



A passion for inspiring

How can you make sure you do something you enjoy every day?
P&J Recruitment hears from Pip Barnwell, who turned her love for music into a job

Pip Barnwell, company manager for Children's Classical Concerts



Children's Classic Concerts aim to inspire the next generation of concert-goers and professional musicians. PICTURES COURTESY OF GILLIAN MCBAIN

Many people are involved with music as a hobby. Singing lessons, piano tuition and music classes are familiar activities for school children, but what happens when you can turn your hobby into a career?

Pip Barnwell, 37, has done just that. She grew up in Newburgh, just north of Aberdeen, and attended St. Margaret's School for Girls in Aberdeen. Now she is company manager for Children's Classical Concerts.

● **What is Children's Classical Concerts?**

It is a music organisation that produces classical music concerts aimed at four to 12 year olds, with the aim to inspire the next generation of concert goers and professional musicians through fun and interactive concerts. We organise everything from small chamber ensembles for small town halls to large, full-scale symphonic concerts with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in the Usher Hall, Edinburgh, and Glasgow Royal Concert Hall.

● **What did you want to be when you were growing up?**

I loved music growing up but never really saw it as a career option. I always thought I would go into a profession

such as law, accountancy or teaching – basically a job where if you mentioned the job title everyone would know what I did for a living.

Right the way through my education, even into my final year at university, I never thought I'd make music my career – although I could never quite give it up either.

● **Is this a job "10-year-old Pip" could have imagined herself in?**

Having said that I never considered it a career option, my 10-year-old self was intrigued by orchestras and how they were put together. I loved music but never enjoyed the performing aspect of music (or the practising!). My parents took me to Scottish Chamber Orchestra and RSNO concerts from a fairly early age and I was fascinated as much by what was going on behind the scenes as the performances on stage.

I remember sitting watching the orchestra manager putting out the music on the stands during the interval and finding it as interesting as the performance by the soloist or the conductor.

● **Where did you go to university?**

I studied music at the University of Sheffield and really benefitted from the module we had on arts administration. At the time there were very few orches-



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tra management or arts management courses either at undergrad or postgrad level. There is so much more on offer now but I definitely benefitted from the grounding I had from my music degree.

● **Did you go straight from university into a job?**

Whilst I was at university I did a summer internship at the London Philharmonic Orchestra in the marketing department. It was fascinating but it also made me very aware I wanted to be involved in the planning of concerts rather than marketing.

After university I went on to work for the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland (NYOS), first starting as the secretary and slowly working my way up to managing the National Youth Jazz Orchestra of Scotland and a number of the other classical ensembles.

After eight years I moved on to working for the Scottish Ensemble – an entirely different experience working with professional musicians and with many different challenges but one that I loved equally. I discovered a whole new style of music and it made me ever more aware of the power of music and how it can push boundaries physically, socially and metaphorically.

Both NYOS and Scottish Ensemble gave me the opportunities to tour extensively and I have managed tours throughout the UK but also across Europe and China.

My current post has taken me back to working with young people while still working closely with professionals. I've discovered I have a real passion for inspiring the next generation of music lovers – something that developed through my early career at NYOS but I have taken with me through all my roles.

The impact music can have on a person from an incredibly early age is amazing. It is vital we encourage the next generation to have the experiences I was lucky enough to have in my own childhood, without which I would never be doing what I do now.

● **What skills have you developed through your career?**

Having good organisational skills are vital to these kinds of jobs. You are often working on a concert that is about to happen while planning for a tour or performance happening the following year and at the same time writing a report for a trust for a project that has already happened.

Diplomacy is also something I have had to develop. You often have to manage a number of different key factors and demands for a concert and make sure you have the orchestra, conductor, soloist, lighting and sound technicians all on board which can take some negotiation.

● **Has anything surprised you about your career?**

How rewarding the job can be. Standing at the back of a concert hall listening to a concert that you have planned is an incredibly proud moment. When I was at NYOS I was amazed at how the young musicians could create such a professional sound – when I was at Scottish Ensemble it was how just 12 musicians could create such a mesmerising experience and at Children's Classic Concerts it is just the sheer joy you see on the young audiences faces and you know you've played a part in a life-changing experience.

● **What skills would you say are necessary to your job?**

You definitely need to be able to stay calm under pressure and be able to think on your feet. But those can be taught and are developed through experience. I think the most important thing is to have a passion for music and the arts in general and to believe how influential the arts can be on someone's life. The arts are not well paid so to get into the industry you have to do it for the love of the job and the music and not because of the money.

● **Have you met anyone who was a particular influence to you?**

Every music teacher I've had has influ-

enced my life and my career in one shape or another. I was lucky enough to be involved in the Haddo Junior Chorus between the ages of five and probably about 12 or 13.

Lady Aberdeen had a massive impact on my early musical years – I have very clear memories of spending every Saturday morning at Haddo House and then singing as part of the choir at the Christmas Carol concerts in the chapel there.

Both my schools, especially St. Margaret's in Aberdeen, had really strong music traditions and I'm in no doubt that my interest was nurtured in these environments and I am immensely grateful for this grounding I had at such an influential age.

Finally it was a random conversation with a fellow pupil in my final year at school who questioned why I was thinking of a career as an accountant when I love music so much – was it just because the salary would be so much better? – that made me start to take a career in music into serious consideration.

● **What advice would you give to someone leaving school and wanting a similar career?**

Arts management is incredibly competitive so get as much experience as you can. Volunteer at concerts, get internships, get involved in organising concerts at your school, college or university.

Be as pro-active as you can and go to as many different types of arts events as you can. Expect to start at the very bottom and work your way up. Being a secretary was the best education I could have had. Typing letters for the chief executive taught me more about the practicalities of how an orchestra is run than anything I learned through a course at university.

● **Would you change anything?**

Other than practising my own instrument more I think it is to have not been so hung up on being a lawyer or accountant for so long and realising where my true passions lay.