



Bulgarian dancers at the Orbis Maker Awards

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Tourism and Events students pull off spectacular awards ceremony

Students from Northumbria University's Newcastle Business School have collaborated with a growing SME hub to deliver an innovative awards ceremony celebrating creative enterprise in the North East.

The Orbis Maker Awards 2019 were held in the landmark Commercial Union House Building in Newcastle recently and have been hailed a huge success and significant learning experience for the students.

Orbis is an umbrella company set up to support a range of creative SMEs including visual artists, performers, illustrators, filmmakers, writers, designers, digital artists and disability art projects. As well as providing workspace, the Orbis directors also provide mentoring support to around 300 individuals, businesses and new start-ups in this creative sector. The awards were set up to celebrate and champion collaboration within these creative communities. And in keeping with the ethos of collaboration and partnership the directors at Orbis decided to work with Northumbria and enlist the help of students to co-organise and stage the event.

Dr Sharon Wilson, Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Events at Newcastle Business School, explained: “Working on this brief for a real client was a rich learning experience for our students and a valuable insight into the skills needed for effective and more importantly innovative event management, which will undoubtedly enhance their CVs and future career prospects. They put on a great show with a live performance from Bulgarian Dancers supplied by student Miliana Nikolova which fit in seamlessly with the awards themselves. The evening was also a fun way for them to work on a real-world project, and I am delighted they pulled it off so professionally – I was extremely proud.”

“The Awards are all about promoting creative SMEs and start-ups region-wide, and to highlight innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship in the North East – and working with Orbis that’s exactly what our students were able to do. We also picked up an award ourselves in the Student Creativity and Innovation sector and I congratulate first year students Eva Radlova and Kelsie Leigh Grimwood on their success.”

The Northumbria students worked strategically with [Ampersand Inventions](#), to co-run the event as part of their Business Practice Module. Based in Commercial Union House, Ampersand is itself home to a community of more than 30 creative SMEs and its Director Jonpaul Kirvan is on the Board of Orbis.

As a driving force behind the Awards he said: “We had originally planned to host the event on our own, but in the spirit of community and collaboration we decided to work with Northumbria – and I’m extremely pleased we did. The event was excellent and so different from any other awards that I have attended. We were able to engage with the students at every level, encouraging them to connect directly with the people behind our many and

varied businesses, and to really understand what it is like to manage an event like this from start to finish. Taking them outside of the academic bubble and allowing them to get their hands dirty in this way gave them a lot of confidence – and I'm sure the experience will have boosted their employability considerably."

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