



"...an exploratory and explosive cocktail of free-thinking and originality." The Scotsman

Evaluation Report: New Music Biennial 2014



New Music Biennial is a UK wide celebration of new music which aims to support talented UK based composers and performers to collaborate and reach new audiences by creating new work and presenting it in an imaginative way. In 2014 it stimulated the creation and performance of 20 new pieces of music which were performed across the UK and brought together across weekend festivals in London and Glasgow.

This report summarises what we set out to do, what we've achieved in collaboration with twenty composers and commissioning organisations from across the UK, what we've learnt from this process and what we consider to be the lasting impact of New Music Biennial. It has been informed by evaluation forms submitted by the twenty participating commissioning organisations, along with feedback from key stakeholders and the results of research undertaken by the Audience Agency.

We hope you will be interested in reading about our findings – we are sharing them with all New Music Biennial partners and we welcome your feedback.

What we set out to do

Building on the success of our Cultural Olympiad programme, New Music 20x12, we launched the UK's first "New Music Biennial" to present a wide reaching, cross genre commissioning programme in response to the lack of any similar national platform in the UK. Part of our motivation was to explore the potential for a New Music Biennial to become a regular feature of the UK's arts calendar and a model through which we could develop our targeted support of UK composers and commissioning organisations.

The aims of New Music Biennial were:

- to celebrate and showcase the wealth of musical talent in the UK
- to inspire increased public interest in new music, through short commissions which would also form part of the Commonwealth Games cultural programme
- to raise the profile of UK composers and their works
- to strengthen working relationships between UK music creators and performers who are pushing the boundaries of our musical imagination.

New Music Biennial dates and core activities

An open call was launched in January 2013, selections were made in April 2013 and the twenty successful submissions were announced publicly later that month at Southbank Centre, London. The 20 new compositions were performed across the length and the breadth of the UK between January and August 2014. All of the commissions were also presented together across two weekends hosted by Southbank Centre from 4-6 July 2014 and by Glasgow Royal Concert Halls during the last weekend of the Commonwealth Games from 1-2 August 2014. All of the

works were covered by BBC Radio 3 between July and August 2014 on Hear and Now and on weekday evening slots around 21.30. To extend distribution of the works, New Music Biennial downloads are now available via NMC www.nmcrec.co.uk. A summary film which shows extracts from many of the works as they were performed at Southbank Centre and Glasgow Concert Halls is available on YouTube. See <http://youtu.be/rwDw6y7btxs>

Key achievements of our commissioning process

By inviting applications and selecting from a broad range of organisations from across the UK, we are proud of the following outcomes:

An inclusive recruitment process, open to any organisation based in the UK with an interest in commissioning new music: we received over 130 applications and entrusted the selection of the final twenty works to two independent expert panels. The final panel consisted of Cerys Matthews, Max Richter, Dame Evelyn Glennie, Gillian Moore, Svend Brown and Jason Yarde. The panel was chaired by Roger Wright, Controller of BBC Radio 3.

Selection of a broad range of projects reflecting a diverse new music community working across a range of genres: from voluntary, non professional groups such as Foden's Band and Jazz Re:Freshed, to cross-art form organisations like Artsdepot and The Sage Gateshead. Also involved were City of London Sinfonia and renowned folk artists Lau. **175** organisations and **57** venues were involved in the 20 New Music Biennial commissions.

High quality new music, supporting artist and audience development: this was acknowledged in press coverage, self and peer review from participating composers and feedback from stakeholders and audiences.

A dynamic introduction to new UK composers at different stages of their career: from established music creators such as Matthew Herbert, David Sawer and Stephen Montague to younger talent such as Dobrinka Tabakova, Samuel Bordoli, and Luke Styles. Also taking part were creators with a strong track record in jazz, folk and world music such as Mary Ann Kennedy, Lau and Bourne/Davis/Kane, alongside talented composers such as Niraj Chag and Jez Colbourne who have not previously participated in a music commissioning programme of this kind.

