

Scotland rejigs youth orchestras

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The National Youth Orchestras of Scotland has revealed changes to its orchestral structures and age limits that will lead to a greater number of young people being involved in a larger number of courses from the 2013 season.

The National Children's Orchestra of Scotland, which admitted young players aged eight to 14, will cease to exist, but it will be replaced by two new orchestras: NYOS Junior Orchestra (eight to 13) and NYOS Senior Orchestra (for players aged 11 to 18). Furthermore, the flagship National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, which admits members from the age of 13, will increase its upper age limit from 21 to 25. The new Junior and Senior orchestras will meet for three courses per year, and NYOS will increase its activities from one to two courses per year, plus a summer tour.

NYOS chief executive Joan Gibson, who took on the position in May, explained the thinking behind the changes: 'When I first came into the post, I looked at the orchestras we had, but there seemed to be a gap in the middle: we'd lose players if they didn't progress from the Children's Orchestra to NYOS. I'm a great believer in educational pathways, and we needed to create a set of building blocks for the young players to aspire to. The age ranges of the new orchestras overlap so that if you are young and particularly able, we won't restrict you by saying you have to stay in the younger orchestra, and likewise if you're older but maybe don't make it into the flagship orchestra, there are still opportunities for you to enjoy music making up to a high level. Hopefully it will offer more opportunities to more people.'

The NYOS age range extension brings the

orchestra in line with other youth orchestras around the world, Ms Gibson argued, and is also intended to set even higher standards for the ensemble. 'It should encourage higher-profile conductors to come and work with us,' she said, 'and hopefully we can also push things further in terms of the repertoire we take on.'

NOYS's extensive jazz strand will remain as previously, and its two pre-professional ensembles – Camerata Scotland (now renamed NYOS Camerata) and contemporary music group NYOS Futures – will continue to invite members from the other orchestras.

'Application forms are out now for 2013, and young people applying will be working in this new structure,' said Ms Gibson. 'It's a very optimistic story – we're flying the flag for young musicians in Scotland, and we're looking forward to working with them.'