting friends and posting Myspace adverts for Academy events and sponsoring links. The sponsors donate prizes and in return receive internet advertising. Already there have been positive responses from sponsors.

The music service in **Manchester** is now “One Education Music”. The creation half-way through the year of a well qualified jazz development team to work closely with music service staff and high school music departments has already raised the profile of jazz and created more opportunities for jazz performance in Manchester schools. Indeed a group of students from one high school won the Yamaha Jazz Experience competition in 2012. Whole music staff CPD was undertaken in January and a future CPD programme is under discussion with the Director of the National Youth Jazz Collective (NYJC). Similarly effective joint working is happening with the recently established Northern School of Jazz (NSJ) and the Yamaha Jazz Experience. Indeed a memorandum of understanding is being drawn up between the music service, the NSJ and the NYJC with view to creating progressive pathways between those organisation and generally to support each others work.

School jazz ensembles are supported by music service staff. Students have opportunity to experience live jazz through annual jazz workshops, supported by the Manchester Jazz Festival, ie the Festival provides artists to work with students. The jazz development team is looking to establish regular youth jam sessions at the City's premier jazz club.

The music service held a Showcase Week at the Royal Northern College Music and one student jazz ensemble performed each night. A member of the jazz development team was commissioned to compose a large scale work for the Week. The resultant piece, “Generations” was performed by over 70 pupils and students and featured guest trumpeter Neil Yates. The work had carefully differentiated parts to accommodate 40 Wider Opportunities trumpet players alongside the experienced Manchester Youth Stage Band. Students of all abilities took improvised solos leading up to Neil Yates' solo.

These are encouraging developments which promise even bigger and better things to come in Manchester!

Little surprise that jazz ensembles thrive in **Oxfordshire**: the Music Service has a jazz performance programme which involves three big bands, two small jazz ensembles and is further enhanced by jazz groups from secondary schools and the five Saturday music centres. Additionally over 50 developing jazz students attend the big band programme on weekday nights. The programme is open to all 11-19s of grade five plus levels to play in one of two bands. One of these is known as the Jazz Collective and has performed publicly with the Oxfordshire County Youth Big Band (OCYBB).

This submission includes a long list of jazz group meetings and workshops from big band to small ensembles. Improvisation groups are being developed to facilitate progression into the County Big Band. Every OCYBB concert is recorded and used by students for A level and GCSE music requirements. The OCYBB undertook a substantial number of public performances in the year.

The music service's Student Assessment System and First Access Programmes both include improvisation as an important area of development. Consequently, all those students are now experiencing improvisation as a regular part of their lessons. There is now a clear progression in development of improvisation from First Access to the Student Assessment System, to local school bands, to local music centre membership, to county big bands and to the Jazz Collective.

And finally we are pleased to note that as a further earnest of the Music Services commitment to jazz they are now in partnership with the Oxford Jazz Festival.

SoundStorm came to be the music service for Bournemouth & Poole with an already established jazz tradition having set up the Safehouse Improvisation Collective and the Bournemouth Modern Jazz Club. The Collective continues to meet regularly at the Lighthouse Arts Centre with an open-door policy of allowing all-comers to participate in completely improvised music sessions, free of charge.

SoundStorm fund education outreach programmes which give young people workshop and masterclass experiences in their schools with nationally known jazz musicians and in some instances opportunity to perform on stage with the stars! This workshop programme is to be continued in 2012/13 and big-name workshop leaders have already been signed-up. In the context of CPD some of these workshop leaders have introduced classroom teachers to the virtues of employing jazz related techniques in the classroom.

We are pleased to learn that SoundStorm are committed to a new ensembles policy which will produce two new jazz ensembles, a starter and intermediate ensemble which with existing school ensembles will feed into the Dorset Youth Jazz Orchestra – a good example of the value of cross-border cooperation.

The Mbawale Township Choir project, featuring a 200 strong choir drawn from Bournemouth and Poole, was the flagship event of the year. It is idle to try to separate this joyous manifestation of Township music from jazz. Valuable seeds will have been sown by the experience.