Engagement of talented collaborators from other art or music genres – including Lau's collaboration with Elysian Quartet, Dobrinka Tabakova and Jazz Refreshed's collaboration with filmmakers Ruth Paxton and Bunny Bread respectively, Gael Music's collaboration with Canadian step dancers and Zinny Harris' writing for sound festival's Stephen Montague commission for young people. A total of **46** performers from other art forms took part in New Music Biennial.

Artistic expressions of Commonwealth values and an exploration of identity and international collaboration as a theme including Watercolour music's commission with the Inverness Gaelic Choir and stories about the Highlands and Canada's Gaelic diaspora, Red Note Ensemble's collaboration with the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund and Niraj Chag's focus on his East African heritage. Several of the commissions were also performed outside of the UK e.g. Matthew Herbert's work has been performed at Bimhuis, Amsterdam for the Holland Festival and in PACT Zollverein, Essen, for the Ruhrtriennale. The RPS commission for film was presented at Cork Film Festival, Batumi International Art-House Film Festival (BIAFF) and Georgia Cucalorus Film Festival, Wilmington, North Carolina.

A strong and genuine UK wide partnership including involvement of stakeholders from all UK countries in the planning and selection process and the engagement of organisations and composers from all UK countries in both the London and Glasgow weekends. 75% of all New Music Biennial performances took place outside of London.

International awareness thanks to British Council's support of a visiting delegation of festival promoters and programmers from Europe to the Southbank Centre weekend. Third Ear promoters also said that "*The New Music Biennial's status as an international programme was key to taking our project, 20 Pianos, to major European festivals.*"

Key outcomes of our performance & broadcast programme

Our collaboration with 20 commissioning organisations from across the UK and with Southbank Centre (London), Royal Concert Halls (Glasgow), BBC Radio 3 and NMC Recordings enabled almost **100,000** people to enjoy live or broadcast performances of a New Music Biennial piece

Engagement of diverse audiences via unusual partnerships and venues across the UK: New Music Biennial reached over **23,500** people via **96** live performances across 57 venues across the UK. Venues ranged from concert halls, music and arts festivals to a skateboarding park, a shipping container and outdoor spaces.

Engagement of a large radio audience via two BBC Radio 3, Hear and Now broadcasts and six weekday evening broadcasts reaching a total of c.**76,000** listeners per week, plus news items, interviews and performances on the breakfast show and In Tune. Matthew Herbert's performance for Holland Festival was covered on Dutch radio and the Ruhrtriennale performances were covered on both German and Dutch TV.

Legacy and digital access thanks to the downloads available via NMC Recordings website which received an average of 5,000 unique visitors and 12,000 page views per month during the year. Almost **1000** downloads have been purchased from the 20 commissions recorded at the Southbank and Glasgow weekends.

Engagement of new audiences – 54% of audiences interviewed at the London and Glasgow weekends said this was their first new music event and 44% of these people said that their experience of the New Music Biennial would encourage them to seek out new music in the future.

Audience enjoyment - 92% of those interviewed rated the weekends as very good or good & overall the words used to describe the weekend were "interesting," "different," "enjoyable," and "inspiring."

Participation of 150 professional performers and 152 non professional performers who worked together on the creation and performance of new music.

Participation of 28 young people (under-18s) in performances via commissions by Sage Gateshead and Tete a Tete Opera.

Learning & participation opportunities for all ages including **57** workshops with over 500 attendees.

Unique weekend celebrations at Southbank Centre (21 performances and 5 workshops and 6588 attenders) and **Glasgow** (20 performances and 4600 attenders) which attracted a diverse audience, alongside networking and learning opportunities for participants. The approach to programming at both weekend festivals was flexible and open, encouraging audiences to move between different spaces inside and outside of the concert halls to experience the commissions. All pieces were 15 minutes or less in duration to help with this flexibility.

Enhanced profile of the new music and UK composers involved thanks to a strong PR strategy which created 93 press entries and “Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE)” of **£964,450.84**.

The amount levered by New Music Biennial grantees from other sources totalled £163,161.

Significant promotion and professional development opportunities through BBC Radio 3 recordings and broadcasts, experience of taking part in a UK wide initiative and experience of commissioning a composer for organisations with no specialist experience of this process.



