

The Musician

Journal of the Musicians' Union
Autumn 2019
theMU.org

MU Conferences

Report from the Delegate and
Members' events in Brighton

Profile: Kojo Samuel

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landmark Glastonbury show

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New Look Conference

This year's new format Delegate Conference and the new Members' Conference were both a resounding success. But elsewhere, British politics is entering a crucial era...

The 38th MU Delegate Conference took place in Brighton on the 23 July in glorious hot and sunny weather. For the first time in the Union's history, the business of Conference was conducted in just one day, and we even finished early, which gave the delegates time to take a swim in the sea once the Chair of the EC, Dave Lee, had declared the Conference officially closed.

Motions to Conference were moved and carried on a range of different subjects including Online Streaming Payments, Parity For Women In Music, Business Rates Cuts For Music Venues, Musical Instrument Tuition and many other issues with which our industry continues to grapple. The mood of Conference was overwhelmingly upbeat, and the delegates

were very supportive of the changes that we have introduced to the Conference format. The Conference report was completely restyled with the National and Regional Organisers and the Heads of Department contributing to the various sections of the report. As such, the new style Conference report was a much more attractive and accessible document, and delegates were unanimous in their praise for the changes that we have introduced.

Conference itself was treated to speeches from Michael Dugher, CEO of UK Music, and Kevin Brennan, Shadow Deputy DCMS Minister, who are both naturally very supportive of the MU's position on Brexit.

New format

The day after the Delegate Conference, we held the inaugural Members' Conference and the breakout sessions proved very popular with all who attended. The plenary sessions provided the Executive Committee with invaluable information and guidance to assist them in forming policy for the next two years on a range of differing issues. The recommendations will be considered over the coming months

and much of what was proposed will no doubt be actioned.

I want to send my heartfelt thanks to the delegates, staff and Officials and Executive Committee members who made the two conferences such a resounding success. Work has already started on planning for Conference in summer 2021, and if you have never attended an MU Delegate Conference before, I would ask you to consider becoming a delegate for the next event.

Difficult future

Finally, I am writing this column at the tail end of July with a new PM just installed and a no-deal Brexit looming large on the horizon. I sincerely hope and pray that by the time you read this, good sense has prevailed, and the threat of a no-deal Brexit has been averted.

Brexit has the potential to severely damage our wonderful industry and a no-deal Brexit would be disastrous. We must not sit back and let this happen. We have to keep demanding that Article 50 be revoked or, at the very least, that the British people are given the opportunity

to vote for or against leaving the EU on such calamitous terms.

In the meantime, look after your chops and keep searching the horizon for any signs of the cavalry.

Horace Trubridge, General Secretary

To hear more from Horace, visit theMU.org

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MU Contributors

Andrew Stewart

Andrew writes for *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *Classical Music* and *BBC Music Magazine*, among others. He is also Director of Southwark Voices. **p12**

Katie Nicholls

Katie is a freelance journalist and editor whose features and reviews have appeared in titles such as *Mojo*, *The Guardian* and *Kerrang!*. **p24**

Henry Yates

Henry is a freelance writer from Gloucestershire who has written for publications as diverse as *Classic Rock*, *Total Guitar*, *NME* and *Record Collector*. **p28 & 42**

Neil Crossley

A journalist and editor who has written for *The Independent*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*. Neil also fronts the band Furlined. **p44**

George Hall

George has written widely on opera and classical music for such publications as *BBC Music Magazine*, *The Guardian*, *The Stage* and *Opera Now*. **p32**

Dave Everley

Dave has worked as a senior editor on *Q*, *Classic Rock* and *Kerrang!* magazines, as well as writing for *The Observer* and the *Evening Standard*. **p36**

Neil Churchman

Neil is an experienced journalist in broadcasting and print. A former BBC national newsroom assistant editor, he now writes on music and the media. **p22**

Yasmin Prabhudas

A freelance journalist who writes for trade unions and charities. Yasmin also writes for content marketing agencies and for a lifestyle magazine. **p40**

Frontline

The MU in action, working on behalf of professional musicians.

