

2017

Will Michael Jazz Education Awards

Introduction

Once again the Awards were formally presented by LESLIE EAST, chair of the Jazz Committee of the Musicians' Company. We are grateful for the support of the Company and indeed to Trinity Laban Conservatoire for hosting this year's event and making it possible for the Trinity Laban Contemporary Jazz Ensemble under director Mark Lockheart to perform a scintillating programme of music by UK composers as part of our celebrations.

This is the 11th year we have made these Awards. Sad to say it is the first time we have not received any submissions from Scotland. One thing which hasn't changed over the years is the extent to which successful jazz education within a Hub or music service depends on the dedication, industry and inspiration of a few individuals. One of our Awards this year recognises the achievements of one such!

One of the more pleasing features of this year's submissions is the evidence of collaboration between Hubs and music services in the South Yorkshire region, between Cumbria and Lancashire, and between Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire.

My Awards Panel colleagues (Andrea Vicari, Dr Catherine Tackley, Bill Martin and Richard Michael) and I continue to dedicate this Awards scheme to the memory of Will Michael who died tragically early in 2008. Will was a respected and highly successful educator on both local and national stages.

Ivor Widdison
Chair, Will Michael Jazz Education Awards Panel

22 November 2017

The Awards:

A little over two years ago music education in **Bromley** had to fight for its life. This submission is testament to the belief of all those who successfully saved the day in the very real value of music education. The Youth Music Trust, the lead Hub partner, created the jazz education department in September 2016. Remarkably, jazz education seems to be at the heart of the overall provision. It is also set in an arts environment which celebrates all genres of music and dance. The Trust's Jazz School, lead by Buster Birch, holds fortnightly sessions of two groups separated according to experience and ability and cover ear training, improvisation, rhythmic skills, harmony, jazz vocabulary all with a strong emphasis on performance opportunities. Many of the secondary schools in Bromley have big bands whose work is overseen by the Jazz School. We hope that the School will soon be in a position to contribute actively to schools' music curriculum and provide CPD services on the lines of those organised in connection with the new gospel singing project, which involves adults and young people. Future Trust plans include a series of master classes in the New Year and for jazz singing to be developed as part of Jazz School provision.

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Thanks to Youtube we can see evidence of a fine big band tradition in **Camden**. At least one of the reasons this is being maintained is the existence of a regular rehearsing jazz ensemble in virtually every secondary school in the borough. An Arts Council funded project – Jazz Connect – has been launched to promote jazz and improvisation provision within the Hub. Taster workshops in conjunction with Hub partners and as part of Wider Opportunities provision are under way. That experience will be drawn upon to provide valuable CPD for Hub tutors. The music service takes full advantage of its central London location by extensive involvement of established high quality UK jazz musicians visiting schools and working alongside Hub tutors. The plan is to collate material from the Jazz Connect workshops for use as part of a package of schools' classroom resources. There are also plans to provide more opportunities at local venues for young jazz musicians. And the icing on the cake is a budget for arrangements to promote female jazz composers for the services' young bands. Given the coming to fruition of most of those plans we expect to hear much more from Camden in the near future!

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BlueJam Arts deliver the Hub's jazz development programme. It is of the essence of music-making that there is a coming-together with fellow musicians. With a minority music such as jazz that poses practical problems which jazz education organisers in Hubs and music services serving sparsely populated rural areas like **Cumbria** and Devon face every day. So approaches to ensemble rehearsals and performance by necessity have to be flexible, not least in accommodating varying levels of ability. Yet despite all that Hub-wide ensembles do function and perform at jazz clubs and community events. Monthly weekend sessions for women and young girls, which given lack of specific funding are lead by volunteers, are proving to be popular and have already resulted in six participants performing with the more senior jazz ensemble and other mixed workshops.

We applaud fruitful partnership working with the Lancashire Hub out of which, for example, NYJO delivered a number of workshops culminating in a joint concert. The NYJO Ambassadors, in addition to live concerts for key stage 2 and year 7 pupils who were hearing live jazz for the first time, held sessions with existing school jazz bands and engaged with key stage 4/5 BTEC students.

