**The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland’s contribution to teaching music to children in Scotland**

The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland contributes to teaching music to children in Scotland in several key ways.

**Teaching of NYPBoS Members**

The NYPBoS Development and Senior bands each have 4 rehearsal weekends per annum spread throughout the year. Members are provided music during January – March before attending the first rehearsal weekend in April. The tunes and recordings are provided to members via Dropbox and members are expected to learn the music independently. Rehearsal weekends focus on the finer technical aspects of the tunes – e.g. musical expression, playing together as an ensemble, striking the correct balance in terms of harmonies. The basic learning of the music is done at home, either independently or, for lesser experienced members, with help and guidance from their private tutors.

***Development Band***

Senior Band members are appointed leaders/mentors of the Development Band and, under the tutelage of the NYPBoS Director, lead the band through a rehearsal. These members consist of 1 x Pipe Major, 2 x Pipe Sergeants, 2 x Pipe Corporals, 1 x Drum Sergeant and 1 x Tenor mentor. Their role is to perform alongside the members of the Development Band, providing key learnings and feedback to encourage the young members. This serves two purposes:-

1. It creates a strong link between the Development and Senior bands. It eases the transition for a Development Band member who is promoted to the Senior Band as they will already have built friendships with some of the Senior Band members. This has proven successful in helping young players settle into the more demanding environment of a Senior Band rehearsal and they have developed more quickly as a result.
2. It gives the Senior Band members an opportunity to develop their teaching, coaching and leadership skills. Most of these individuals will be between the age of 17 and 20 – a very young age to learn skills which most people do not have a chance to learn and practice until later in life. The NYPBoS prides itself in creating opportunities not only to improve an individual’s musical skills but also to learn key life skills –
   1. independent learning (music)
   2. inter-personal and social skills
   3. self-management (managing their time to travel to practices without parents; managing a small budget of pocket money at lunchtimes and evenings; getting to bed and setting alarm to ensure they are on time in the morning for rehearsals)
   4. coaching and teaching of others
   5. leadership (for Band Officers) and managing peers

***Senior Band***

Six members are appointed into leadership positions which collectively forms the band officers – 2 x Pipe Majors, 2 x Pipe Sergeants, 1 x Drum Sergeant and 1 x Drum Corporal.

In addition to the teaching of the musical arrangements for each of the band’s sets, the Director will use the band officers to help them learn and develop the following core skills:-

* Listening critically and appraising performance
* Providing constructive feedback to promote change
* Time management – running a rehearsal to a set plan and ensuring timings are adhered to
* Listening to the needs of others (e.g. for the Pipe Major, they need to check that the drummers and backing team are happy or whether sets need to be re-run)
* Managing a large number of members and adapting to their differing personalities – for example, some people respond positively to harsh critique whilst others lose confidence and therefore you need to adapt how you deliver your feedback dependent on the target audience
* Delegation – assigning key tasks to other members (e.g. setting chanters)

**Teaching of other young pipers and drummers in Scotland**

The teaching of other pipers and drummers (non-members of the NYPBoS) is primarily delivered through the band’s Outreach programmes. These are 3 day trips to remote areas of Scotland where young people do not have ready access to a range of tuition options or top pipe band performances. During the NYPBoS’ visit to a region they will lead teaching workshops and also perform a small concert. In the last 9 years the NYPBoS have held Outreach events in Melrose, Musselburgh, Thurso, Wick, Kirkwall (Orkney), Stornoway (Lewis), Uist, Barra, Perth, Aberdeen and Inverness. Throughout these events the NYPBoS has reached almost 1000 young pipers and drummers in Scotland. Many of these children have gone on to successfully audition for a place in the NYPBoS – a clear indicator that these events are very worthwhile.

**Success Factors**

Overall, the National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland has had a very positive impact on the teaching of music to children in Scotland, both to its members and through its members.

Membership of the project brings together children from different geographic and socio-economic backgrounds, children with different teaching backgrounds and from different pipe bands. The Youth Band becomes a melting pot of their experiences and makes it a truly unique project. The members share their positive and negative personal experiences (of tuition received) and develop their own best methods which they can then put into practice at one of the NYPBoS teaching events.

The NYPBoS goes beyond the teaching of music and is a vital part of a young person’s core life development, per those areas highlighted earlier.

By Alisdair McLaren, February 2017