

# 2013

## *Jazz Services' Will Michael Jazz Education Awards*

### Introduction

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These Diplomas are awarded annually by Jazz Services in association with the National Music Council 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 Hubs, music services and schools which demonstrate an outstanding commitment to jazz education. And secondly, they matter because they give national recognition to those field practitioners who are actually 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. In presenting the Awards, Leslie East, the Chief Executive of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music paid tribute to Will and to his contribution to the development of the Board's Jazz Piano Syllabus.

So far as England is concerned, this is the first time the Awards are made in the name of Hubs. The National Plan for Music Education in England came into force in September 2012 and the large majority of music services became music education hubs; in some cases this meant a merging with several close neighbours and a loosening of the tie with the local authority. Preparations for these changes represented large scale organisational turbulence which, in some measure, continued into the year in question.

In the light of what we understand to be the most pressing needs of schools, we shall review our Awards criteria for next year with a view to giving greater emphasis to the importance of Hubs and Music Services providing jazz teaching resources for use in the classroom and specifically encouraging the development of improvisation skills. The National Music Curriculum to be introduced in England next September demands no less. But irrespective of that, we believe improvisation to be a vital part of any self-respecting musical education.

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;
- the National Music Council, of course!; and
- The Royal Academy of Music for their generosity in once again hosting the Awards' presentations.

Ivor Widdison

Chair, Jazz Services' Education Panel

We received the following submissions:

**Bournemouth & Poole (SoundStorm).** With a total staffing complement of 1.5, SoundStorm are very dependent on their Hub partners. Working with CODA Music Trust, Voice Works and the South West Music School SoundStorm provide CPD for teachers, which includes jazz. Again working with local venues and promoters, provision is made for gifted and talented pupils through workshops and master classes lead by established UK jazz artists.

By virtue of the partnership with Dorset Music Service local pupils and students have subsidised access to the Dorset Youth Jazz Orchestra. This year SoundStorm have formed a new out-of-school big band for beginners with a significant emphasis on improvisation skills and the development of performance confidence.

In by far the smallest Education Authority (yes, they still have them in Scotland!) with a school population of 16,000, regularly to participate in this scheme, music performance benefits in **East Renfrewshire** from a Primary Music Programme which leads on to pupils going down an instrumental or vocal route, or both, and facilitates a structured ensemble programme, ie one with built-in progression. Sound preparation for membership of the Senior Jazz Big Band, which comprises students from all seven of the Authority's secondary schools, is thus the norm. This year, that preparation has been enhanced by the introduction of improvisation (and taken up by 100 pupils) in the Primary Music Residential Course.

The Music Services' commitment to jazz education is further evidenced by the fact that out of 13.3 instrumental tutors, four have completed the Advanced Diploma in Jazz at St Andrew's University. Those tutors continue to pass on their improvisation knowledge and skills to other instrumental tutors and classroom music teachers.

Provision is made for the more advanced students by encouragement to attend the Jazz School of the Strathclyde Youth Jazz Orchestra Trust. Currently there are four East Renfrewshire students in attendance, another has progressed to the junior Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and is a featured soloist with the RCS Jazz Big Band and yet another is an established member of the Scottish Youth Jazz Orchestra.

In contrast to East Renfrewshire, **Glasgow** have a school population of 65,000. The City also have a long and enviable record of achievement in the performance of classical music. Jazz has much catching up to do. A start was made in 2009 with the setting up of a Schools' Big Band which went on to perform at major education authority public concerts. The standard big band repertoire has been staple and the development of individual players' improvisation skills is not neglected. The Glasgow Jazz Summer School is lead by some of Scotland's most experienced jazz musicians and educators; it provides classes of theory, ear training and ensemble playing for the participants who are aged 15 plus. The School dates coincide with the Glasgow International Jazz Festival and Summer School participants can attend selected performances free of charge. And again, we draw attention to Glasgow's praiseworthy policy of not charging for any instrumental lessons.