SoundStorm played a major role in the planning and funding of two important commissions. One, involving John Surman, was "Coastal Voices", the flagship Cultural Olympiad piece for the Jurassic Coast. And the other, a major improvised work in the form of a 45 minute suite by Karen Wimhurst reflecting on the demise of the Soviet Union which will give young people the opportunity to play and sing unusual and challenging jazz and improvised sections along with professional musicians in an audio-visual premiere in Bournemouth.

There is still much to do here, but we are really heartened by the progress made so far.

Southampton Music Service provided jazz education workshops in schools with improvisation and composition as integral parts. Some of those session outcomes were incorporated in an hour-long large scale piece by the Director of the Southampton Youth Jazz Orchestra (SYJO), Daniel Mar-Molinero – a cornucopia of rhythms, grooves and melodies from Africa to Asia and back to Southampton. The public performance was underpinned by SYJO and featured Soweto Kinch. Small groups drawn from the workshops joined the performance for different parts and indeed introduced new improvisatory elements. Over 100 young musicians were involved from a range of schools in delivering two performances – one before the general public and City Council members and the other before over 1200 school pupils and students, many of whom had never heard jazz before. As a result, interest in jazz has burgeoned with many students now playing jazz in instrumental lessons delivered by the music service.

Close collaborations with

- a) the University of Southampton, facilitated the provision of CPD by expert tutors; and
- b) with the Turner Sims Concert Hall provided invaluable performance opportunities, master classes and high quality live jazz experiences for pupils and students.

Southampton has two flagship ensembles – SYJO and the Southampton Jazz Workshop (SJW). The latter is open to beginners and has close links with local schools. In that connection the SJW have developed teaching resources for classroom music teachers and instrumental tutors. SYJO is one of the best Youth Jazz Orchestras in the country and with 60 per cent of leavers going on to conservatoires is an effective stepping stone to the music profession. Student composition is encouraged by both ensembles, indeed their sets invariably incorporate examples of such.

Southwark Music Service could almost certainly have made a stronger case for national recognition of their jazz education provision than appears in their submission. For example:

- a) five members of the music service staff are active on the London jazz scene;
- b) jazz is used extensively as a learning tool;
- c) both Saturday music centres use jazz examinations as well as the traditional instrumental exams;
- d) the vocal Wider Opportunities programme features jazz techniques, such as scat singing; and
- e) some members of the Southwark Youth Orchestra decided to perform as a jazz ensemble, encouraged, but not directed, by music service staff.

Some fleshing out of those examples would have been very welcome!

Devon's commitment to jazz education is undiminished . Members of DYJO 1 continue to progress to UK music conservatoires. The promised return to the Montreux International Jazz Festival by DYJO 1 was fulfilled with three performances.

The two elite Jazz Ambassador groups (drawn from DYJO 1) continued with their outreach programmes. The value of their work is being demonstrated in North Devon schools where a new junior DYJO is being developed. The Jazz Ambassadors are also being used to increase players' skill levels in soloing and the development of compositional ideas. We note with interest plans to develop original teaching materials to enrich existing stocks and to target them at primary school-age pupils.

DYJOs 1 and 2 continue to perform in school Local Learning Communities as a standard part of their annual programme. Thus cascading of skills is enabled as well as the inspirational fillip which only live music can provide. It is worth noting that the two DYJOs meet monthly from September to March, enjoy a residential course and undertake at least six gigs per season. Their programme includes public performances throughout the county. Of the two, the DYJO 1 repertoire is the more advanced and aims to show how integral improvisation is to the idiom by encouraging musical empathy, support and interaction. DYJO 2 concentrates on the basic big band ensemble practice and styles and on essential improvisation. Progression in both groups is monitored and evaluated and peer review is encouraged among section leaders.



The Jazz Explosion programme, which started as a project and first attracted our attention in 2009 is now well established. This year, workshops continued to be provided for Key Stage 2 pupils, and, as has become the norm, customised teaching materials and lesson plans were published on the website in advance.

Conclusion

We pay tribute to all the above-mentioned authorities for their commitment to music education and jazz in particular. We are pleased to award Diplomas to East Renfrewshire, One Education Music (Manchester), Oxfordshire, SoundStorm (Bournemouth and Poole), Southampton; and a Diploma of Special Merit to Devon together with a special trophy donated by Yamaha Music Europe - UK, in recognition of the fact that Devon have now won six Diplomas on the trot, four of them "of Special Merit"!

IKW/ November 2012