Music sector development

Professional and artistic development for all involved stimulated by the open call approach which enabled each composer and organisation to work to a specific brief, without interference from the funder but with clear guidelines on duration and performance format

“The experience gave me a chance to experiment in something completely new and different. It pushed my limits and challenged me along the way, especially having to stick to 15 minutes.” **Jez Colbourne, Composer**

“The Biennial gave me an opportunity to explore the stories and ideas that I wanted to. The freedom and trust in my creative vision that I was given was the most beautiful part of it. Thank you!” **Nirag Chag, Composer**

“Every new composition is a learning experience but given the tight brief for this, an excellent challenge to condense many ambitious ideas into a tight 15 minute event. The work has drawn very positive response including an excellent review. Several European and North American venues have downloaded the work recently and asked to see the score.” **Stephen Montague, Composer**

“This project challenged and extended my practice at every level, being the first in which determining of the very substance and course of my music was shared with performing artists; in my previous experience the role of the performer has been

interpretative, through the realization of my score, but Bourne Davis Kane expected to take a creative role, one in which each performance expanded on the previous..”

Piers Hellowell, Composer

New contacts and points of reference for participating composers and performers created by the cross genre network of organisations and the coming together of all participants at the launch and Southbank/Glasgow weekends

“Through our involvement in the New Music Biennial, we have started a relationship with the Southbank Centre, who were impressed by our commission and we are making plans for future co-productions.” **Jazz Re:freshed**

“We have made strong bonds with other artists and promoters/arts professionals as a result of this, and learnt a huge amount about combining traditional music with classical elements.” **Lau**

Opportunities for groups and composers based in different parts of the UK – 8 groups and 12 composers from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland showcased their work in London at the Southbank weekend. 14 groups and 14 composers from England, Wales and NI had a chance to showcase their work in Glasgow during the Commonwealth Games.

“The UK wide nature of the partnership, combined with the involvement of all the partners, felt extremely valuable to us – allowing us to reach a much wider audience for the project, as well as the festival in general.” **Edinburgh Art Festival**

“Being able to use the Commonwealth Games branding and be a part of such a huge international event was fantastic for both Jez and Mind The Gap’s profile.”

Mind The Gap

New contracts for composers and freelance arts professionals – an estimated **550** freelance jobs and **552** work days were created for composers and arts professionals who were contracted by the participating organisations.

Opportunities to take part as a volunteer – a total of **40** non-professional staff donated their time to New Music Biennial. Also **152** non-professional performers took part and 2 commissioning projects were led by non-professional voluntary organisations.

A different type of audience for new music – the informal nature of the Southbank Centre encouraged new audiences to experiment and participate in new music, resulting in a different demographic from the traditional audience for contemporary music concerts. In Glasgow, people attending were more likely to be regular attenders of the venue and responded positively to programming of new music.

A strong public/private sector network of supporters including sponsorship from Google for our digital content, support from a range of Trusts and Foundations and a particularly strong commitment from the core partners – Arts Council England, Creative Scotland and British Council.

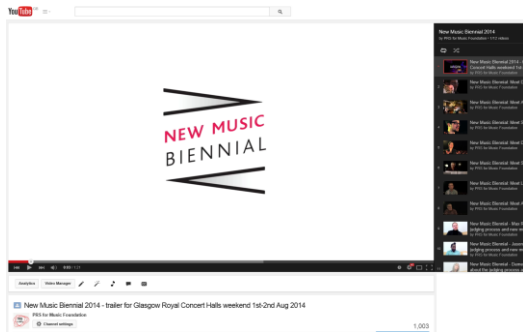


Lasting benefit and impact

When we launched New Music Biennial we placed a strong emphasis on the following long-term outcomes:

- high quality repertoire which will be performed long after the programme has ended
- additional work for participating composers e.g. extended or new commissions which increase composer earnings and open up new opportunities
- online documentation of performances and project activity including recordings which will be promoted after the programme has ended
- a vibrant network of composers, performers and music organisations
- increased profile for new music across the UK and for the emerging composers involved.