HARASSMENT AT WORK LAWS REQUIRE LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

The Musicians' Union is calling for legislative change relating to bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment, both in the workplace and in spaces related to work. There is currently no statutory duty on employers to take steps to prevent harassment or victimisation in the workplace. "We call on the government to introduce a statutory code of practice on harassment at work," said MU Deputy General Secretary, Naomi Pohl, "specifying the steps that employers should take to prevent and respond to sexual harassment."

The MU also believes that the government should extend the protections relating to discrimination and harassment in the Equality Act 2010 to freelancers, so that they are entitled to the same protections as the wide range of

individuals in the workplace who are already protected.

The MU feels that the current time limit of three months from the act of discrimination or harassment in which to bring an Employment Tribunal claim is a significant barrier to people bringing claims. The MU is asking for the limitation period for such claims to be amended to at least six months. In claims brought out of time, once the claimant has established the reason for delay, the burden of proof should shift to the respondent to establish why time should not be extended.

Furthermore, it is not currently possible for someone to bring a discrimination claim based on multiple characteristics. As the law stands, a person can make a claim on the grounds that they are a woman, or because they are BAME. However, they cannot claim that they have been discriminated against on the grounds that they are a black woman. An intersectional approach, which draws on more than one characteristic, would strengthen claims.

The Union urges members to sign the petition

and join our call for the government to take immediate action: **bit.ly/2ODvZIW**

The government is gathering evidence on whether current laws on protecting people from sexual harassment in the workplace are effective. Members can contribute by visiting **bit.ly/2KaEnLQ**

MU STATEMENT FOLLOWING CLOSURE OF PLEDGEMUSIC

As reported in May on the Musicians' Union website and other channels, the MU has written to the PledgeMusic board to outline its members' losses as a result of the crowd-funding platform's closure.

The MU has also been working alongside a number of other organisations (AIM, Help Musicians, the Featured Artists Coalition, the Music Managers Forum, Music Support, the PRS Foundation and the Ivors Academy), to assess the extent of losses across the industry and collate an information pack signposting guidance and support for anyone affected.

All respondents to our recent survey will be contacted by one of the above organisations and sent a copy of the pack, which will also be made available on the MU website shortly.

The MU learned at the time of going to press that a petition to wind up PledgeMusic is being heard in court. While it has always seemed likely that this would happen if PledgeMusic were unable to appoint administrators, there was no forewarning of the hearing.

If you have any concerns relating to this issue in the meantime or you need advice, please contact your Regional Office. If you have been affected by the closure of PledgeMusic and you have not yet been in touch with us or filled out the survey, please get in touch as soon as possible.

INSTRUMENT AND EQUIPMENT COVER

The MU's preferred insurance broker, Hencilla Canworth, has created a website specifically for MU members who wish to register for the MU £2,000 Musical Instrument and Equipment

Cover (MU£2K) and buy MU Additional Cover (if required). **muinsure.com** enables MU members to register for the MU£2K cover at any time with cover documents instantly available.

Previously registered members are encouraged to re-register to ensure they have up-to-date details. Members requiring discounted Additional Cover for instruments/equipment above £2,000 can apply as and when required, with quotes and cover being emailed instantaneously following online payment by debit or credit card.

Once MU Additional Cover is purchased, the MU£2K cover no longer applies, as the Additional Cover premium features a discount equivalent to £2,000 of the insured items.

ELECTION RESULT: INDEPENDENT SCRUTINEER'S REPORT

This report is issued in accordance with the Trades Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 as amended.

