

Music for Youth Season Guidelines

Music for Youth (MFY) offers young people the opportunity to perform live in music festivals across the UK, celebrating the breadth of music-making by young people both in and out of school. The MFY season is designed to inspire musicians at every level of experience, in a supportive environment.

MFY encourages a festival atmosphere at all its events. There are, however, stages of progression within the season between the Regional Festival Series, National Festival, Special Projects including MFY Exchange, Frequencies and the New Music Stage and the Music for Youth Proms through a carefully considered selection process. Typically, in any one year, 1,500 groups (c. 40,000 young musicians) take part in our Regional Festival Series, with up to 300 groups then being invited to perform at our National Festival in Birmingham and up to 40 groups invited to our annual Music for Youth Prom concerts at London's Royal Albert Hall.

Inevitably, we have to disappoint many musicians as we make our decisions as to who will progress. We have therefore provided some guidance below to explain how these decisions are made and hope that they will help all participating groups understand better how the process works. We hope that everyone will enjoy participating in our festivals, be inspired by the performances of other groups and learn from the feedback of our Music Mentors. All our Music Mentors are working musicians, whose role at MFY events is to listen to all the performances and provide constructive written and verbal feedback, as well as useful next steps.

Regional Festival Series

- Open to any young musicians aged 21 or under, in a group of two or more
- No minimum performance standard
- All musical genres welcome
- Online entry opens in the autumn at mfy.org.uk for festivals in the following January-April
- Festival performance slots are allocated using a formula to try and balance the high demand for places while enabling new groups to experience the events. This policy can be found at <http://www.mfy.org.uk/media/1097/regional-festival-allocations-2016.pdf>
- All groups perform alongside each other, regardless of musical style, ability or age
- MFY Music Mentors give constructive feedback to all performing groups (verbal and written)

All participating groups are encouraged to listen to and support other musicians. Depending on the venue, it may be possible for additional supporters to attend. Recorded entries can be submitted if there is not a Regional Festival near to you via <http://www.mfy.org.uk/events/regional-festivals/>

Progression to the National Festival

After the last Regional Festival of the season (late March/early April), MFY collates the feedback from the Music Mentors and their recommendations as to which groups should be invited to perform on a main stage at the National Festival. This is based on both the standard of the performance heard and where the group is at in relation to their age and experience. There is also an opportunity for any group, regardless of age or genre to perform as part of our Festival Fringe across Birmingham. Invitations to perform are sent to groups in April.

National Festival

- Five-day event held at venues across Birmingham
- Invitations to perform result from the selection process outlined above
- MFY Music Mentors give constructive feedback to all performing groups (verbal and written)
- MFY aims to achieve a good geographical spread of groups to reflect the national picture
- MFY aims for a balance of returning groups and those who are new to the National Festival
- Audience tickets are sold to supporters and to the general public

MFY aims to create a festival atmosphere which celebrates musical achievement, enabling young musicians to inspire, and be inspired by their peers, and to strive to realise their potential. It offers partnership opportunities post event to recognise the achievement groups and additional activities beyond the performances to extend the educational benefits of the festival for all participants.

All groups are encouraged to listen to the performances of other musicians, as well as sign up for additional events, which are programmed as part of the festival. Together, these activities complete the MFY National Festival experience.

National Festival Certificates and Awards

The following certificates are given out at the National Festival:

Certificate of Participation – presented to each group

Music Mentors also make nominations from each session at the National Festival for MFY Connects, specially tailored music education experiences provided by key MFY partners. These partnerships are intended to provide an opportunity the group would not normally be able to experience. MFY reviews the nominations for each genre or group type after the event (e.g. the nominations from the 5 choir sessions or 3 jazz sessions) and makes the final decision on who receives the partnership opportunity. The experiences will then be delivered during the following season.

Progression to Music for Youth Prom Concerts

The Music for Youth Prom concerts showcase the breadth and quality of young people's music-making across the UK to a wider audience. Our specialist Music Mentors make recommendations to the MFY team as to which groups from the National Festival and Special Projects such as MFY Exchange, Frequencies and the New Music Stage should be invited to perform. This is based primarily on the standard of the performance heard and results in a shortlist. However, MFY aims to support innovation and best practice, reserving the right to include groups whose work is of particular interest or who are demonstrating outstanding achievement within challenging circumstances whilst balancing artistic, technical, and organisational considerations.

All performances are recorded for subsequent review. The MFY team then works together to make the final selections. As well as the quality of performances, MFY considers the following factors before invitations to perform are made at the end of August:

- Appropriateness of the performance to the Royal Albert Hall stages
- Representation of young musicians of all ages
- A range of groups from different settings, e.g. school, music centre, community, students with additional support needs, student led
- A geographical spread of groups which reflects the national picture
- A balance of returning groups and those who have not performed at the MFY Proms
- Groups will only be invited in two consecutive years under exceptional circumstances. Where possible, we will avoid this in order to spread the opportunity to more groups

Music for Youth Prom Concerts

- Three evening concerts at London's Royal Albert Hall in November
- Performances are as a result of the selection process outlined above
- The standard of performance is exemplary
- Tickets are sold to supporters and to the general public
- MFY aims to present artistically exciting concerts, which showcase excellence and innovation across a wide range of repertoire and styles.

Further performance opportunities

MFY also offers performance opportunities by inviting groups to perform at Primary Prom concerts in Spring and Autumn (www.mfy.org.uk/inspiration), MFY Invites events, such as Free Friday Music at the Royal Albert Hall (<http://www.mfy.org.uk/events/mfy-invites/>) and open applications to showcase a Massed Ensemble from your area at the MFY Proms.

MFY supports and initiates projects which encourage creative approaches to teaching, learning and best practice in both formal and non-formal education settings. These include:

- Large scale collaborations i.e. Massed Ensembles
- Student led performances and compositions
- Performance of challenging repertoire