



**Laura Ayoub, from Bearsden has been playing the violin since she was eight years old and in addition to being a talented violinist, Laura also plays the piano and sings. She has participated in The National Children's Orchestra of Scotland (NCOS), a symphony orchestra for up to 120 children and young people aged between 8 and 14, since 2007.**

Laura, now aged 14, first participated in The National Children's Orchestra of Scotland's (NCOS) Easter Course and Concerts in 2007 when she was just 12 years old and at first she did not know anyone but said 'it was really easy to socialise and make friends.' During the NCOS Easter Course and Concerts 2010 Laura was not only leading the second violins but would also direct the section in rehearsals when the tutor was running late. Laura was really pleased to have this opportunity, which she believes has helped her to understand how to lead an orchestral section well as well as offering help to her section when they need it. Thanks to this experience Laura feels she is 'a lot more confident' about her leadership skills.

One of the things that Laura most enjoys about NCOS courses is coming together with like-minded people. She also feels that every year her standard of playing improves and she gains more techniques, as a result of the specialist tuition she receives. Laura enjoys using the social time on NCOS courses to catch up with friends made on previous courses and to make new ones but will usually spend her spare time doing something musical, She says she particularly likes 'having a jam with friends' and informal rehearsing.

Laura also enjoys practising at home, saying that she doesn't see it as a chore, more of a duty and similarly during NCOS courses she enjoys the rehearsal periods when she can play alongside friends. Additionally Laura likes "getting into a piece of music" saying that "it takes you to a different place especially if it is an intense piece, it just makes you forget everything around you."

Laura is also keen to learn new music, which NCOS provides during each course, where she is always impressed by the high standard of playing of the orchestra. When asked if she gets nervous performing in front of an audience she says she must "find a way of blocking everything out but, as I perform, it becomes more easy." Laura is especially grateful that being part of NCOS allows her to perform in such fantastic venues such as Edinburgh's Usher Hall, which she describes as "such a beautiful building where it is a privilege to play."

Now that Laura has reached the upper age range for the Children's Orchestra, she plans to apply for a place in The National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, the flagship orchestra that performs internationally. It is clear therefore that Laura has learned much from just three years of participating in NCOS; she has made many new friends, felt her confidence rise and enjoyed the camaraderie of performing alongside fellow NCOS students. Laura will surely also benefit from participation in the Youth Orchestra and continue to reap the rewards that participation in NYOS orchestras affords its students'.

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