

**\*\*PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE\*\***

**ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD, ENDOWMENT TRUST, CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND STAFF OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRAS OF SCOTLAND (NYOS)**

It is with great sadness that we announce the sudden passing of our dear friend and former Chief Executive, Richard Chester. Richard was a visionary within music education in Scotland and beyond, always striving to create more opportunities for young musicians in both classical and jazz. He will be greatly missed, and our thoughts are with his family and friends at this very difficult time.

***“Richard carried himself with such dignity, but I always found him very approachable. Even when I first auditioned for NYOS at 13, I felt like I was taken very seriously and respected. He treated everyone with the same courtesy and consideration, and that will be one of his hallmarks.”*** Colin Currie, Percussionist

Born and educated in Yorkshire, and a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music in London, Richard came to Scotland in 1967 to join the Scottish National Orchestra and for 14 years he was its principal flautist. In 1987 he left to take the reins at the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland (initially as Administrator, and latterly Chief Executive). He stayed in that role for twenty years, leaving behind an incredible musical and educational legacy. He grew the opportunities available for young musicians, expanding the pathway to include the NYOS Children’s Orchestra as well as the pre-professional Camerata. At the same time, he broadened those opportunities by introducing the Jazz Orchestra and programme.

***“Under Richard’s leadership, NYOS Jazz was both supported and nurtured, as he allowed it the creative freedom to expand and excel, year after year. He will be greatly missed.”***

Andrew Bain, Senior Lecturer in Jazz at the Birmingham Conservatoire and Director of Jazz for the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland

Always keen to ensure that Scotland’s young musicians could receive international recognition and experience, he organised many overseas tours, as well as being a founder member of the European Federation of National Youth Orchestras and the World Federation of Amateur Orchestras.

***“Richard Chester was a giant in everything he did - a fiercely intelligent man and a visionary, he had an impact on the lives of so many young people in Scotland. Generations of musicians have spoken of the guidance and generosity they received from him. Richard was someone for whom I had the utmost admiration and respect. He will be sadly missed.”*** Nick Žekulin, Chief Executive and Artistic Director, National Youth Orchestras of Scotland

After retiring as Chief Executive, he went on to Chair the NYOS Endowment Trust, a position he held until 2019. Richard was also made a fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in 2003, but perhaps his greatest legacy is to be found in the lives of the countless musicians he influenced, supported and guided throughout his life.

***“Richard was involved with NYOS Endowment Trust from the outset; since 1998 the Trust has awarded nearly £900,000 to support NYOS’s valuable work with the young musicians to whom Richard devoted his creativity and energy for over 40 years. He will be sorely missed.”*** Alayne Swanson, Chair of NYOS Endowment Trust

Without Richard Chester’s vision the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland would not be the unique, robust and accessible organisation it is today, and there would be no jazz programme to partner the classical pathway he pioneered.

***“If it had not been for his vision and determination, NYOS Jazz would never have come into being. Richard approached me in 1990 about the possible setting up of a Jazz Course. After the first one had taken place, I remember saying to him ‘Well you can now get on with the real NYOS’ and he replied, ‘This IS the real NYOS’ - and he really believed in it.”***  
Richard Michael, Artistic Director of Jazz at NYOS 1996-2001

It feels somewhat fitting that in 2021 we will celebrate 25 years of both the Children’s Orchestra (now Junior Orchestra) and Jazz education and performance at NYOS. A year in which we had already planned to mark Richard’s pivotal role in introducing Jazz to NYOS and to innumerable young musicians and celebrate his fantastic musical and educational legacy in Scotland and beyond. We are deeply saddened that this celebration will now be in his memory rather than along with this gracious and kind gentleman, but celebrate we will!

***“Richard was universally respected and loved by all who met him and for those who have served on the NYOS board, he has been a supportive and inspirational presence for over 40 years. He inspired generations of young aspiring musicians to be their best. From my personal perspective as a NYOS alumna through to my appointment as Chair, he has been a reassuring figure and has helped me and many others on our different career paths through life. We will all miss him very much.”*** Lindsay Pell, Senior Producer, BBC Scotland and Chair of the NYOS Board

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**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**Alan Simpson, Chair of NYOS Board 2000-2011**

During his 20 years at the helm of NYOS, Richard Chester transformed it from an organisation with one orchestra to one with some eight different ensembles making it the envy of most other countries. Overseas trips were a regular feature with many concerts performed in Europe but also as far afield as China. In all of these trips the musicians were acclaimed as wonderful ambassadors for Scotland. Richard was always a joy to work with because he was able to combine the attributes of a top-quality musician with a brilliant administrator. He engaged and managed inspirational conductors and soloists but at all times the organisation kept functioning smoothly. His ability to spot young talent was exemplified when he appointed Nicola Benedetti as leader of the first Children's Orchestra even though she was one of the youngest players.

**Dr. Renate Böck, President, European Federation of National Youth Orchestras (EFNYO)**

Richard was an incredibly supportive, kind and honest person, who shaped EFNYO with his unique personality full of optimism, expertise, and energy. I am thinking of the many occasions at which he gave the right direction for EFNYO's development and for the well-being of its members and young musicians. In view of this sad news, I am glad that he was able to accept our invitation to join us at last year's General Assembly in Bucharest to celebrate 25 years of EFNYO. We will truly honour his achievements and keep fond memories of him as a great person, dear friend and mentor for the arts.

**Curated social media messages:** <https://www.nyos.co.uk/news/in-memory-of-richard-chester-30062020>

**About NYOS:**

The National Youth Orchestras of Scotland is unique in providing a complete orchestral experience for its students aged between 8 and 25, through its comprehensive pathway of orchestras, jazz bands, training ensembles and an ever-expanding outreach programme. In addition to organising residential training programmes, intensive rehearsals and national and international concert tours, The National Youth Orchestras of Scotland is committed to introducing musical experiences to Scotland's young people through workshops in communities throughout the country.

Our ensembles inspire audiences with their outstanding skill, youthful energy and panache. Audiences marvel at the powerful sound of our large-scale orchestras, appreciate the intimacy of our smaller chamber ensembles and delight in the fresh and uplifting performances given by our jazz bands.

We believe in the future of Scotland's next generation of musicians. Our students are proud to play with Scotland's National Youth Orchestras and we are passionate about nurturing and developing their talent.



**Patrons**

The National Youth Orchestras of Scotland (NYOS) - HRH, The Earl of Forfar, KG GCVO ADC

NYOS Symphony Orchestra - Sir James MacMillan, CBE

NYOS Jazz Orchestra - Liane Carroll

NYOS Senior Orchestra - Colin Currie

NYOS Junior Orchestra - Nicola Benedetti, CBE

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