NMC – Challenging New Music

Our Mission
NMC believes that new music is a dynamic and engaging art. We always seek to discover and share exceptional work that inspires and challenges. NMC:

- produces high quality recordings of outstanding work by British composers
- works with leading artists and ensembles
- promotes these recordings to expand worldwide audiences for contemporary music
- preserves this creativity for generations to come

Our History
NMC arose almost more by chance than by design. Imogen Holst and Colin Matthews had set up the Holst Foundation in 1984 with the aim of supporting the work of living composers. A significant concert of contemporary music at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1987, funded entirely by the Foundation, attracted a full house, but was not broadcast and so was heard by only 800 people. This led Colin Matthews to propose that recordings were the ideal way to reach a larger audience. The Holst Foundation has been the major funder of NMC ever since our inception in 1989.

Our Status
NMC is a unique and indispensable player in the new music world. We operate as a social enterprise with charitable status, providing public benefit through the contribution our work makes to enriching cultural life. NMC’s future — our ability to continue to record and promote the innovative, the challenging, the obscure, the lost — is reliant on securing public funding and the support of trusts and foundations, plus the generous investment of our donors, Friends, and collaborating partners.

Chair’s Message

2011/12 was another successful year for NMC. And we also found ourselves at a turning point …

As a record label, we gathered international awards and accolades for Harrison Birtwistle’s Night’s Black Bird; our artistic and production standards had never been higher and we were delighted that our determined commitment to quality was recognised. As a promoter of new composing talent, we initiated our brand new Debut Discs series to create a platform for emerging British composers. Our partnership with Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design, where design students created the cover artwork for our proposed 12 Debut Disc releases, was NMC’s first collaborative cross-arts venture and helped us to develop our ideas for expanding our audiences into the contemporary visual arts. We also improved our accessibility online.

Yet in a few short years, our annual grant from the Holst Foundation, which has sustained and nurtured our work since our inception, will end. So at this most exciting time for NMC, while we believe that what we offer — as a charity, as a promoter of creativity and talent, as a preserver of Britain’s musical heritage — can only get better and reach more people, we also find ourselves at our most perilous point financially.

In this period of transition we are building a sustainable funding model to allow us to continue to operate in the longer term. We have limited financial resources to deliver our ambitious plans, so I must thank our loyal and generous Friends and donors for their support, and Arts Council England for its continued guidance and its decision to include us in the National Portfolio Funding Programme. We have been able to achieve our successes and high standing only through this support and we urge you to continue to invest in NMC’s indispensable role within the music sector.

Richard Shoylekov, Chair
In little more than 20 years, NMC has developed from a small niche-market operation into one of the major players in the new music world, while remaining uniquely distinguished as a record label which is also a charity. In 2011, we won our third Gramophone Award in four years with our latest Birtwistle CD. We created our pioneering Debut Discs series whereby 12 younger and emerging composers will achieve their first exclusive, full length CD. We headed ever further into digital distribution while not losing sight of our indispensable CD catalogue, from which nothing is ever deleted. And we started to plan the celebrations for our 25th anniversary in 2014/15, which will propagate our cross-arts adventure.

In 2011/12 we released 12 new recordings featuring emerging and established composers ranging from Ed Bennett and Morgan Hayes to Thea Musgrave and Michael Finnissy, and we returned the important recording of Oliver Knussen’s Symphonies No 2 and 3 (previously available on Unicorn Kanchana) permanently to the NMC catalogue as part of our Ancora series.

At our October Away Day we revisited NMC’s mission and core values with gusto. Our aim remains unchanged and uncompromised – to record the best of music by living British composers to the highest possible standards. But we continue to look forward, to innovate, and as one of our favourite early reviews stated ‘to boldly go where no other recording company has gone before’.

