



Newbury Spring Festival

How to be a Young Critic

Supported by



INTRODUCTION

Young Festival Critics Scheme

This year we'd like to invite **anyone** under the age of 18 who's seen a Festival event to write a brief review, and have the chance to win a prize for themselves and their school. It could be they've seen an event with their parents or family, or part of a school trip to the Festival.

The reviews need not be long, but we'd like to encourage the next generation to think about the music they've heard and what they liked, or didn't like (!) about it.

There will be three prizes available in three different age categories.

Categories: 5 – 7 Years Old | 9 – 11 Years Old | 12 – 18 Years Old

We're pleased to be working with Hogan Music on this project, and they have generously agreed to help with the prizes. Each winning student will be awarded a **Gift Voucher for a music lesson**, and their **school will win a music Workshop** to be delivered by Hogan Music.

We ask critics to focus on writing meaningful observations looking at the relationship between the performing arts and reviewing.

The Festival offers a world class programme of events and includes new and well-known work performed in some amazing venues around Berkshire.

One of our supporters of the scheme describes the art of criticism:

'Criticism is still so misunderstood. Is it good or bad, the best or the worst, we critics are asked - and no matter how many times we care to explain that things are rarely black or white and it's the shades of grey in between that make something interesting or not the most sensational quotes will always make their way on to the hoardings and the well written, well balanced, review will more as not be put to one side.

For me the opinion has always mattered less than the way in which it is expressed and in an age where the most outspoken among us don't always feel it is necessary to substantiate their views in any thoughtful, meaningful, way it's great that schemes like Newbury's Young Festival Critics are giving a platform to budding young arts enthusiasts with something to say.

Sharing the experience of a play, a film, a concert, or piece of art or literature is what it is all about. The best critics make us feel part of that experience whether or not we were there ourselves. I like to think that doing so is an art in itself."

Edward Seckerson – Chief Classical Music Critic, The Independent

How To - In Brief

- Reviews should be between an appropriate length according to the age category.
- For 12-18 year olds we would envisage 200 - 250 words (but no longer) submitted in the correct format.
- Reviews will appear on the Newbury Spring Festival website and be judged by a professional panel.
- The most well written reviews will win a **Gift Voucher for a music lesson**, and their **school will win a music Workshop** to be delivered by Hogan Music.

The Prize Draw

We will submit all the outstanding reviews to a panel of experts (to be announced) who will be responsible for choosing the top 3. We are lucky enough to get some really prestigious judges. Winning reviews will be announced and published on the Festival website.

How to Submit Reviews

As the Festival is only two weeks long you will have until the end of June to send your review to us. Please email it to ashley@newburyspringfestival.org.uk

In the subject line of the email put: **YFC review – ‘name of event’**

How to Layout your review

Font size 12

Name of concert [bold]

Date, venue [bold]

Review 250 words... Review 250 words... Review 250 words... Review 250 words...
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Your name, your age [bold]

If you would rather not put your full name just put your initials. I.e. HP, 21

In addition to your review

You can also submit information by social media. Anything from a tweet to a video diary.



Twitter

We have a twitter account we would like you to link into.
The hashtag we would like to use is #festivalcriticsnewbury

Newbury Festival - @newburyfestival <https://twitter.com/#!/NewburyFestival>

Example:

- 1) "I am on my way to the @olympianist writing a review for @newburyfestival"
- 2) "The crowds are gathering in the marketplace for @newburyfestival 's @olympianist" #festivalcriticsnewbury
- 3) "Brilliant concert by @olympianist. The gathering crowds loved this free event @newburyfestival and his achievements are incredible"
#festivalcriticsnewbury



Facebook

Once your review had been accepted you will be sent an email to say you can now up load it onto Facebook. Please add it to the following pages or link to them from your post.

Entitle the post "I'm a Young Festival Critic – Here is my review"

<http://www.facebook.com/NewburySpringFestival>

What Happens to Accepted Reviews?

Once you have submitted your review to us I can take up to 3 days to process. We may ask you to amend it if there are errors, it is too long / short or we don't feel it fits within the guidelines.

