

NYJO - A Year in the Life

November 2012

The Nottingham Youth Jazz Orchestra - www.nottsnyjo.co.uk - came into being in 2008 as part of the Nottingham Youth Orchestra (NYO). Currently there are around 40 players across three bands: an 18-piece NYJO1 Big Band under Musical Director Phil Smith; a large 'development band called NYJO2 and a 7-piece NYJO Combo.



All bands rehearse on Tuesday evenings in the Music Block at the Nottingham Boys high School. NYJO bands perform on a regular basis, including twice a year at a family and friends concert held at Lakeside Towers, Arnold.

This report on NYJO activities covers roughly a year and gives an idea of the variety of performances that NYJO bands enjoy

performing - all high points of musical entertainment shared by both audiences and players alike.

NYJO were delighted to join the NYO orchestra for part of the impressive Cultural Olympiad Concert at the Royal Concert Hall in March - see video on You Tube of part of this:



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTuw5PDQWDI>

Also, NYJO bands like to entertain NYO concert goers during the intervals in the foyers.

With its strong focus on performance and high musical standards, NYJO receives numerous invitations for gigs and concerts. The majority of these are for NYJO Combo, mainly because this smaller scale band is more flexible for accommodating requirements and venues. The Combo attracts especially talented NYJO players who are keen to develop and practise improvisation skills.

NYJO is proud to have active support from its patron Tony Kofi, a Nottingham-born jazz saxophonist and improviser of world stature -



www.tonykofimusic.com Twice during the last year, NYJO Combo has been joined by Tony for an interval performance at Jazzsteps, a leading Nottingham venue for contemporary jazz at the Bonington Theatre in Arnold

www.jazzsteps.co.uk

A You Tube video of one of the tunes played by NYJO Combo with guest Tony Kofi is at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkdAeCCqVHA&feature=relmfu>

When Royalty came to Nottingham as part of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations, NYJO were delighted to be invited to perform both at Vernon Park and, beforehand, at Woodthorpe Park for the crowds gathered for the lighting of the beacon.



As part of other Jubilee fun, NYJO performed for shoppers one Saturday at the John Lewis store in Nottingham.



In July, NYJO opened the Mansfield Cultural Festival 2012 with a Big Band concert at the 200-seat theatre in the new Mansfield Library:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZOx5-9s8UY>

NYJO players toured at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival for the third successive year this August. Around 15 NYJO players were on tour led by Musical Director Phil Smith with the assistance of guest tutor Jacques Moran. NYJO played an average of two gigs per day, all at excellent music venues and to enthusiastic audiences. The band members were accommodated in student halls of residence near the centre of Edinburgh. Tour activities included NYJO players enjoying other cultural entertainment at this world-class festival.



To subsidise the costs of their tour, NYJO players did busking and other fund-raising activities. NYJO sponsors Newark Motor Auctions generously provided some fully fuelled transport and Clement Pianos subsidised the cost of new branded polo shirts and hoodies for the band. The positive response from venues means that NYJO have been invited back to them again for 2013. NYJO are indebted to Judith Smith - one the dedicated Friends of NYJO volunteers - for, once again, organising a highly successful jazz tour.

As part of a productive relationship with sponsors Clement Pianos www.clementpianos.com - NYJO were invited to perform during the intervals at the Nottingham International Jazz Piano Competition whose finals were held at the Nottingham Albert Hall. This prestigious event is, for jazz piano, what the Leeds Piano Competition is to classical piano. The competition results are noted on NYJO's blog:

<http://www.nottsnyjo.co.uk/blog/2012/10/8/international-jazz-piano-fireworks-in-nottingham.html>

During October 2012, NYJO organised a self-funded Workshop day on *Improvisation and Performing Skills*. Dean Masser, a professional jazz musician and educator, was the lead workshop tutor, ably assisted by Phil Smith and Ben Lee.



Ben is lead NYJO tutor for NYJO2 and NYJO Combo bands. Ben provides numerous unique arrangements of jazz standards and popular tunes for NYJO bands and is a talented professional trumpeter and band leader in his own right - <http://bennylee.co.uk>.

The workshop culminated in a short demonstration of skills put into practice by a combined group of NYJO players representing all bands:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dB1hGrUOI9U>

During December 2012 NYJO bands are performing three gigs in a 'Jazz in the Libraries' series at Mansfield, Southwell and Worksop libraries. At these some NYJO alumni are returning from music studies to join in with current NYJO players. NYJO alumni Mark Lewandowski (bass) and Will Glaser (drums) are both studying in London and have performed back in Nottingham at Jazzsteps:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E98HGvAaI7A>



During the year NYJO has acquired some new arrangements including pads for vocalists. In addition, the local Henry Farrell Big Band has also sponsored NYJO through a loan of some of its jazz arrangements.

NYJO greatly appreciates the enthusiasm and support from NYJO players' parents and friends. We are always open to new volunteers to assist the dedicated **Friends of NYJO**, whose efforts really make a difference to the success of NYJO. Our continuing musical collaborations with NYO celebrate the diversity of musical genres. We value NYO's support, no least from administrator Paula Watt.

NYJO bands have the prospect of a busy and enjoyable 2012-13 season with many great opportunities for performance and further developing their skills in Big Band swing and jazz improvisation.



*“Life is a lot like jazz
... it's best when you
improvise”*

George Gershwin

Phil Smith NYJO Musical Director
Carl Billson Chair of Friends of NYJO