**Greater Manchester Music Hub** comprises nine local authorities with a combined school population of 336,000. It has proved difficult in this first year to paint a comprehensive picture of jazz education provision. However a 'progression through ensembles' policy is now in being and a Greater Manchester Youth Jazz Orchestra to cater for more advanced young musicians is planned for next year (it will be interesting to see where one of the country's finest youth jazz orchestras – that of Wigan – will fit in). Currently the Hub runs 13 weekly ensembles dedicated to jazz performance. A particularly welcome development here is the move to an integrated offer of training to both Hub and school-based staff.

**Kingston upon Hull** Hub employs two members of staff with jazz as their specialism. The City's splendid purpose-built Albemarle Music Centre is home to Junior and Senior Jazz Orchestras; the latter won the Best Band category and other awards at this year's Great North Big Band Festival. Both bands perform publicly at least once per term. One of the specialist tutors, who also delivers a jazz module at Huddersfield University, supports non-specialist tutors and gives one-to-one coaching.

The main delivery partner of **Manchester Youth Music Education Hub** is One Education Music. Many high spots recorded here. First among them has been the creation of the Manchester Youth Jazz Collective – a collaboration between One Education Music, Brighter Sound, the NYJC and the Manchester's premier jazz club, Band-on-the-Wall, which has given 8-18 year olds opportunity to participate in a series of three weekend workshops focusing on small group improvisation in streamed groups. This year 41 pupils and students attended. A follow-on summer school is planned for next year.

Senior members of the One Education Jazz team are active jazz performers and are well qualified, both musically and educationally. Ten other members of staff received two intensive and very successful CPD training days lead by the Director of the NYJC and the ubiquitous Richard Michael. Out of that, one member of staff created a scheme of work for introducing improvisation to his Wider Opportunities brass students.

We have been given detailed information on the type and large number of ensembles of all levels playing some jazz or 100 per cent jazz; that includes jazz bands at most of the schools at which One Education Music staff teach. Weekly rehearsals are the norm for all of these

Close links with the Manchester Jazz Festival have been exploited to great advantage with the provision of artists to conduct workshops, some of which are in depth explorations of original works. Between 40 and 60 students attend. That is in addition to regular jazz workshops run by Brighter Sound and Band on the Wall. Students are encouraged to sit ABRSM syllabuses and to use jazz group ensemble performances for their GCSE course work.

It was good to see in **Oxfordshire's** main NMC submission that they highlighted a series of graded ensembles in jazz and big band settings to provide progression routes and performing and recording opportunities for able musicians, who also play in school and area ensembles, or, at the highest level, have progressed beyond local provision. Those extension activities take place at the Centre for Music. It is quite rare to see a jazz initiative featured in the the main NMC submission.

This Hub has four members of staff qualified (and very highly in some cases) to teach jazz, which given that jazz is included in assessment procedures is a good thing! The Hub has continued with the OCMS Student Assessment System, and all first access programmes include improvisation as an important area of development. Therefore all those students experience improvisation as a regular part of their music lessons. That emphasis on improvisation continues with the established Oxfordshire progression system from beginner to post-grade 8 students. The Hub has also continued with the focused big band programme started by the Music Service in the mid-70s with the Oxfordshire Youth Big Band (OYBB). It now comprises three "progressive" big bands and two smaller jazz ensembles all of which are nourished by jazz groups from secondary schools and the five Saturday morning music centres. There are numerous examples of members of those aggregations entering conservatoires, universities and NYJO. And OYBB performs with established professional jazz musicians. Every Big Band concert is now recorded and used by students for A level and GCSE music purposes. We have seen and noted a formidable list of public gigs undertaken by all the Oxfordshire youth jazz ensembles.

**Sheffield** are a welcome newcomer to both the NMC overall scheme and to the Will Michael Awards. The Hub has a jazz specialist among the staff who leads on improvisation for the music service team's CPD. She is also writing a jazz strategy for the Hub. Meantime, a first-ever jazz course has been run and attended by 83 young musicians at three levels of learning. Led by professional jazz musicians the course culminated in a launch concert organised in such a way that the beginners were also able to participate. We look forward to hearing more from Sheffield in future years.

