



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

# Case Study

No. 60

## Aberdeen Bach Choir

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

Introduce a new work to the choir and to the public in the North East of Scotland

Develop further the close contact which already exists between the Bach choir, the Cathedral Church of St Machar and the local community

Provide a further link with the imaginative programme-planning which has been the hallmark of Aberdeen Bach Choir for many years

Provide music pupils and students in local schools and college with an opportunity to hear and experience at first hand the work of a prominent Scottish composer

Stimulate music pupils and students to produce musical inventions based on the themes of the work introduced to them by the composer

#### Project Description

Commissioned Work/Schools Inventing Project

Aberdeen Bach choir commissioned a new work, *The Chronicle of Saint Machar* from the Scottish composer John McLeod. The work is scored for SATB choir (Aberdeen Bach Choir), children's choir (Cults Academy Junior Singers), strings (Aberdeen Sinfonietta), percussion, piano and organ. The first performance was on 25th April 1999 in St Machar's Cathedral in Aberdeen, together with Britten's *St Nicolas*. A pre-recital talk was given on the morning of Saturday 24th April, by John McLeod and historian John Smith.

Pupils studying Standard Grade, Higher and CSYS (Certificate of Sixth Year Studies) Music in Aberdeen City secondary schools and music students from Northern College based their own compositions on themes taken from the new work, and a selection of these are to be performed during the first half of a Recital on 6th June 1999 in St Machar's Cathedral. The second half of this Recital will be the second public performance of 'The Chronicle of St Machar' by John McLeod.

Aberdeen Bach choir wished to commission a new work by a Scottish composer for choir, children's choir, baritone solo, strings, percussion, piano and organ. St. Nicolas by Benjamin Britten was chosen because it complemented the new Cantata by John McLeod, using similar forces and also a children's choir. As one of the main aims of the project was to involve young people, both works were ideal.

### **Legacy**

Audience reaction to the First Performance of The Chronicle of Saint Machar by John McLeod was exceptionally positive. Comments from audience members (including letters and telephone calls to the conductor) included for instance: "The most wonderful musical experience", "Faultless performance and beautiful music. . ." "The music was very accessible and moving and I am looking forward to the second performance so much."

Inventing Project: The time-scale seemed fine and all pupils benefited greatly from the advice and suggestions made by the composers. Pupils were able to use the inventions as part of their Standard Grade, Higher and CSYS Inventing folios for submission to the Scottish Qualifications Authority. One student from Northern College used her invention as part of her inventing folio in the final year of her B.Ed Music Course. Verbal feedback from pupils suggests that they enjoyed the workshop and the project in general but that it did take up a considerable time from their normal studies. Some pupils and students fell by the wayside because of this.

Review in The Scotsman: "It is an intensely dramatic piece. . . . to the choir he gives the most glorious and resolute music . . . Aberdeen Bach Choir and Sinfonietta gave an ardent, assured and truly inspired performance." In short it was a triumph.

At least one member of the Cults Academy choir expressed a wish to join the Bach Choir.

### **Improvements**

An extra visit to schools by the composers would have been very helpful. Too many late suggestions and alterations were made to the pupils' compositions, causing a rush to complete the final scores of the music.

## **2. Project Details**

### **General Details**

Nature of Youth Project  
Number of Young People involved           **32**  
Age Range of Young People  
Type of Young People involvement

Recruitment of Young People	<b>letters to schools</b>
Level of LEA involvement	
Project budget	<b>Over £5,000</b>
Sources of funding	<b>Scottish Arts Council Lottery grant - £18,000, NFMS/SAC grant; sponsorship</b>
Video available	<b>False</b>
Audio available	<b>True</b>
Photographs available	<b>False</b>
Programme available	<b>True</b>
Publicity leaflets/posters	<b>False</b>

## **Society Details**

Name of society	<b>Aberdeen Bach Choir</b>
Type of Society	<b>Classical choral</b>
Size of Society	<b>0</b>
Age profile	
Under 19s in society	<b>0</b>
Under 19s from project	<b>0</b>
Repertoire	
Typical concert budget	
Typical performance	
Number of performances	
Willing to be contacted	<b>False</b>

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## **This information sheet can be made available in large print and other formats on request. Please telephone 020 7422 8280.**

We hope you find this Making Music document useful - it is intended to give a reasonable summary of the position at the time of writing. If you are aware of any changes to the situation described or have suggestions for further information to be included please contact the Membership Services Team at Making Music 020 7422 8280 or [info@makingmusic.org.uk](mailto:info@makingmusic.org.uk). Please note that no responsibility for loss occasioned to any person or group acting or refraining from action as a result of any of the contents of this information sheet can be accepted by any of the authors or by Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies.

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