Once it is accepted we will email you to tell you were you will be able to see it or where you can put it – i.e. Facebook, blog etc

Reviews will not be accepted if there are typos – make sure you correctly spell the fundamental information such as the event name, venue name, date etc.

HOW TO WRITE A REVIEW

Please read this guide carefully and submit your reviews in accordance to the advice given. The most important thing to remember when writing a review is be objective!

Do	Don't
Assess the work	Assess the organization
Be descriptive	Tell the story
Contextualize the work you are seeing – Set the scene	Make it too long
Analyze the work	Slate or dismiss the work – be constructive
Provide evidence to support your comments	
Read up on the company – this can be done after you have seen the productions.	
Make it factual	Put too much of yourself in the review

What Not To Do!

An Example of a Bad Review:

<p>Jazz Night</p> <p>Venue in Newbury</p> <p>“I went to see a pianist for the Newbury festival. I didn’t enjoy it as I don’t like jazz. People were laughing and getting into his music but I found myself yawning and looking at the ceiling. I don’t recommend you go and see this.”</p> <p>HP</p>
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Why is it bad?

It doesn’t say who, where, no scene is set. It offers nothing positive to the reader except for a chuckle at how terrible it was. The reader doesn’t care if you like jazz or not, they want to know why it was in the Festival Programme.

How to make it better?

Even if you didn’t enjoy the production you can still appreciate it for its worth and be critical as follows:

“Although Jazz would not my first choice of production. I could see the ‘jazz-enthused’ audience were appreciating the technique and gusto of the musician”

What To Do!

An example of a good review from a previous year:

In response to a concert the reviewer really loved.

Berlin Symphony Orchestra
St Nicolas Church

An outstanding concert with the internationally acclaimed Berlin Symphony Orchestra playing Weber, Prokofiev & Beethoven. Held at St Nicolas Church, in the very Centre of Newbury itself, I felt we were extremely very lucky as it's so rare to have the opportunity to see an orchestra of this size and calibre in such an intimate setting.

Agata Szymczewska, Violin, captured the room from the moment she stepped on to the stage, who shone out while beautifully playing Prokofiev's masterpiece.

Once the final movement had finished you could hear a pin drop, the sound went from so full and loud to complete silence. It was very powerful and the audience were clearly moved.

Having not been to a concert like this before, I feel it's awakened a new passion in me. I will be sure to look out for more events of this kind.

Holly Payton, 21

Other Points to Consider

The Venue

Describe the venue. Is it an unusual space? What is it normally used for? Is this performance in keeping with other Festival events in the Programme? Is it in the countryside? What is the acoustic like? How many people does it hold?

The Key Performers (Conductor, actor, lead performer)

It is worth researching a quick biography of the key people involved. You can find links to most performer sites from the Newbury Spring Festival events pages. Knowledge will contribute to the context and validity of your review.

The performers

How are they positioned on stage? Explain what you can see. How many of them are there?

The Stage

The stage will be the first thing audiences will see- how is it set up and arranged? Does it do the performers justice; is it simple to not detract from the performance?

The atmosphere

Does the pace and length of the performance fit with the explanation? What is the audience's reaction to the event? Was it too long or just right? Were there any unwanted distractions? Did the audience enjoy it?

Is it OK to say you didn't have a good experience?

The events at the Newbury Spring Festival have been programmed because of the reputation and the quality of the performers. It is important to bear that in mind when you are reviewing. The event or genre may not be of your taste but it will be of good quality. If you haven't enjoyed a production this will make a review more difficult to write and you will need to put a lot of thought into your response.

It is OK to state if the performer has had an off night or in the unlikely event you have been treated badly by the venue or festival staff.

An example of a good review from a previous year:

In response to a concert the reviewer really didn't love but was able to appreciate the quality of the performance despite it not being to their taste.

Berlin Symphony Orchestra
St Nicolas Church, Saturday 26th May

A concert with the internationally acclaimed Berlin Symphony Orchestra playing Weber, Prokofiev & Beethoven. Held at St Nicolas Church, in the very centre of Newbury itself. The audience were extremely very lucky as it's so rare to have the opportunity to see an orchestra of this size and calibre in such an intimate setting.