London Region Executive Committee

Casual Vacancy Election 2019

One to be elected

| | | |
|------------------------|------------|----------------|
| JACQUELYN HYNES | 363 | ELECTED |
| NIXON ROSEMBERT | 260 | |
| JAMES TOPP | 274 | |
| BARBARA WHITE | 201 | |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------|-------|
| Spoilt ballot papers | 10 | |
| Total ballot papers received | 1108 | (12%) |
| Total ballot papers dispatched | 8909 | |

“I am satisfied that there are no reasonable grounds for believing that there was any contravention of a requirement imposed by or under any enactment in relation to the election. I am satisfied that the arrangements made with respect to the production, storage, distribution, return or other handling of the voting papers used in the election, and the arrangements for the counting of the votes, included all such security arrangements as were reasonably practicable for the purpose of minimising the risk that any

unfairness or malpractice might occur. I have been able to carry out my functions without such interference as would make it reasonable for any person to call my independence in relation to the union into question. I have inspected the register of members and no matters were revealed which should be drawn to the attention of the union in order to assist it in securing that the register is accurate and up to date. I was not requested by any member or candidate to inspect or examine a copy of the membership register. The MU did not appoint an Independent Person under Section 51A of the Act.”

**Anne Hock, Managing Director, Popularis,
10 June 2019**

NEW SOFTWARE FOR MUSIC TUTORS

Music tutors can take advantage of a new cloud-based website called *Music Tutor's Hero*. Launched by Neil Cooper, drummer of Northern Irish rockers Therapy?, it boasts an impressive toolkit that covers all bases.

With features including automatic lesson

reminders, an invoice creation facility, online storage for videos and pupils' progress, the site has been getting rave reviews from busy tutors looking to offer value to customers. *Music Tutor's Hero* exists securely online so you don't need to download the software. You can either use the free package or subscribe for extra features from £10 and £25 a month. To find out more visit **musictutorshero.co.uk**

NEW PODCAST AIDS MUSICIANS' HEALTH

The Elevate Music Podcast has been launched to help musicians learn about their mental health and wellbeing. Launched by production company Wisebuddah, Elevate Music and the MU-affiliated charity Help Musicians, the podcast is hosted by Lucy Heyman and features guests from across the music business. For more details please visit **audioboom.com/channels/4994604**

PPL AND SNOW PATROL MILESTONES

The PPL has marked its 85th anniversary as a

music licensing body by revealing UK radio's most played song of the 21st century: Snow Patrol's 2006 hit *Chasing Cars*.

The Scottish-Northern Irish band released the song in 2006, which would go on to spend 111 weeks on the UK Singles Top 75 chart. To mark the achievement, the band's singer Gary Lightbody was presented with a commemorative award by PPL chief executive officer Peter Leathem.

The song, written overnight in band producer Jackknife Lee's shed, beat out Black Eyed Peas' *I Got A Feeling* and Pharrell Williams' *Happy* to second and third place respectively.

MU V DOMINIC KELLY

Mr Kelly was expelled from membership of the Union and had his approved contractor status revoked in March 2018. Mr Kelly challenged his expulsion from the Union by bringing a claim to the Certification Officer.

Following a preliminary hearing on 8 January 2019 the Certification Officer issued a decision on 1 February 2019. She found against the Union and issued an enforcement order requiring us to both restore Mr Kelly to membership and as an approved contractor.

The Union appealed against this decision to the Employment Appeal Tribunal. On 20 June 2019, the Employment Appeal Tribunal allowed the Union's appeal and set aside the Certification Officer's decision. This means Mr Kelly remains expelled from membership and is not an approved contractor.

The Union is delighted that the judge found the rules had the meaning that the Union had argued for. The judgment will be published in due course and the Union will advise members when it is available.

The remainder of Mr Kelly's complaints to the Certification Officer will be heard in due course.

YOUR UNION

£261,448

Money recovered on behalf of Musicians' Union members during 2018.

20%

The amount that Secondary Use Fees have increased by in the last two years.

12,161

Members using the Musician's Hearing Health Scheme.