**Artistic Development**

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**2011/12 NMC Highlights**

**Awards and Accolades**

**Harrison Birtwistle: Night’s Black Bird**
- Gramophone Award Winner (Contemporary) 2011
- BBC Music Magazine Award Winner (Premiere Recording) 2012
- Reached number eight in the Official Specialist Classical Chart May 2011
- Time Out New York Best Classical Recording of 2011
- The Sunday Times 100 Best Albums of 2011

**Ed Bennett: My Broken Machines**
- Time Out Chicago Best Classical Recording of 2011

**Jonathan Harvey: Bird Concerto with Pianosong**
- BBC Music Magazine Choice of the Month Jan 2012
- WQXR Radio New York Album of the Week Feb 2012
- Radio 3 CD Review Disc of the Week Feb 2012

**LeFanu / Gilbert / Marsh / Poole: Crossing Ohashi Bridge**
- The Sunday Times 100 Best Albums of 2011

**Brian Elias: The House That Jack Built**
- The Sunday Times 100 Best Albums of 2011

**Best Sellers**
1. Harrison Birtwistle: Night’s Black Bird
2. Jonathan Harvey: Bird Concerto with Pianosong
Partnerships

Partnership working was a growth area of activity for NMC as we sought to broaden our audience base, expand our artistic horizons, and develop a strategy of collaborating with others across the new music sector. In 2011/12, we agreed an ongoing series of recordings devised and produced in collaboration with the London Sinfonietta; the first of these, Jonathan Harvey’s Bird Concerto with Pianosong, was released to great acclaim in October. Earlier in the year, we worked for the first time with the Hallé, producing a recording of works by Harrison Birtwistle that went on to win numerous accolades, and we hope to develop this relationship in coming years.

With our success in utilising digital technologies to market and distribute our recordings we continued to offer our expertise to new music partners with the ultimate aim of increasing new music audiences. We became the Digital Partner of the PRS for Music Foundation New Music 20x12 project, meaning that throughout 2012 NMC will release the recordings for digital download, thus providing a long-term legacy to this ground-breaking project.

In 2011/12 we worked with leading artists including:

- Mark Padmore
- Huw Watkins
- Elias Quartet
- Christopher Austin
- Azalea Ensemble
- Darrah Morgan
- Philharmonia Orchestra
- Joby Burgess
- Andrew Sparling
- Michael Tilson Thomas
- Fidelio Trio
- Rob Keeley
- Richard Watkins
- Mark Simpson
- BCMG
- Esbjerg Ensemble
- Jonathan Powell
- Roderick Williams
- Hilary Summers
- Tim Mirfin
- The Hallé
- BBC Symphony Orchestra
- London Sinfonietta
- Goldberg Ensemble
- Scottish Ensemble
- Fretwork
- Kreutzer Quartet
- BBC Singers
- Sir Andrew Davis
- Jiří Bělohlávek
- Martyn Brabbins
- André de Ridder
- Ryan Wigglesworth
- David Atherton

Sales & Audience Development

2011/12 Total Sales (% revenue)

There was a substantial increase in sales in 2011/12 thanks to several strong releases. We saw a 30% rise in download sales. NMC continued to distribute worldwide through various distributors in stores and online, and the UK and US remained our key territories. We saw continued growth in digital sales, which accounted for 20% of our total 2011/12 revenue meaning NMC performed well above the industry average for classical.

NMC Digital Share

- Classical Industry Digital Share*
- Pop Industry Digital Share*

NMC Audience Age Group

- 75+
- 65-74
- 55-64
- 45-54
- 35-44
- 25-34
- Under 21

NMC Audience Gender

- Male 93%
- Female 7%

Purchasing: CD remained the first choice format for the majority of buyers, with 85% saying they preferred CDs. However, it is worth noting that over a quarter of our customers were buying digital, compared to just 9% in 2009.

Social networking: by June 2011, 53% of our audience were on Facebook, 21% on Twitter, 21% read music blogs and 17% used forums/message boards.

Survey Findings

The purpose of our survey was to find out more about NMC’s audience, to make sure we were focusing our attention in the right areas, and to compare results with those from our January 2009 survey to see how we have developed over two and a half years. Here are some of our findings:
Audience Development
Following our October Away Day we began to build a strategy of increasing awareness of NMC and contemporary classical music by focusing on audience development through cross-arts initiatives, live events, digital activity and marketing programmes and the continued use of social networking. Pilot initiatives included:

- Free download sampler on signing up to the NMC mailing list
- QR codes on posters and postcards at key live events
- Collaborative projects
- Developing our website to be more interactive and offer more rich content to encourage people to revisit
- Presentations to students at university music departments and conservatoires

Online and Social Networking
Twitter: followers 1600
Facebook: likes 183
E-newsletter: 1943
(figures at February 2012)

Website
4150 views per month
50% explore more than just home page
Average duration on site: 2.05 minutes
20% of visits from referral sites
Top referral sites: Facebook and Gramophone
(figures at February 2012)

Licensing
As income from the sale of recorded music continued to fall across the industry it became clear that NMC needed to develop new revenue streams. A report by AIM (The Association of Independent Music) on label income showed that 20% of income in 2010 came from secondary rights/synch licensing. In February 2012, we sent out our new licensing sampler featuring 24 tracks carefully selected from our catalogue to 110 advertising, film and TV companies to encourage the use of NMC recordings in their productions. Publishers and composers have shown support for the sampler and we will work closely with them to set up a one-stop shop for easy and quick clearance of works.

