



# *Analysis & Review of Scottish Young Musicians 2022*



SCOTTISH  
YOUNG  
MUSICIANS

[www.scottishyoungmusicians.com](http://www.scottishyoungmusicians.com)

*“Scottish Young Musicians was an absolute highlight of the past academic year. We have been absolutely buzzing about this new opportunity for our young musicians, and already have been asked by some of our youngsters about next year’s competition! What an achievement! Bring on next year! We can’t wait!”*

— HEAD OF INSTRUMENTAL SERVICE, ANGUS COUNCIL

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## Aims & Objectives

The aim of Scottish Young Musicians was to offer every school student, who plays a musical instrument or sings, a platform to compete against like-minded students to achieve their musical ambitions, develop their life-skills and have fun. After the major disruption to music lessons and performance opportunities from the COVID-19 pandemic, Scottish Young Musicians has offered students a high-quality music experience and given them something to work towards to achieve their ambitions.

All thirty-two Scottish local authorities and independent schools were invited to participate. A total of twenty-two authorities, covering over 75% of the population, took part in the competition, including four out of the five most deprived areas of Scotland. The uptake was due to the support that each local authority had from SYM staff. Over two hundred schools participated in the regional competitions which led to the finals. Given the backdrop of COVID - 19, most observers considered the first year's outturn to be a considerable success.

A key objective was to remove barriers for all students, especially those in low socio-economic areas of Scotland, giving them an equal opportunity to participate in these wonderful competitions. Additional support was offered to any students who needed extra assistance to participate. We believe that the outcome was highly favourable. While it would be impossible to list comprehensively all that benefitted, it's worth drawing reference to a couple of examples.

One promising student from a deprived area had no piano at home on which to practice. Appreciating their potential, the Scottish Young Musicians' network mustered support and one was delivered.

One very talented finalist decided to change their career path and is now looking to apply to university to study musical theatre rather than attend a local college. Previously this student did not feel confident to make this leap but, following their success in the competition, feels empowered to make this life changing decision.

We were overwhelmed by offers of support from across the music fraternity of Scotland and beyond and with this we were able to craft career-changing opportunities. These ranged from studio recordings, masterclasses, behind the scenes visits to orchestras with the participation of some of the best musicians in the country. We are indebted to our music partners including Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Scottish Ensemble, the Dunedin Consort, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music, and the Cumnock Tryst. We gratefully received support from Stringers, Band Supplies and Haydock Music who provided equipment prizes and the Corner Shop PR, the Incorporated Society of Musicians and Virgin Money/ Clydesdale Bank. Although this allowed all twenty-two finalists to be offered a prize, the participation by so many, at all levels, was the achievement that we are most proud of.

# The Competitions

## Analysis

COVID – 19 was still causing a significant disruption in schools but, despite this restriction, 82% of the local authorities managed to hold their own regional competition to select their finalists. The other authorities who took part selected their finalist in other ways such as video entries and nominations.

Each authority set their own criteria for selecting their finalists for their regional competition -

- Higher/Advanced Higher pupils were invited to audition
- Instrumental Teacher recommendation
- Faculty Head recommendation
- Pupils were invited to audition
- Schools held their own competition

For many authorities, their regional competition was the first 'live' event they had hosted for over two years and some events had audiences of hundreds – a welcome return to normality.

## Evaluation Feedback from Finalists

Feedback from finalists was as follows -

- 100% were satisfied with the organisation of the competition
- 93% were satisfied with the communication
- 100% were satisfied with the venue rehearsal space
- 100% were satisfied with the pre competition rehearsal time
- 100% were satisfied with the competition venue

The finalists reported the following principal benefit following participating in the competition -

|                                       |   |     |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----|
| <span style="color: blue;">■</span>   | Increased musical skill                 | 26% |
| <span style="color: orange;">■</span> | Increased confidence                    | 37% |
| <span style="color: teal;">■</span>   | Increased mental wellbeing/health       | 7%  |
| <span style="color: yellow;">■</span> | New connections with other young people | 30% |



## Quotes from Finalists

The finalists were asked what competing in the competition meant to them personally -

*It has given me a good and new experience and has also helped improve my confidence playing in front of others.*

*Scottish Young Musicians has given me the opportunity to perform in public and experience the feelings associated with that. I also learnt a lot from the other performers many of whom were more experienced in this area than I was.*

*It made me so appreciative of the hard work I have put in to be on the same level as Scotland's top musicians.*