For the latest news on how the Musicians' Union is helping you visit theMU.org

DATES FOR THE DIARY

27 Sep

What: Feldenkrais Workshop

Where: Musicians' Union, 60-62 Clapham Road, London

Info: theMU.org

27 Sep-5 Oct

What: SensoriaPro 2019 – Festival of Music & Film

Where: Trafalgar Warehouse, Trafalgar Street, Sheffield, S1 4JT

Info: sensoria.org.uk

2 Oct

What: Creative Industries Health and Safety Passport Course

Where: 1 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9SD

Info: theMU.org

31 Oct

What: BBC Music Introducing Live

Where: Tobacco Quay,
Wapping Lane, London, E1W 2SF

Info: bit.ly/32DgHXI

15 Nov

What: Off The Record – New Music Festival & Conference

Where: Methodist Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester, M1 1JQ

Info: otrmcr.co.uk

Your Voice

This selection of tweets, emails and letters reflects the diverse range of dialogue between the MU and its members.

Artist Solidarity

Adding *Ode To Joy* to every UK concert, gig & performance across all musical & theatrical genres would be a lovely way to show our solidarity as artists & publicise the potential disaster awaiting the UK arts industry. @WeAreTheMU @EquityUK #StopBrexit
Karen Anstee @kazanstee

Working For Free

So Edinburgh Tattoo wanting onstage musicians to work for free 'for the experience' yet expect professional standards. Thank goodness The MU are on the case!

Susan Heaton Wright @superstarcomms

Music Basics Online

To know the difference between performance, publishing and synchronisation rights, and many other helpful stuff, I would highly recommend you

to visit the @WeAreTheMU site: themu.org

Heinali @Heinali

Mental Health Help

Check out the @WeAreTheMU and @HelpMusiciansUK they've got loads of info about mental health workshops!

Martyn Peters @MartynPmusic

Mother Love

Thanks for the brilliant feature on Motherhood at Work from my union @WeAreTheMU – along with @PregnantScrewed @PIPAinfo and, erm, @Beyonce. Great interview also with @PianoLieder – have heard so many stories like yours unfortunately.

Olga FitzRoy @OlgaFitzRoy

Why We Teach

You know things are bad when you're procrastinating from booking yourself on a course to help stop you procrastinating.

@WeAreTheMU

Jenny Sturgeon @Jenny_Sturgeon

Welcome Aboard

Thanks @WeAreTheMU for this lovely article

(Why I Joined The MU) in the Summer issue of *The Musician*. Proud to be a member.

#BehindEveryMusician #WeAreTheMU

Camilla Mathias @camillaCmathias

Know Your Rights

We're underway in Blackpool at @bootlegbars as Barry from @WeAreTheMU takes attendees through the importance of understanding the ownership of your master and publishing rights!

Dan Jones @thedan_jones

facebook.com/musicians.union

Follow us on Twitter @WeAreTheMU

Follow us on Instagram @WeAreTheMU

soundcloud.com/musicians-union

Find us at theMU.org

Email us TheMusician@TheMU.org

BREXIT AND YOU

The MU is fighting to protect musicians' right to travel when working in the EU post-Brexit. We want to hear from you about how Brexit has affected your working plans for 2019. **#WorkingInTheEU** bit.ly/2AzdUAV

SUPPORT THE MU

Love Music? Encourage your music-loving friends and family to sign up as MU Supporters at theMU.org

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Making The Case For A Fairer Music Industry

MU Deputy General Secretary Naomi Pohl celebrates the passing of several motions promoting equality and inclusion in the industry, while highlighting a troubling example of discrimination and the Union's impassioned response.

Motions passed at MU Delegate Conference on 23rd July included several on the theme of equality, diversity and inclusion. The London Region moved a motion on black and minority ethnic orchestral musicians highlighting that “out of 629 players in 17 UK orchestras, only 11 individuals, just 1.7% are identifiable from a BME background”. Chi-chi Nwanoku moved the motion with an impassioned speech and identified that screened auditions are a step forward, but it's crucial that workplaces are welcoming to BME musicians and that they are afforded a sense of belonging.

The North of England Region moved a motion calling for the Union's Executive Committee to launch a campaign "to stop disability discrimination in the workplace and to encourage employers, engagers and fellow colleagues to make reasonable adjustments and change their attitudes towards disabled musicians".

