



Update from Director Sarah Alexander

**National
Youth Orchestra**
of Great Britain



Dear NYO Supporter,

Firstly may I say thank you to the many people who contacted me after last October's NYO Newsletter. I received a huge amount of perceptive and generous-spirited feedback, and discovered in the process that the NYO has a support base that is diverse, well-informed, opinionated, and as excited as I am by the challenges and opportunities that the future offers to the NYO and its brilliant young players.

In February we successfully re-located to bright & spacious offices in London. We're close to the Barbican, the Guildhall, the LSO, and St Luke's, so there is plenty of inspiration, and many exciting conversations to be had right on our doorstep. We'll be holding a series of formal and not-so-formal gatherings over the coming months, as part of our 60th Birthday celebrations and we are looking forward to inviting you to join us.

I found the passion for music-making of the young players on the Winter Course thoroughly intoxicating, and was thrilled by their commitment, supported by their tutors to mastering and articulating the pieces. At the same time I discovered the degree to which the NYO as an organisation is steeped in tradition and ritual. The students experienced several cross-arts workshops during the course, all of which were intended to engage the young players with the repertoire, and reveal it to them in new ways. Perhaps the most successful of these innovations was a workshop led by tenor Jeff Lloyd Roberts and members of the Opera North *Peter Grimes* production team. This revealed to me the readiness of members the Orchestra to engage with repertoire through the medium of song. So I am very excited that on our Spring Course Jeff is going to be in residence, leading daily vocal warm-ups in which all NYO-ers will explore the harmonic language of our repertoire, and gain confidence in using their voices as part of their developing musicianship.

This course culminated in sell-out concerts at the Camden Roundhouse and Leeds Town Hall. James Macmillan was touched by the Orchestra's openness to his music, and the dedication they showed in rehearsal and performance. Orchestra and audience were held in thrall by the tremendous drama of the *Symphony Vigil*. The intensity of the musical dialogue between our five brass soloists and the Orchestra was gripping and deeply moving. The NYO were the first orchestra to play in the Roundhouse since 1973. We were thrilled to have a full house, and the heart-felt controversy over the suitability of the acoustic for orchestral music added to the sense of event.

Our Spring Course will be held at Nottingham University. This is a break from precedent, NYO courses have generally been held at public schools. We're very excited about this, and so is the University, who have given us a warm welcome. Conducted by charismatic young Russian Vasily Petrenko (dir. LPO) the Orchestra will play Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs* (with soprano Gabriele

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Fontana), Ravel's *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales*, and the premiere of Mark Simpson's *Threads for Orchestra*, which was commissioned by the Musicians Benevolent Fund for NYO.

Mark is a 2007 graduate of both the NYO clarinet section, and the NYO Composers' Course. Led by Paul Patterson, the Composers' Course gives young composers the opportunity to write new music in dialogue with young players who are their like minded musical peers. Mark has come to know our Orchestra as a living musical organism, and *Threads for Orchestra* comes directly out of this knowledge. In his own words *'The NYO is a beacon of hope in today's society which seems to concern itself more and more with the promotion of mediocrity every day. It is a simple fact that what the NYO does is vitally important in keeping our rich and diverse musical life alive. It is simply one of the most important threads in the fabric of British musical life.'*

Arrive early at the Sage Gateshead, Symphony Hall or Barbican Hall and hear *Swing*, a concert inspired by dance rhythms, written by our current NYO composers and performed by NYO ensembles.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank both the Musicians Benevolent Fund and The Vardy Foundation for their support of concerts during our Spring season.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Alexander
Director, NYO

NYO SPRING 2008 CONCERTS – TICKET OFFERS

We have half price ticket offers for **students** and **young people** and special **family** ticket offers at each of our three concert venues. Please contact the relevant Box Office to book your tickets and to take advantage of these fabulous offers.