



**75 YEARS OF SUPPORTING
AND CHAMPIONING
VOLUNTARY MUSIC**

Case Study

No. 54

Nottingham Choral Trust

One of Making Music's five areas of activity is working with and for young people. Through Making Music's Young People's Programme a substantial library of youth project case studies has been developed. These case studies are designed to highlight and share best practice from the experiences of Making Music member societies undertaking youth projects. Many of the case studies arise from Making Music's two national youth programmes *tuned in* (2001-2002) funded by Youth Music and The Carnegie UK Trust and RESOUND (2003-2005) funded by Youth Music, Scottish Arts Council, The Carnegie UK Trust and Headley Trust.

1. Project Description

Project Aims

To extend to children the Nottingham Choral Trust approach to choral singing for adults (large-chorus projects; individual home-based study of scores guided by NCT's own rehearsal cassettes plus intensive weekend courses and concerts)

To make choral singing attractive and accessible to young singers in the Nottingham area

To reach a new audience for choral music and to create a new income stream for the organisation

To contribute to the future of choral singing in the UK

Project Description

Development of Youth Choir

1989: The Nottingham Choral Trust had always planned to start a Youth Choir. The catalyst was a direct request from the local youth orchestra to form a large youth choir to share a concert with them at the Royal Concert Hall in Nottingham (capacity 2,300). They approached the Nottingham Choral Trust because of the reputation of their Artistic Director, Angela Kay, for tackling unusual projects and being able to make things happen.

The children enrolled as individuals, not via schools. A team of conductors and workshop leaders were drawn mainly from teachers who are members of the chamber choir of Nottingham Choral Trust but also specialists from outside identified through contacts were involved. In addition, a support team made up of volunteer parents, led by NCT members provided project management.

Attractive publicity leaflets were distributed by members of the adult choir to outlets across the community: schools, churches, libraries, community and leisure centres etc. There were some direct mailing of music specialists in schools, but personal contact is more effective.

There were no auditions. The lower age limit was 6 years, there was open access to all and subsidised places were available. Artistic and logistical leaders were chosen by the Artistic Director. Further helpers were recruited from parents who ticked in the 'volunteer' box on the children's enrolment form.

The planning schedule was as follows:

6 months in advance: book venues

4 months in advance: choose activities, book key personnel, print enrolment brochure, distribute, open enrolment

2 months in advance: make up study packs for singers and deliver

There are usually three distinct events each year: a 'big sing' concert in the Autumn, a workshop-based event introducing a wide range of types of singing (e.g. from opera through barbershop to rap) in May, with a traditional Christmas concert in between. Whatever the event a chamber orchestra or band is provided in support, rather than just a piano.

The repertoire is always as wide-ranging as possible – the age-range requires this to some extent, but it is also important for broadening the appeal. In the September concerts a substantial narrative-based piece is generally included for the younger children, for instance Big Momma, Blast Off, Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, Holy Moses, Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo, as well as part-singing in two, three and four parts for older children, with classical items: examples from past concerts include Bach, Handel, Fauré, Britten, Bernstein. Programmes have been put together on themes including Vocal Software (computers and electronic music effects) and, topically, music with French/English associations for Eurotunnel Extravaganza. NCT has been lucky to have had attractive music written for them by local composers David Machell and Paul K Joyce, mostly but not always supported by Regional Arts Board grant. On the last occasion the composer won lottery funding for a project to record a new piece on CD with the children, which introduced them to a new performance discipline, singing in a recording studio, to which they responded amazingly well, achieving a very high standard.

Supervision is provided by teams of volunteer parents and helpers. There are identity badges for all, careful operation of timetables and registration and de-registration procedures.

Legacy

Initial preparation in the form of distance learning via rehearsal tapes seems to appeal to children and fit in with their busy lifestyles as much as it suits adults. Also the open-access policy and almost one-off intensive weekend format brings healthy levels of recruitment which would not be achieved if auditions were required, or commitment to rehearsals every week. The enthusiasm and repeated enrolments by children indicate a high level of satisfaction. Nevertheless there is here, as in many other choirs etc, a relative falling off of numbers in all three youth initiatives among the older children, leaving viable but not large "top" groups. Numbers of boys and girls achieve the best balance in the wind band event.

The educational sponsors are clear about the benefits for them as children who are committed to music possess qualities they are keen to see among their students. For the FE college, the positive vibes they hope to convey to the parents are seen as part of the college's marketing strategy in a very competitive area. For the university, as recruitment to Higher Education

looks like expanding its local base, a sponsorship of NCT's youth events is an investment for the future.

Improvements

This area of NCT's work is well established and while they are keen to keep introducing new ideas to keep it fresh, it has settled into a system which works well for them. Following the same pattern, they began an annual weekend course and concert for young string players in 1994 and one for wind and brass in 1999. A feature of all the youth weekends is the large number of adults involved, to sing or play alongside the children in all sessions.

2. Project Details

General Details

Nature of Youth Project	
Number of Young People involved	250
Age Range of Young People	5 - 18
Type of Young People involvement	
Recruitment of Young People	
Level of LEA involvement	
Project budget	0
Sources of funding	Subsidised accommodation, course feeds (£9-£14), concert tickets
Video available	False
Audio available	False
Photographs available	False
Programme available	True
Publicity leaflets/posters	True

Society Details

Name of society	Nottingham Choral Trust
Type of Society	Classical choral
Size of Society	0
Age profile	
Under 19s in society	0
Under 19s from project	0
Repertoire	
Typical concert budget	
Typical performance	
Number of performances	
Willing to be contacted	True
Contact name	Angela Smallwood
Contact phone	0115 925 9212
Contact address	
Contact email	angela.smallwood@nottingham.ac.uk

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