The industry has to work together to resolve this issue. One member I spoke to said that his work opportunities as a gigging musician are halved by the fact that he uses a wheelchair. Heidi McGough moved the motion and highlighted some absolutely unacceptable experiences she's had as a visually impaired musician in the live sector. Heidi highlighted that attitudes towards disability remain a significant problem and we need to call this out whenever we come across it.

Finally, the Scotland and Northern Ireland Region highlighted "the lack of women appearing on festival programmes and in venues" and called for the MU to lobby decision makers to implement policies that will promote parity for women in music. Not only are women under-

represented in almost all areas of the music industry but they are also commonly underpaid. The latest depressing statistic is that men earned 60% more than women at last year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The industry has to wake up to these issues and address them consciously. It isn't enough to pay lip service to diversity and inclusion; things have to change.

Blatant discrimination

I want to draw MU members' attention to an incident which was highlighted on social media by artist Shirley Manson of Garbage fame. Shirley got in touch with the MU and the PRS for Music Foundation in response to an email from a London promoter to a US punk band called Pleasure Venom who had identified themselves as being fronted by a woman of colour and with a trans bassist.

The email from the promoter said "as a mixed race (half black) promoter I feel really uncomfortable about bands playing the race card to sell themselves as something unique. It's a form of self-imposed/self-inflicted racism."

She went on to cite various bands with diverse

line-ups who had been successful and said: “I really wish race wasn’t made such a big deal out of, and if we could stop with the affirmative action and just go back to celebrating people’s skills based on merit and talent alone?” In Shirley’s response on Facebook, she writes: “Does [the promoter] really believe just because Skunk Anansie continues to thrive in rock that we should no longer be discussing race? That’s like saying that racism in America has been entirely eradicated because Barack Obama was once president. We all know this is far from the case.”

Our stance

The Union is well aware, unfortunately, of numerous examples of artists and bands not being booked or even being cancelled because of their gender, race, sexuality or disability. Let us be very clear, using a band’s diverse make-up as a reason not to book them is discrimination, it’s that simple. Celebrating and highlighting bands that are diverse is vital if the industry is to be truly representative and inclusive of all musicians. Initiatives like PRS for Music Foundation’s Keychange (www.keychange.eu) that force organisations to look at their current

practices and consider how they can improve on diversity are proof that change can, and is, happening.

Overcoming bias

One of the biggest attitudinal barriers the MU faces when tackling discrimination is the notion that race, sex, sexuality, gender or disability don't matter, and that success is based solely on merit or talent. 'If a band is good enough, they'll succeed.'

That may seem like a reasonable argument at first glance but it doesn't take into account cultural and institutional biases that have stopped many musicians progressing their careers. The MU looks forward to a time when musicians are judged solely on their talent and all have access to the same opportunities. But until then, we will continue to take action against and call out anyone who discriminates against musicians because of their race, sex, sexuality or any other protected characteristic.

The MU has seen a rise in members reporting discrimination and it's important that these issues are raised. Reporting discrimination

means it can be challenged, and that those responsible can be educated. The MU encourages musicians everywhere to celebrate what makes them different and any members who experience discrimination of any kind should contact their Regional Office for advice and support.

MU Delegate Conference 2019

With changes at Number 10, the 2019 MU Conference focused instead on the positive impact of its members.

Report by Andrew Stewart

On the day Boris Johnson became prime minister, preaching can-do spirit and cod optimism, delegates at the Musicians' Union 38th Biennial Conference were busy debating motions designed to deliver positive change. The contrast between empty political rhetoric at Westminster and constructive deliberation by MU members in Brighton was clear.

Conference, hosted by the Union's Executive Committee (EC), tapped energy from its new structure. It began on 23 July with a day for delegates to debate motions and continued the following day with the Union's first Members' Conference, a forum for fresh ideas. The agenda embraced everything from membership recruitment and retention, digital copyright and

business rate discounts for music venues; to strategic plans for music education, overcoming gender, racial and disability discrimination in the music industry, and communicating strong messages about music's value to politicians, media influencers and the public.