Seemingly **South Gloucestershire's** jazz eggs have all gone into the big band basket for no other information has been vouchsafed to us! Thus the South Gloucestershire Youth Jazz Orchestra met weekly and registered several successful public performances.

**Southend-on-Sea.** Graded jazz piano syllabuses are taught at two schools and the woodwind equivalent from grade one to diploma level. Given the use of the LCM Jazz Syllabus students are required to compose, so much jazz composition is going on. Provision is made, on an ad hoc basis, for A level pupils who are interested in jazz. The Hub runs two jazz ensembles which meet weekly in term time and whose members have experienced live professional jazz performance by virtue of joint performances with professionals. The Borough Council sponsor a number of jazz events, including an annual jazz festival.

**Southampton.** We were delighted to learn that the two directors of the Southampton Youth Jazz Workshop (SYJW) have written new teaching resources to support delivery of jazz in school classrooms. This represents a new dimension to music education for many Southampton schools and, unsurprisingly, has had a positive affect on those schools' own jazz groups. The Hub has also allocated staff time to prepare new jazz repertoire for whole class teaching. Not only has this enabled many 8/9 year old pupils to experience and experiment with the jazz sound, it has also, simultaneously involved classroom music teachers in the learning process! Learning how to improvise is now a feature of a local, customised, schools' music education programme. Effective liaison between classroom music teachers and the Hub's specialist jazz educators in the form of advice and hands on guidance has resulted in many students' GCSE and A level music course work including jazz repertoire.

In the Southampton Youth Jazz Orchestra (SYJO) and the SYJW, the Hub has two of the finest youth jazz ensembles in the country. They don't take easy paths. For example, performing alongside Courtney Pine at the Turner Sims Concert Hall, when they had the stage to themselves, the programme comprised Ellington, Gillespie and Maria Schneider charts. That, incidentally, is but one example of SYJO performing jointly with big jazz names. Both ensembles were selected to play in the Essentially Ellington Festival at the Barbican in July 2012. And the steady flow of SYJO and SYJW musicians into higher education, including conservatoires, many to take jazz courses, continues.

By **Devon's** own standards this was a quiet year with the emphasis on laying the foundations for further development. Yet the two Devon Youth Jazz Orchestras (DYJOs 1 & 2) continue to honour their article of faith, which is to achieve an effective balance between gigging and providing a substantial jazz education programme. To that end, on top of ten public gigs throughout the year, the two orchestras performed in School Local Learning Communities as a standard part of their season's programme. That involved cascading of skills, inspiring pupils and students and causing those schools with jazz ensembles to raise their game. Such has been the success of the Jazz Ambassadors Programme, that the Ambassadors have been invited to deliver workshops for adults at one of the Devon Community Colleges.

There is one innovation to report: this takes the form of members of both DYJOs being encouraged and given opportunity to develop leadership roles within the band by means of member-directed rehearsal sessions. DYJO members also participated in the NYJC summer school, performed public gigs throughout Devon and enjoyed what has become their normal October residential course.



The Hub rightly draws attention to the merits of having the County Youth Jazz Orchestras tutored by musicians who all play in the local music community and are thus able to provide further playing opportunities to the more gifted musicians.

## Conclusion

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We pay tribute to those Hubs and Music Services which have demonstrated their commitment to music education and to jazz education in particular and believe that 'honourable mentions' are due to Bournemouth & Poole (SoundStorm), Glasgow, Sheffield and Southend-on-Sea.

And we are pleased to award Diplomas to East Renfrewshire, Manchester (One Education Music), Oxfordshire, Southampton; and a Diploma of Special Merit to Devon.

It will not have escaped notice that Devon have now received several consecutive Diplomas of Special Merit. We have therefore agreed with the Devon Hub that next year they will take a break from the Will Michael Awards and, with our blessing, offer their services as a mentor to one or more other Hubs in England which are keen to develop and improve their jazz education provision. We can think of no better model than that built by Devon!

IKW/ October 2013