

Irish Association of Youth Orchestras

Youth Orchestra Ovation Awards

The Irish Association of Youth Orchestra presents the Youth Orchestra Ovation Awards, an event and process that celebrates and spreads best practice and innovation in the youth orchestra community in Ireland.

Each year, in October, IAYO will present two awards valued at €5,000 each in cash and in kind to two orchestras for their activities in the previous school year. The awards ceremony will see a gathering of young people from orchestras with workshops, presentations of their work and the awards ceremony itself. It will form a second peak in visibility for the community in the year, complimenting and enhancing the promotional work of the IAYO Festival of Youth Orchestras which takes place in February.

Background

The Youth Orchestra Achievement Awards were conceived in the mid-1990s and were first presented at the very first Festival of Youth Orchestras at the National Concert Hall in 1996. They have been presented annually since then, changing shape a few times over the years and having different branded names relating to supporters and sponsors but the overall format has remained the same.

In 2020, a review was undertaken of the awards by IAYO board members and staff including consultation member orchestras, young people and relevant experts. It was decided that, in order to enhance the impact of the awards, they should have their own event(s) and promotional campaigns built around them, cognisant of the fact that removing them from the Festival of Youth Orchestras at the National Concert Hall creates a need to build the prestige of the presentations in another way.

Vision

The visionary question, which remains to be answered fully by implementation is, “How will youth orchestras and the youth orchestra movement be different in 25 years as a result of the Youth Orchestra Ovation Awards.”

We know from a large amount of anecdotal evidence that our Festival has been a focus for the development of artistic standards in youth orchestras over 25 years. We would like the Ovations Awards to have a similar level of impact.

Impacts

As part of the review, we investigated a wide range of possible impacts of the awards and how we might realise those impacts.

- The awards create a virtuous circle of improvement and development in youth orchestras and youth and amateur orchestral playing in Ireland, increasing both the quantity and quality of participation.
- They help IAYO effectively achieve IAYO’s mission by developing youth orchestras and the community of youth orchestras, music educators and musicians.
- The awards form a second peak in the year of the presentation of youth orchestras to the general public and potentially enhance the PR efforts around the Festival in February.
- They help IAYO to collect and distribute examples of excellence and innovation in youth orchestra practice to our members, other stakeholders and the general public.
- They encourage other orchestras and ensembles to emulate such excellence and innovation.
- They help IAYO encourage orchestral playing as an intrinsic part of Irish culture.
- They encourage networking and a sharing of experiences among young musicians across the country

- They help IAYO promote the value of music education and participation in ensemble music-making and increase participation in both.
- They encourage youth orchestras to engage in better planning processes with the awards in mind.
- They encourage youth orchestras to engage in higher-quality documentation and promotion of their work.
- They bring prestige to youth orchestras that are acknowledged.
- They motivate youth orchestra participants, staff and volunteers to grow and improve their orchestras.
- They raise the profiles of youth orchestras in their own locality and regions.
- They allow youth orchestras to showcase their work within the youth orchestra and music communities.
- They help youth orchestras access funding and other resources.
- They help orchestras recruit new members.
- They help orchestras sell more concert tickets and fundraise.
- The financial reward(s) can help youth orchestras fund new ventures and developments.
- The presentation ceremony will be used as a significant networking opportunity in the IAYO annual calendar of events.

Processes

We aim to have the awards as an ongoing process within our annual calendar and in our information flows to members and stakeholders, intensifying in a PR and publicity campaign focussed around the presentation event(s) in October.