Dave Lee, EC and Delegate Conference Chair, summarised successes documented in the new-look EC Report and Agenda. "It's the story of your efforts and of the committees and activists you engage with," he observed. Dave paid tribute to the Union's officials for their hard work and reported that the MU had scored a notable first by electing more women than men to EC membership.

The Union's prominent media profile proved that its message was cutting through. "We have to renew our efforts because there's a changing political landscape, from chaos to comedy and probably tragedy," Dave observed.

General Secretary Horace Trubridge explained the radical changes to Conference. Past iterations, he noted, had been good at approving past work and influencing EC policy but less

effective at forging ideas to help the EC reflect the widest range of members' concerns.

“It’s a new idea, and we hope it will work well,” said Horace. The day’s business flowed smoothly and concluded early. A dozen motions were debated, with one remitted and the rest passed. By close of play the General Secretary felt the format change, the result of extensive planning, had indeed worked well.

“We wanted you to feel enthused, excited and engaged with your Union. We’ve modernised the Conference. I’m delighted with the way things have gone and hope you are too.” Horace finished by thanking the EC chair, vice-chairs and members, and the Union’s staff and officials. “They do an amazing job,” he said, his voice breaking with emotion. “They work tirelessly, sometimes up against the hardest issues, the toughest managements. I want to thank them very much!”

DELEGATE CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Tackling discrimination and inequality in the music industry were the most prominent and well-received topics discussed.

Several Conference motions tackled inequalities: those dictated in music education by parental income and support, those between men and women in the music workforce, those reflected by the lack of ethnic diversity in orchestras, and those standing in the way of disabled musicians.

Chi-chi Nwanoku, London Region delegate and founder of the Chineke! Orchestra, made a compelling case for Conference to recognise the underrepresentation of black and minority ethnic (BME) musicians in the orchestral sector and back a motion for fundamental change. “There’s an extraordinary wealth of talent among BME professional musicians in the UK and

across the world,” she said. “Chineke! reflects the depth of that talent.”

Conference heard evidence of the pay and opportunities gap between male and female musicians. “It’s 2019, not 1919,” said Bill Sweeney in moving the motion for parity for women in music. “It’s time for change and not more well-meaning words.” He quoted data from the PRS Foundation’s Keychange, an international initiative to encourage festivals and music organisations to achieve a 50:50 gender balance by 2022. Only 14% of registered songwriters in the UK, for example, were women, while a 30% pay gap separates men from women in the music industry.

Bill, attending Conference for the last time, outlined strategies for achieving gender parity. “The issue demands repeated initiatives, repeated pressure and repeated action. Equality and diversity are important human rights, but they’re also vital to the whole artistic ecology. It matters not just

for women and other marginalised groups
– it matters to us all!”

Heidi McGough highlighted disability discrimination. She spoke of the need for accessible stages and commended Attitude is Everything’s campaigns to improve deaf and disabled people’s access to live music. While she welcomed progress made, much remained to be done, she said. The crude attitudes expressed by promoters and venue managers to her visual impairment stood for the barriers, physical and societal, set against disabled musicians. “This kind of discrimination is as damaging to people’s careers and mental health as sexual harassment and racism,” concluded Heidi. “On every level, discrimination in the music industry needs to stop.”

The state of schools’ music education, music’s downgrading within the curriculum and the prohibitive cost of music lessons were hot topics. The North of England

Region proposed a motion to address the effects of the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) on arts education and reverse its negative impact on school music provision. Since its introduction in 2010 there has been a 38% decline in the number of students taking GCSE arts subjects.

Rachael Parvin voiced the EC's support for the motion. The Ebacc, she noted, has had a "terrible effect, narrowing the options for students [while] many music teachers have had to leave the profession. But it's not all doom and gloom. There are things we can do collectively and individually to persuade the powers that be to scrap the Ebacc and put music back on the agenda in schools."

Horace Trubridge was adamant that the Union should continue investing a share of its reserve funds into recruitment. The MU, he explained, can no longer rely on BBC licensing income to bridge the gap between subscriptions and expenditure. The EC, therefore, decided to spend more

money on recruiting new members.