Examples of how these outcomes are being achieved have been noted throughout this evaluation. In addition, we will monitor the extent of the New Music Biennial legacy by continuing to track repeat performances of New Music Biennial, any follow-up work for composers, visitors to our website and YouTube portal, future projects which are stimulated by connections made through the London/Glasgow events and how our programme's impact aligns with other Commonwealth programmes. As a funder, we also expect those who were selected for New Music Biennial to feel more confident about applying for PRSF funds for individuals and organisations. To date this includes new applications from Jazz Re:Freshed, Royal Philharmonic Society and Artsdepot.



What we've learnt from the process

PRSF for Music Foundation and steering group partners have learnt a lot from facilitating and managing this ambitious and wide reaching initiative and as part of our evaluation we have identified the following strengths:

The importance of providing a platform which presents all kinds of new music:

Shifting conventional definitions of "new music" and associated value judgements was a goal of this programme and the programming at the London and Glasgow weekends have enabled us to start breaking down these barriers.

The impact of a strong and mixed partnership: the involvement of the 20 commissioning organisations (alongside 155 partner organisations) with a broadcaster, record label, leading national promoters (SBC and Glasgow Concert Halls), strong network of private/public funding partners and lead agency (PRSF) facilitated the reach, status and potential legacy of this networked project.

The benefits of a clear and restrictive brief in the process of funding and commissioning: the time limit of up to 15 minutes enabled each piece to be performed twice during the weekend festivals, and may help the pieces to be repeated more frequently in the future. The short duration also made new music more accessible to non specialist audiences and may have increased the quality of musical experience overall.

Responding to a gap in the current cultural landscape: New Music Biennial was established because no other UK wide festival presents new music in its diversity with an emphasis on reaching out to new audiences. The mix of participants was empowering for many of those involved.

The role a flexible funder can play in stimulating new work, creating a UK network and helping organisations to promote their achievements: by supporting commissions in this hub and spoke way, with strong funding and delivery partners, enables us meet our charitable objectives and offer something unique to the sector.

We also identified the following challenges which will help inform how we sustain the legacy of New Music Biennial:

Attracting full range of applications to an open call: some of the groups and ensembles that could add value to a nationwide exploration of new music did not apply to the call and it is more likely they might participate as partners or if given the opportunity to programmes existing work.

The challenge of supporting 20 groups of varying levels, some with limited experience of commissioning composers: the range of experience amongst

“The New Music Biennial 2014 was an unbelievable and epic experience which showcased my music. Gift really did what I set out to do – it made people think differently about music, about where music can be made, and about what people with learning disabilities can achieve.” **Jez Colborne, Composer**

“This is a “new” audience for Jez and Mind The Gap’s work and this is a very important endorsement for the quality and innovation of the work.” **Mind the Gap**

“Being a part of the Biennial project extended our organisation and allowed us access to audiences we wouldn’t have normally connected with. It also gave us a platform and an opportunity to put the brand of music and creative film that we love in the spotlight.” **Jazz Re:Freshed**

“This initiative enabled us to work with a local composer in a meaningful way, exploring a cultural story that might otherwise not be told, and leaving a legacy of a new work plus collaborative relationships, which can inspire further work in the future. None of this would have been possible without the New Music Biennial.” **Kerry Andrews, Artsdepot**

“The New Music Biennial was a great international showcase and platform for new work, and enabled us to commission a more complex and ambitious project than we would ordinarily have been able to attempt.it gave us the opportunity to connect with a large number of organisations united with a common purpose – to create new and dynamic musical collaborations.” **Royal Philharmonic Society**

Press quotes

“...charming and uplifting, it made you want to dance.” Observer

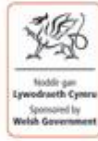
“The event, focused on cross-genre couplings, was infused with a sense of free-wheeling creativity...” BBC Classical Music Magazine

“...inviting the curious to roll up and try each for size: rather like a summer fete, everyone rushing out of one sideshow desperate to find where the next thrill lay.”
The Scotsman

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