



TEENAGER Zoe Cartlidge is pursuing her dream of studying at music school. She is an oboe major at Chetham's in Manchester, regarded as one of the top music schools in Europe, combining A levels with a massive musical programme.

It is both a reward and a ringing endorsement of her talent and commitment as a young musician. From a young age she knew what she wanted to do, so her success is, in no small part, down to her own determination.

But what must also be recognised, is the support of a North Devon charity which is focused on giving a helping hand to those interested in classical music. Like many other talented local youngsters Zoe was financially helped with tuition fees and associated bills by Young Musicians' Support.

Her mum, Michelle Tickell of High Bickington, is convinced that the support of YMS has gone "a long way" towards helping Zoe make the most of her potential. Certainly, things would have been more difficult without it. When Zoe began her musical studies her mum was a single parent who was struggling to meet the basic tuition costs, never mind exam fees and other demands.

Michelle said: "They have been an enormous help. An organisation like that puts you in touch with the right people and guides you as a parent and child. She got free tickets to go to see professional musicians in the theatre and if you are struggling with just the basic tuition fees you don't get to do these other things. And these are the things that gave her the encouragement and ambition."

YMS gave Zoe access to musical opportunities that helped confirm her desire to pursue a musical career. "That is where she has got, thanks to Young Musicians' Support. She has really gone for it big time."

Zoe started playing the piano at the age of eight, under the tuition of tutor Valerie Hind, and it was then that her mum approached YMS for financial support. Zoe began the oboe at the age of 12 when she started Pilton Community College, taking lessons with Carol Dewis. By the time she left Pilton in Year 11 she had achieved distinction at Grade 8 in both instruments.

Zoe said: "Ever since I went to my first audition with YMS at the age of seven, they have supported me through 10 years of instrumental tuition, two Grade 8 exams, and the general broadening of my musicianship, which has included lending me an oboe, and then money towards a new one of my own, lessons with passing orchestral professionals, and, more recently, supporting my dreams of attending a music school for Sixth Form, which is now a reality.

"YMS have also provided ample performance opportunities for all of us at various local venues. And still now they keep in touch to see how I am getting on in Manchester, and to offer support and yet more opportunities to showcase my playing. They have been a fantastic foundation for my musical career and I am very grateful for the huge amount of help that they have given me over the last decade."

YMS chairman and local musician Heather Shorten recalled that Zoe made a great impression at a young age. "The spark was there immediately," she said. "Zoe was a person to be reckoned with. She knew exactly what she wanted." As well as providing financial support for tuition and new instruments, YMS also encourages students in a wider context. They give them opportunities to perform at informal settings. Heather said: "Most of them love doing this and it is very encouraging for people to go up to them and say you are doing well. It is lovely to see how they respond to that."

Last year YMS gave out nearly £5,000 in support to 25 young musicians. The amounts vary but each grant can make a real difference.

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