“The Licensing Sampler is very interesting … in my opinion all tracks have a specific potential for synchronisation”
Kapagama, France

NMC Fundraising
The economics of contemporary classical music continued to drive our need for strong funding and fundraising strategies. We have been anticipating the end of our Holst funding for some years now and having introduced our first dedicated fundraising post in 2010, we consolidated our position in 2011/12:

- Confirmation of our place within Arts Council England’s National Portfolio
- New Corporate Friends option welcoming sector and industry investors on board
- Increased income from trusts and foundations, led by Debut Discs as our main creative and fundraising driver with its emphasis on emerging talent. We secured the investment of eight trusts/foundations for the project, only one of which had supported NMC before
- First annual fundraising campaign, promoting Debut Discs via The Big Give Christmas Challenge to attract match funding and give us the confidence to programme an annual campaign into our funding strategy each Autumn
- Consolidation of the support of our loyal and discerning Friends and ensuring they are well looked after
- Exploration of the potential for NMC to benefit from legacy giving by attending training and researching campaign options

The illustration on page 10 shows NMC’s overall income picture for 2011/12.

As the Government’s philanthropy agenda continued to steer arts organisations towards increased individual giving activity we have explored all the appropriate routes that fit with NMC’s scale and product and remain mindful that as a charity operating in a very competitive marketplace, how we communicate with and look after our supporters remains key.
Financials

Expenditure
65% of our expenditure is invested in originating and distributing our unique recordings to a growing worldwide audience.

Income
Annual income shows an increase in funds from trusts and foundations (T&F), donations and earned income. Our Holst grant (until 2015) currently represents nearly 40% of our turnover.

Costs of making a disc
The cost of recording and producing a disc varies enormously depending on the forces involved, from around £8,000 for a solo disc to anything up to £30,000 for a project requiring a large orchestra and soloists. In 2011/12, we produced a varied schedule of releases and the average split of costs was as follows:

Average costs of making a disc

Reserves Policy
During 2011/12, NMC’s Board reviewed its reserves policy and decided to adopt a more prudent reserves policy to ensure that as a maximum, reserves should not exceed approximately six months’ running costs.

Press Recognition in 2011/12

Michael Finnissy: Second and Third String Quartets
“Only Finnissy could write what adds up to a symphonic movement, splice in bird song and label it string quartet”
Gramophone

Ed Bennett: My Broken Machines
“This is a fine collection of pieces by a composer with a clear vision and a healthy dose of talent. All of the performances and recordings are excellent.”
MusicWeb International

Robert Saxton: The Wandering Jew
“This project blew me away ... Saxton’s tonal (or modal) musical language ranges from the cinematic spectacular to rapt spirituality”
The Times

Thea Musgrave: An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge
“The London Sinfonietta, under Musgrave herself, plays with razor-sharp precision ... performances and recordings are excellent”
BBC Music Magazine

Brian Elias: The House That Jack Built
“These substantial, gutsy yet fastidious pieces ... attest a formidable mastery of the orchestra. Their manner and content are mostly turbulent, their craft imperturbable. The performances bring out the rich dark colours of Elias’s imagination”
The Sunday Times

Harrison Birtwistle: Night’s Black Bird
“No one does deep, dark, elemental brooding quite as profoundly and convincingly as Harrison Birtwistle ... an invaluable disc”
The New York Times

Morgan Hayes: Violin Concerto
“Hayes makes witty assemblages out of brilliantly coloured shards and balletic gestures. Wonderful performances; luminous and warm recorded sound”
BBC Music Magazine

Jonathan Harvey: Bird Concerto with Pianosong
“Bird Concerto with Pianosong is a work of remarkable, beguiling beauty ... a wonderfully fresh, post-Messiaen masterpiece ... a marvellous recording. Strongly recommended”
BBC Music Magazine