As well as going into schools to do workshops on songwriting, improvisation and ensemble playing BlueJam's music leaders deliver weekly instrumental and vocal lessons throughout Cumbria. The priority is always the development of musicianship skills so that pupils can be as self-reliant as possible.

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Proof that **Devon** is the Rolls Royce of jazz education providers comes in the form of ten Diplomas out of eleven competition years; it would have been eleven no doubt had we not suggested in 2014 that they take a breather and do a little spreading of the jazz education gospel by offering services to other music services!

The Devon Music Education Hub commissions music organisations with specialists to deliver jazz education and more than 6000 children and young people are supported in their music making by the Hub. This year the Hub expanded its successful support for jazz education in the north and east by funding a new youth project in the south of the county. Bespoke jazz CPD sessions for classroom music teachers have continued to be supported and next year will include teachers from four education authorities.

The two Devon Youth Jazz Orchestras (DYJOs 1 and 2) and the DYJO Ambassadors have a long and distinguished record of international showcases and performance and improvisation in outreach school workshop programmes. The Ambassadors comprise the best soloists from DYJOs 1 & 2. They have four training sessions in preparation for the workshops which consist of jazz performance based activities, including improvisation, for the students.

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Given the nationwide shortage of trombone players we should all be grateful to the **Doncaster** Youth Jazz Association for their trombone initiative. Funded by the Ronnie Scott Charitable Foundation and PBone this was a 16 week pilot programme prior to trailing in local primary schools in a disadvantaged area. Heavy parental involvement, appetiser school assembly performances lead by Denis Rollins and provision of starter packs secured the enrolment of 48 pupils by the second week. On completion of the course the music service supported the ongoing development of the pupils.

The year also featured master classes on key instruments with high profile performers, partnership events with neighbouring Hubs and a one off project with NYJO which we were privileged to be part of at last year's Will Michael Awards presentations.

One of the major challenges for jazz educators is the development of greater knowledge of the genre. Doncaster's approach is through individual and group tuition. Doncaster Youth Jazz Association consists of three graded learning ensembles supported by a team of dedicated tutors. Currently the ensembles comprise over 50 young learners, and that number is growing. All ensembles have opportunity to perform in a variety of settings. The master classes referred to earlier were in fact promoted throughout the region; and DYJA plan to host a further range of such in 2018. CPD for non-specialist tutors was provided by DYJA head, John Ellis. Jazz improvisation workshops have attracted regional participation especially from other music genres. And more of those too are planned for 2018.

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The **Gloucestershire** Jazz Live (GJL) submission is special in at least one respect: it is able to refer to support of two adult jazz ensembles which perform publicly and sometimes rehearse alongside the two youth jazz ensembles. Fifteen years ago it was normal for all music services to make provision for adults.

An important “behind the scenes” part of any jazz education programme is the provision of practical guidance not only for established ensembles but also for classroom use. The GJL director provides suggestions and guidance of recommended listening in jazz associated genres and styles for key stage 3 & 4 students both through practical activities and an annually updated comprehensive booklet. A second booklet provides more specific guidance on theory, practice strategies and reading for GJL ensemble members and county music centres which have jazz groups. GJL also offers local schools jazz workshops and materials focusing on improvisation. The delivery of most of those activities is facilitated by GJL tutors. Thanks to ACE funding Guy Barker was employed to work in GJL groups (including one of the adult ensembles) in two workshops and a Cheltenham Jazz Festival performance.

I’m going to conclude this brief citation with a personal tribute to the Gloucestershire Youth Jazz Orchestra and the Oxfordshire Youth Big Band who performed an original piece by Nick Blake – Bayard’s Juke Joint – in an unsympathetic acoustic. This was earlier this year. Despite inevitable imperfections they created genuine big band excitement out of a fine arrangement which paid appropriate tribute to the tradition.

