

# Article for European Choral Magazine: 'Providing opportunities to the new generation'



Vocal Futures, founded in 2010 by Suzi Digby OBE, is a new foundation aimed at young people aged 16-22 that allows them to engage with, and to turn the tables on, their perception of classical music. The vision of Vocal Futures is to focus on where the future of classical music begins: with the young audience growing up now.

Statistics show that audiences for classical music are ageing; Vocal Futures seeks to change this by offering young people unforgettable experiences of the world's great classical works. Using high-tech production values, Vocal Futures produces ambitious, fully-staged choral works in unusual and innovative spaces specifically designed to attract young people, using their

experiences and feedback on performances to shape and improve our future work.

**“If the Vocal Futures model does not provide a visionary example of how to develop the young audiences of the future, nothing will.” – Stephen Fry**

Surrounding each of our large-scale productions, and what lies at the heart of Vocal Futures, is the design of our unique three-step approach, designed to inspire 16-22 year olds from a range of backgrounds and involve them in classical music. With partner organisations (Pods) we recruit over 300 Young Ambassadors (YAs) and begin the transformative process. We call our three steps 'Induction', 'Conduction' and 'Outduction':

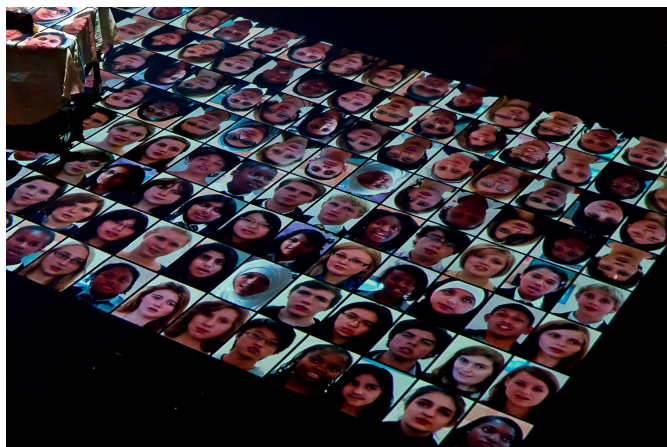
1. Induction – Interactive workshops, delivered by the artistic teams alongside other industry experts, give YAs multiple access points to the featured work, including text exploration, historical context, behind-the-scenes insights and production processes. Social media works alongside this face-to-face contact, to build excitement amongst the cohort and keep conversations alive in advance of, and beyond, the performances.
2. Conduction – YAs receive free tickets to Vocal Futures' professional large-scale, staged choral work in an unusual venue. We aim for the YAs to experience a 'light-bulb' moment sparking a life-long interest in classical music.
3. Outduction – a follow-up period of six months of online contact with the YAs with further offers of free concert tickets, to build on this new experience and encourage life-long concert-going. The DVDs of our productions are distributed to all UK secondary schools to capture the imagination of more young people.



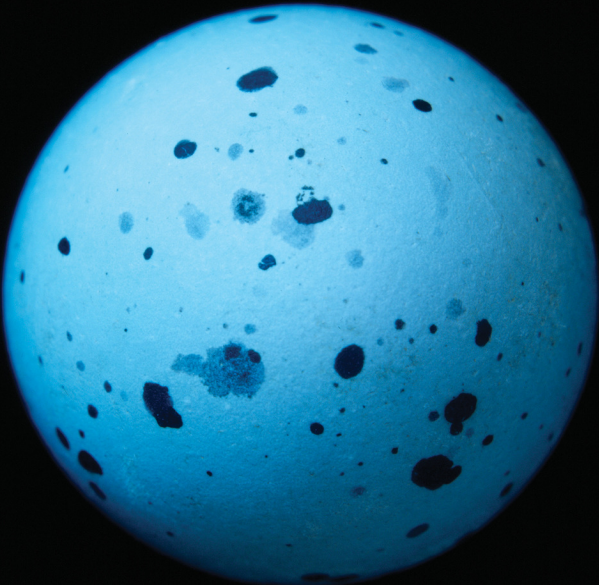
We believe this three-step approach will develop into a model of best practice that can be replicated across the classical music industry.

Central to our vision is the aim to uncover what matters and appeals to young people when attending concerts. Our education programme and production are underpinned by concurrent research led by top music psychologist Professor John Sloboda. Surveys of the YAs are conducted to investigate the impact of our three-phase model on attitudes towards classical concert attendance. The findings will inform our future work, and will help performers, promoters and providers from all over the world to think about how best to establish the long-term commitment of younger audiences for classical music.

December 2011 saw a fully-staged production of J. S. Bach's St Matthew Passion set in Ambika P3 - a startlingly original warehouse space in central London - to great acclaim with a 4\* review from both The Times and The Telegraph. Conductor Suzi Digby OBE and Director Patrick Kinmonth led an outstanding young cast alongside Sir Willard White as Christ, and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment for a classical music experience like no other. High-tech production values included real-time film relay and a 'virtual choir' made up of the Young Ambassadors themselves singing the chorales, challenging preconceptions of classical music, and helping demonstrate the continuing relevance and power of one of the world's great choral works:



**"I would recommend it to anyone who was going to a classical concert for the first time, as it is creative and innovative, and strays away from the traditional idea of a 'sit and listen' classical oratorio concert in a church." Young Ambassador 2010**



**HAYDN'S  
CREATION**

Conducted by **Suzi Digby OBE** Directed by **Patrick Kinmonth**

Mary Bevan as Gabriel   Matthew Long as Uriel   David Stout as Raphael   Charlotte Beament as Eve   Jonathan McGovern as Adam

11 - 13 December 2013 | 7.15pm  
Tickets: £40 | [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)

**AMBIKA P3**  
University of Westminster, Marylebone Road

[www.vocalfutures.org](http://www.vocalfutures.org)

Photograph by Tessa Traeger

After the success of the St Matthew Passion project, Vocal Futures returned to Amibka P3 in December 2013 to stage another great choral work - Haydn's Creation - with a similarly all-star cast and high production values. This is what one of the YAs had to say about it:

**"Vocal Futures is such a fantastic project. It is providing a gateway for new audiences, and is potentially the way to bridge this gap once and for all. Moreover, it seems even more fitting that Haydn's Creation was chosen, as this project really could be the creation of something very special for the future of classical concert-goers."**

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