Agata Szymczewska, Violin, performed Prokofiev's masterpiece to a large applause.

Once the final movement had finished you could hear a pin drop, the sound went from so full and loud to complete silence.

Having not been to a concert like this before, I feel I know a lot more about classical music and orchestras and I can now form an educated decision when booking events in the future.

Holly Payton, 21

Reviewing Quick Step

Suggestion of the order you write your review:

ORDER	WHAT	ANSWER
What Production	As in the Festival guide	Berlin Symphony Orchestra, St Nicolas Church
What was it about	One sentence	An outstanding concert with the internationally acclaimed Berlin Symphony Orchestra playing Weber, Prokofiev & Beethoven
Set the scene	Where are you	Held at St Nic's church, in the very Centre of Newbury itself. I felt we were extremely very lucky as it's so rare to have the opportunity to see an orchestra of this size and caliber in such an intimate setting
Artists	Who were they and what impact did they have	Agata Szymczewska, Violin, encaptured the room from the moment she stepped on to the stage, who shone out while beautifully playing Prokofiev's masterpiece
Anecdote	Back up your statement	Once the final movement had finished you could hear a pin drop, the sound went from so full and loud to complete silence. It was very powerful and the audience were clearly moved
Wrap it up	This is where you can put your personal opinion	Having not been to a concert like this before, I feel it's awakened a new passion in me. I will be sure to look out for more events of this kind

What Makes a Great Critic?

- Critical does not mean to criticize... A clever reviewer is objective – Offer a constructive criticism not a gushing or damming one.
- An eye for detail – notice the experience as a whole, the ticket collection, the venue, the staff, technical and sound, the props and costume. Respond to it as a whole but also pick out anecdotes and details.
- Being able to write about the production not just tell the story – this isn't a synopsis!
- An understanding of the audience both at the event and the readership.
- Be convincing – don't use unnecessary big words but love the language you are using.
- Be smart – write clearly and stick to a format.
- Engage the reader make it enjoyable. Consider the tone in which you are writing. Enlighten and enrich the reader, make detailed observations and if it's appropriate - be funny
- Point out the strengths and weaknesses (if there are any).

Review Check List

Be Clear & Concise – be to the point, always try and shorten your sentences and don't use unnecessary words.

Shortened example of same sentence:-

The leading actor of the play

The play's leading actor

Make sure it reads well and flows between sentences. Go for a short punchy sentence rather than a padded out one with too many adjectives. Punctuation needs to be perfect.

If you are criticizing some aspect of an event, make your point briefly but don't labour it, or you'll risk sounding petty.

Verbs - Use active not passive verbs i.e.

The work is being completed by John = passive.

John is completing the work = active.

The sound was heard by several people = passive

Many people heard the sound = active

The clouds are blown by the wind = passive

The wind blows the clouds = active

Be correct – if you are quoting someone make sure it is right. Double check the spelling of names against the website. Don't use text speak!

Be compelling – Grab the reader's attention and make them want to read on. Create a headline for the first sentence and make it snappy.

Don't repeat yourself - Don't use the same words twice to describe the event.

"Brilliant musician in a brilliant venue"

If you are writing a few reviews don't overuse the same sentence!

Use a thesaurus to find the words you are looking for or alternative ways of describing something.

YFC'S Terms & Conditions

- By entering the Young Festival Critics scheme you accept these T&C's.
- Your review must be your own work.
- Your reviews must be constructive not destructive and within the guidelines of 'how to write a review'.
- You must submit your review by the end of June.
- Reviews should be between 200 and 250 words (maximum).
- If you use social media you must send out information mentioning the Newbury Spring Festival at least once per performance you review.
- We will not pass on your details to any third party.
- We reserve the right to edit reviews before they go to print or submitted to online view.

Have a great time we're delighted you signed up to be a Critic. We look forward to hearing about your experiences!

Thanks

The Festival team