“Membership is now higher than at any time I’ve been involved with the Union, largely due to the ‘Join for a £’ scheme,” said Horace. “We have to do something to get the membership up to 36,000. At that level we could survive on subscriptions money alone.”

MICHAEL DUGHER, UK MUSIC

Tackling discrimination and inequality in the music industry were the most prominent and well-received topics discussed.

Michael Dugher, Chief Executive of UK Music, offered a retrospect of its work and an overview of future challenges. The former Shadow Secretary of State for

Culture, Media and Sport highlighted the government's response to the DCMS Select Committee *Live Music inquiry Report*. Both report and response, he said, demonstrate the positive influence of UK Music and the MU on the politics surrounding the UK's live music industry.

The state of music in the UK remains perilous. Many grassroots venues faced a punitive hike in business rates and consequent threat of closure. Dugher urged the new Chancellor to extend business rate relief to music venues and government to recognise the precarious nature of being a self-employed musician.

Dugher praised the MU's campaign against sexual harassment and workplace abuse, and threw UK Music's support behind the MU's code of practice. He also called on more government support for music education, not least to increase the 15% of state school pupils who learn instruments (against 50% at private schools). "Every

child from every background should have access to music in their education, not just those who can access the bank of mum and dad.”

KEVIN BRENNAN’S CONFERENCE ADDRESS

The Labour MP discusses the benefits of music lessons to all and promises Labour investment.

Kevin Brennan MP, a long-standing MU member, conveyed greetings to Conference from Labour’s Shadow Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Deputy Leader Tom Watson MP and his team. Events in Westminster had kept Tom from speaking at one of his favourite union events. “He sends his thanks to the Union for all you do for musicians and the culture of the UK.”

The MU's officers and staff, noted Brennan, leverage considerable influence with politicians in Westminster. The Union, he observed, "punches way above its weight... in the corridors of power. That's because of the quality of its membership and leadership".

Making music teaches people to work together to achieve shared goals, he said. "Appreciating and participating in music should be open to everyone, should be a right for all. Our mantra in the shadow culture team is 'talent is everywhere, opportunity isn't'. We're determined to put pressure on government to widen opportunity while nurturing the talent there is in our communities.

A decade of austerity had harmed music-making opportunities across the UK. Brennan attacked the marginalisation of music in schools and condemned the government for effectively removing music education from the poorest in society.

Labour, he vowed, would place music and creative subjects at the heart of the school curriculum. The Arts Pupil Premium, worth £160 million a year, was embedded in Labour's education policy. "Why shouldn't pupils from state schools have the same outstanding creative opportunities they have at Charterhouse [or Eton]?"

Kevin Brennan's list of Labour priorities for culture also included a £1 billion capital investment in the nation's creative infrastructure. "It's vitally important that we reenergise cultural offers in all parts of the country." Labour intends to develop the UK as a music- and musician-friendly society. In government it would improve venues, revise regulations about carrying instruments on planes, establish digital copyright law and introduce protections against intellectual property exploitation by big tech companies.

"We're in a time of change," Brennan concluded. "The shadow culture team

will continue to champion the work you do, to advocate for policies that support musicians and stand up to those who are far too happy to throw our creative economy under a bus. We're on your side and that's our promise."

MU Members' Conference 2019

Key issues are discussed and the future embraced in workshops at the inaugural meeting of members.

Report by Andrew Stewart

Almost 100 participants gave life to the inaugural Musicians' Union Members' Conference. The day provided a platform for MU members to debate key issues and return recommendations to the Union's Executive Committee (EC). It comprised breakout

sessions moderated by EC members and Union officials followed by headline reports to morning and afternoon plenary sessions.

General Secretary Horace Trubridge opened proceedings with words of intent: “What we’re doing is something completely new. The thinking behind it is straightforward. One of the criticisms of past Conferences is that they tended to look back over the past two years rather looking ahead.”

Today’s MU, Horace added, was a proactive organisation, determined to discover new ways to improve members’ working lives. “You are here to discuss some of the major issues that face our members and make recommendations to the EC to help them form policy over the next two years. It’s an exciting opportunity.”