*Being part of a national event of this scale was incredibly exciting and an honour to be a part of alongside great performers and high-profile judges plus Nicola. It is by far the highlight of my musical career so far and a great showcase for Scotland.*

*Allowed me to perform in a professional environment and showcase my artistry.*

*I took on the competition to try get over anxieties about musical performance and the competition definitely helped me with that and it also made me more confident in my musical ability and helped me stop underestimating myself.*

*It was a great experience for me as someone who only plays the piano for a hobby. It was amazing to play in front of musical people in a great venue on an amazing instrument.*

*The competition was a great opportunity to perform and gave me a chance to play to people I normally wouldn't. It also gave me a taste of the music world and better prepared me for a career in music.*

*It has made me look forward to more performance opportunities in my future. And has helped me gain more confidence.*

*A good chance to perform for an audience.*

*A means to focus my practice in order to work towards something.*

*It was an amazing opportunity, I loved meeting others who had a passion for music, and I was truly moved by the talent and kindness showed by everybody, competitor or else, the most unforgettable event.*






*It gave me an opportunity to play to a live audience after a few years due to Covid which I really appreciated, and I was able to meet a lot of other young musicians too which is always a great experience. So much thought and effort was put into the competition and every part of it was incredible.*

*All other music competitions I have competed in have had small audiences and were very informal so getting to compete in such a large competition was a once in a lifetime experience. I have learned a lot about how to present myself in a performance and how to look professional.*

The final question we asked the finalists and the most important one – did you enjoy taking part in the competition and 100% of the finalists did.

## Evaluation Feedback from Music Educators

Staff felt that the predominant benefits for the young people participating in the competition were formed of the following categories.

|  |   |     |
|--|---|-----|
|  | Increased musical skill                 | 23% |
|  | Increased confidence                    | 27% |
|  | Increased mental wellbeing/health       | 17% |
|  | New connections with other young people | 24% |
|  | Other                                   | 7%  |



Comments from staff have been extremely encouraging and some shared a few examples of the benefits they have experienced with their students -

*A pupil who represented their school in the local authority final had never had the confidence to take part in local authority activities previously. This has given her the confidence to join one of the local authority bands in next school session.*

*One competitor who was really nervous about performing and has never played a solo performance overcame her nerves and really shone.*

The authorities who participated this year have all confirmed they want to be involved again next year. From the twelve authorities who did not participate, nine said they plan to take part next year and three said they may do. No authority has said they do not want to be involved.

Feedback from music educators has been positive.

*The support from Mae [Murray] and her team running SYM has been absolutely superb. We pass our thanks and biggest of 'congratulations' on to them for their running of this year's competition - What an achievement! Bring on next year! We can't wait!*

*This event was a wonderful celebration and helped publicise and recognise musical achievement throughout Scotland.*

*The competition was very well organised, the young people who took part thoroughly enjoyed all steps and were very supportive of one another at each stage.*

*Nothing bad to report at all. Communication, organisation, local event, and Final were all excellent. Inverclyde were delighted to be part of it. Thanks Again.*

## The Final

The Scottish Young Musicians Solo Performer of the Year Competition took place on Sunday 29 May 2022 in the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS), Glasgow. Twenty-two finalists from across Scotland took part in the culmination of the year-long competition and the standard of musicianship was truly exceptional. The event was sold-out.

The Final started with a welcome video from world renowned violinist **Nicola Benedetti**. Nicola is a great supporter of music education throughout the UK and her encouragement and enthusiasm got the event off to a fabulous start.

Following an outstanding performance of Debussy's Claire de Lune, the winner was 14-year-old pianist Juliet Robertson from Stirling. Juliet was presented with the Maid of Morven trophy, courtesy of the sculptor **Alexander Stoddart**, along with additional career enhancing prizes.

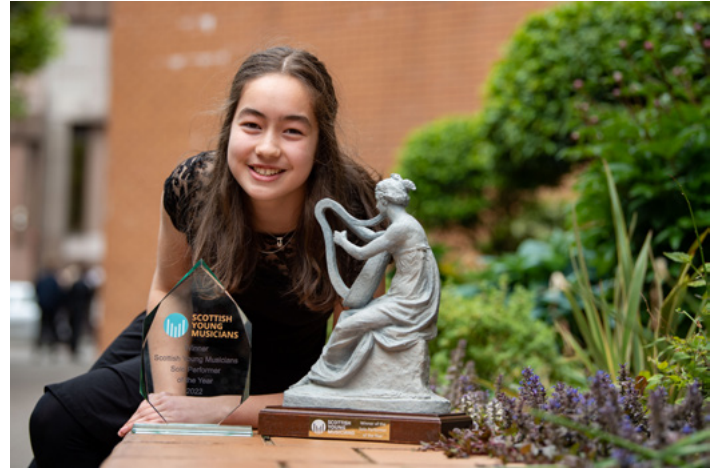
Juliet said -

*"I was really shocked to hear my name called as the winner and I don't think it's sunk in yet! I wasn't even expecting to win my regional final, so to be holding this trophy now feels incredible. Everyone else was amazing and performed so well, I can't believe I'm the first Scottish Young Musicians Solo Performer of the Year!"*