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A NYJO project in 2015 inspired the creation of the **Kingston** Youth Jazz Band (KYJB) which successfully supplemented the jazz programme by providing training in improvisation and sight reading and, importantly, a progression route into the advanced Kingston Youth Big Band (KYBB). Such was the success of that project, an ACE grant was obtained to run another creative day with the NYJO Ambassadors. Over 100 students from five different schools were introduced to jazz rhythms, improvisation and swing. Music teachers were also involved and took their learning back into the work they were doing with instrumentalists in their schools. The two jazz ensembles have performed publicly several times during the year. Sell out shows in community and jazz club settings were among the highlights. Thanks to a developing relationship with Serious it was possible to participate in their New Audiences scheme and give students opportunities to see and hear international jazz stars. We were especially pleased to learn that jazz improvisation has been introduced into Wider Opportunities provision by means of incorporation in warm ups. Improvisation continues to be included in INSET and CPD support for tutors. Throughout the ambition is to inspire teachers/tutors to become more confident when working in the idiom.

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Oxfordshire: Improvisation is a key component of the internal assessment system; all pre-grade three students learning with the county music service are expected to improvise simple melodies based on musical ideas played by their teacher. Following on from that, improvisation based on chordal rhythmic and melodic stimulus is used in internal exams at grades 3,4 & 5 across all pitched instruments. Students interested in developing their improvisational skills receive regular guidance and teaching through the weekly instrumental lessons, music centre ensembles and the weekly small jazz ensembles and big bands.

The big band programme which started 40 plus years ago has developed into three “progressive” big bands and three small jazz ensembles. Yet another big band for grades 3-5 was started three months ago. This programme is well nourished by jazz groups from Oxfordshire secondary schools and the five county Saturday music centres and of course by the skills and industry of six highly qualified tutors!

We think it is worth highlighting at least one unusual achievement of the jazz education year. Members of the Oxfordshire Jazz Collective took it upon themselves to form and run a jazz quartet. They triumphed through the regular Music for Youth competition hoops and performed at the Schools’ Prom in the Royal Albert Hall on 14 November. The Quartet’s piano player wrote originals especially for the Music for Youth performances.

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Sheffield Music Hub have made significant progress since 2013 when we commended their submission. Among the interesting features of the Hub’s approach is the nature and extent of parental and school involvement both initially and through access to students’ jazz experience journey. Weekly jazz education workshops involving 60 pupils/students run by four jazz education specialists are in the progression sequence and have a built-in emphasis on improvisation. They are very much part of the Hub’s jazz education strategy which is based on a Trello online board of six focuses: Discover-reflecting on and refining the detail of learning, progression, not forgetting a sense of exploration and fun! (The involvement of stars such as Denis Rollins, Mark Lockheart, Liam Noble and Jasper Holby in at least one workshop helped!) Evolve-a focus on engagement, learning and progression on the part of the educators. Performance-sharing wherever possible the experience of performing live music (at best a brilliant experience, at worst something akin to a nightmare – Panel’s gloss!); and very much part of that last focus, Celebration.

Connect-another important focus which goes to the heart of jazz education (and indeed music education generally), making connections and establishing a jazz community of professionals, ie musicians, arrangers, composers as well as volunteers, families, children and young people. And the Future- this focus is essentially about developing the connections locally, regionally and nationwide and finding the funding!

Sheffield have embarked on a very challenging journey: we wish them well !

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Daniel Mar-Molinero

Lecturer in Jazz & Popular Music at the University of Southampton and leader of the Southampton Youth Jazz Orchestra (SYJO) for 14 plus years. We made our first jazz education Awards in 2007 to Devon and Southampton. Southampton received Diplomas in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 and Hampshire in 2014 and 2015. Dan Mar-Molinero made a growing contribution to all those winning entries, especially significant were his contributions to the Special Merit submissions in 2014 and 2015.

And through 2016 and 2017 he has kept the jazz education flame burning across several local authority areas in various ways, principally, by continuing voluntarily to lead SYJO – one of the top youth big bands in England – bringing the NYJC into the area and contributing to its workshops, taking over the Southampton Youth Jazz Workshop (which we have lauded in past reports), setting up and running a jazz academy for Hampshire secondary school students, free of charge, and establishing a forum for jazz education in the southern region (chaired by Simon Purcell)

We think all that merits something we have not done before, ie award a special individual Diploma.

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Conclusion

We have awarded Diplomas to Bromley, Cumbria (BlueJam Arts), Devon, Doncaster, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Sheffield in addition to the individual award.

We have formally commended the submissions from Camden and Kingston upon Thames.

IKW/November 2017