- The Ovation Awards will be an application process – members shall self-nominate for their activities.
- Clear guidelines will be created for applicants so they can assess if their proposals are eligible. A section of the IAYO website or a separate sub-site will show examples of previous entries, commendations and awardees. There will be no specific categories for awards.
- Guidance, and ideally training, mentoring and resources, will be given to members when starting out on ambitious projects to enable them to document their activities with high-quality audio, video, photography and printed and online media.
- Initially, two awards with a cash value of €1,000 each will be presented. However, we would wish to see this increase significantly as an investment in the impact of the awards and also in the youth orchestra community. These prizes will not be split.
- The physical manifestations of the awards will be in framed A3 posters or certificates. These will be presented to the awardees and to those receiving highly-commended.
- There will also be an unspecified number of commendations available at the discretion of judges. It is hoped that any suitably excellent or innovative application would receive the promotional benefits offered to those highly-commended.
- The Ovation Awards will benefit all applicants: not just those that are presented awards:
 - All applications with suitable supporting materials will be given exposure through our news channels.
 - For those receiving commendations, we will present a package that includes, should they wish, letters to local representatives, arts officers and ETB heads acknowledging the quality of their work and local and regional press releases.
 - For those receiving the awards, there will be a national a PR campaign in addition to the previous items.
 - Although it is primarily the prestige of the awards that matter to members, the presentation of significant cash-value prizes, whether in-cash or in-kind allow us to invest in orchestras that are doing extra work and to subsequently show the benefits of those

investments as part of the ongoing promotion of the awards and the participating orchestras.



The Awards Ceremony and Associated Activities

- The first edition of the revised Youth Orchestra Ovation Awards will take place in October 2021, covering activities from the period from January 2020 to June 2021.
- The awards ceremony will take place in October of each year in a prestigious venue, whether by virtue of association with an institution or event or by virtue of being an impressive space. A space such as one of those at Smock Alley Theatre has been suggested. The awards ceremony need not necessarily be in Dublin.
- We would aim to have someone with celebrity status amongst the young people to present the awards – someone suitably famous or prestigious who has taken part in youth orchestras in the past or perhaps the leaders or conductors of our national orchestras.
- The awards may still be given some presentation at the Festival of Youth Orchestras. The format of this is to be decided but could involve presentations on awardees and commended projects playing on a loop on screens and / or presentation in the concert programme.¹
- Ideally, there will be high-quality video, audio and / or presentations in other media for each application.
- Members of each applicant orchestra will attend so there is a group of 50-60 young people plus adults present.
- There will be at least some live-performance involving young people at the awards presentation.
- It is unlikely that any of the orchestras will be in a position to perform their award-winning repertoire at this time of year as there is an annual turnover of players around the summer holidays. However, we will be open to the idea and investigate possibilities.
- We may have chamber ensembles / chamber orchestras from our summer courses and activities perform at the event.
- We may put on workshops and other social and musical activities for the young players – up to and including a workshop orchestra that plays at the awards ceremony. We have lots of experience in

¹ Allin – I think this might be an error. Give them their prestige in their own place and, in the Festival, focus on the participants.

this and have commissioned and can find repertoire that is satisfying to a wide range of standards and ages at one time, including engaging instrumental-music works that do not require actual instruments.

Timelines and Promotions

- Aim to have the awards being a 1- to 1.5- year engagement process.
- Promote application to the awards through our website and a specific mail out to member orchestras.
- Provide training in documenting, recording and editing once or twice per year – preferably to young people who will undertake to film and edit the project.
- Have a closing date for applications in May or June to allow for completion of spring- / summer-term projects.
- Awards venue and associated artistic programme is in place by June and able to accommodate a variety of age groups / playing standards for practical musical activities.
- Nominations for attending players accepted in June with applications. It is assumed that all applicants will send young people.
- Judging is completed by mid-August so that orchestras can be informed of plans as soon as they return to activity.
- National / regional / local promotions happen for all applicant orchestras in advance of the awards from four weeks in advance of the ceremony.
- Collective activities and ceremony take place in early- to mid-October.
- Post-awards PR and letters commending orchestras sent out.
- Articles of all suitable projects appear in IAYO's news streams between December and late-January.
- Follow-up articles on the developments assisted by the awards cash and in-kind prizes appear in May and September IAYO news.

Costs

- Initially, €2,000 in cash prizes for the awardees. Increasing eventually to prizes of €10,000 in cash and in-kind value (e.g. PR packages).
- €2,000 for a project manager to organise the awards and the ceremony and activities.
- €3,000 for training and resources for documentation – e.g. video cameras, microphones and associated equipment.
- €7,000 for venue hire, catering, orchestra travel, artistic directors and tutors.
- €3,000 for promotions and PR.
- €25k in total