The Runners Up were Ben Dickson (French Horn) from East Renfrewshire and Yuan Wong (Accordion) from Renfrewshire.

[Click here to watch a 2 minute clip](#)

[Click here to watch the full competition](#)



A panel of adjudicators of international standing comprised of -

- **Christopher Bell**, Artistic Director of National Youth Choirs of Scotland and Chorus Director of The Grant Park Music Festival, Chicago
- **Heather Nicoll**, Head of Woodwind at the RCS
- Renowned violinist, **Jennifer Pike MBE**, a former BBC Young Musician of the Year winner
- **Aaron Shorr**, soloist, chamber musician, educator

The compere for the Final was celebrated BBC Proms presenter and opera singer **Jamie MacDougall**. Jamie took the time to put all the finalists at ease and gave each of them a lovely introduction before they took to the stage. His professionalism and personality kept the whole day moving smoothly and effortlessly. He has agreed to return next year and we hope even more will be televised.

SYM also ran the online Scottish Young Musicians Brass Ensemble of the Year Competition.

In 2020/21 Brass Ensembles were still severely restricted due to COVID – 19 making the competition much smaller but the benefits were nonetheless demonstrated. The winner was Stranraer Brass, who gave a stellar performance during at the Scottish Young Musicians Solo Performer of the Year final at the RCS on the 29th May 2022.

The highly respected adjudicators were -

- **John Wallace**, recipient of the Queens Music Medal and Convener of the Music Education Partnership Group.
- **Arlene Macfarlane**, Director of Scottish Schools Orchestra Trust.
- **John Miller**, former Head of Wind and Percussion at the Royal Northern College of Music

*"I want to thank our young Scottish brass players and their teachers directly for an amazingly positive musical experience. Collectively your performances were brimming with a wonderful sense of enthusiasm, and you all make really beautiful healthy sounds. With young players so full of potential as this, the future is bright!"*

— JOHN WALLACE

*"I am so proud of these talented young musicians and am so happy to see their hard work being rewarded!"*

— ANGELA MILLER, CONDUCTOR OF STRANRAER BRASS





# Press & Media Coverage

Over 250 articles appeared in a variety of publications including: The Herald, The Scotsman, Daily Record, Paisley Daily Express, Irvine Times, The Falkirk Herald, Greenock Telegraph, Midlothian Advertiser, Perthshire Advertiser and Stirling Observer.



## North Ayrshire Council's Press Coverage

Articles in the Irvine Herald & Kilwinning Chronicle and the Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald 5 April 2022



## Perth and Kinross Council's Press Coverage

Two-page feature in the Perthshire Advertiser 27 May 2022

As the competition approached radio coverage gathered momentum with an interview with Alan Kerr, Chair of Scottish Young Musicians, on Radio Scotland's Classics Unwrapped and a feature on the competition on Jamie MacDougall's Getting To Know You afternoon show.

STV News at 6 reported on the final and showed a clip of the winning performance.



Stirling Observer 1 June 2022

Two-page article



The Scotsman - 30 May 2022

## Finances

The budget for 2021/2022 forecast an expected expenditure of marginally over £70,000, against which donations of £71,181 were received. SYM encountered overspend on publicity and associated venue costs for the final and underspend on grants to local authorities. Most of our other estimates were in line with forecast. Overall SYM was left with a surplus of around £14,000 which we will carry forward to next year allowing for the creation of some reserves. We were highly satisfied with this outturn which was largely as a result of the prudent management of our limited resources.

*“I was so excited to see the initial success of the new competition last year. I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the enthusiasm and commitment of all the young people taking part in this and in subsequent years, from their school competitions through to the national final. It’s clear that the initiative is growing and will attract ever wider attention among our school community and in the wider musical world.”*

— SIR JAMES MACMILLAN

To find out more about Scottish Young Musicians, visit

[www.scottishyoungmusicians.com](http://www.scottishyoungmusicians.com)

or find us on social media



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