There were five workshop sessions in the morning and five in the afternoon, under the banners of Education & Equalities, Live Performance, Orchestras, Recording & Broadcasting, and Communications & Government Relations.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

The morning plenary began with a tribute from Horace Trubridge to Jonny Walker, the musician and campaigner who took his own life last year. Members marked Johnny's death with applause and gratitude. "He always lit up the room at previous Conferences," recalled Horace. "We all loved Jonny, he was a smashing guy and a really strong Union voice."

Moderators summarised matters discussed and reported recommendations to the EC arising from each session.

Education & Equalities

Inclusive Music Teaching: discussion of the issues and challenges for teachers

Reporter: John Shortell, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Official

1. We request a campaign to mobilise parents around the lack of music education for SEND (special educational

needs and disability) and all school students, and collaborate here with the National Education Union (NEU) and Music Industries Association (MIA).

2. The MU could facilitate specific CPD and workforce development to support those who teach music to SEND students.
3. Promote the MU as the union for music teachers and work with the NEU to highlight joint membership deals.
4. Collaborate with the NEU to increase representation of disabled music teachers and promote role models for disabled musicians.

Live Performance

Access All Areas: building a career for life. Exploring the ways in which performing artists can find additional revenue streams and develop portfolio careers.

*Reporter: Dave Webster, National Organiser
Live Performance*

“We totalled around 23 income streams traditionally available to musicians and

noted that access to some of them was difficult. The value of musicians came up as an important thing to recognise. They need to organise and prioritise the work they do, as well as reconcile the conflict that often arises between creativity and business.

“The group made no specific recommendation but raised areas where we believe the Union can assert its relevance to all musicians. Words like ‘messaging’, ‘assertiveness’ and ‘mentoring’ attract young musicians. Workshops, events and skill exchange are also important to their recruitment. We need to make the message about the MU’s relevance to young musicians much stronger.”

Orchestras

The decline in music education and its impact on orchestras. How can the MU influence positive change?

Reporter: Jo Laverty,

National Organiser Orchestras

Recommendations to EC:

1. A joint union campaign with the National Education Union (NEU) would mobilise the NEU to reach teachers who are not MU members. Our evidence-based State of Play report could form the basis for a campaign about the value of music education, of its impact on academic progression, health and wellbeing, etc. The talent pipeline needs to start in early years and go all the way through school, not drop off before the end of pupils' time at school.
2. We discussed the work orchestral players do as educators, something they have to do to get funding for their orchestras but for which they are not paid extra. We should campaign for more money to be available to sustain such work and make more of it happen.
3. Not all Music Hubs recognise the MU, even where music teachers are their largest workforce. We support the work Diane Widdison and her education team are already doing to address this issue and want that to continue.

Recording & Broadcasting

Modernising the collection of performer data from recording sessions: finding a solution that works for MU members, approved contractors and the wider industry.

*Reporter: Phil Kear, National Organiser
Recording & Broadcasting*

Recommendations to EC:

1. We call on the MU to develop an efficient electronic solution to performer and composer data collection, in collaboration with PPL and PRS, easy to use by everyone from self-releasing to session musicians.
2. Educate members on how to use the new solution and liaise with other musicians' unions internationally to ensure best ideas are shared.

Communications & Government Relations

Shaping how we talk online: digital communications focus group.

*Reporter: Isabelle Gutierrez, Head of
Communications & Government Relations*

Recommendations to EC:

“As a union of almost 32,000 members, our website must work for everyone. We want to focus on personalisation of the website, so when you log in what you’re most interested in appears on your personalised homepage. Every musician who visits our site needs to feel they belong there.

“Interactivity online will allow us to show all of what we do and vastly improve recruitment and retention. We want the website to contain more video, audio, image galleries, infographics. It’s about getting everyone involved.”

1. We ask the EC to consider financial investment into the review and some redesign of the website, to make it open to all.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

The afternoon round of workshops covered a broad range of topics from

wellbeing on tour, affordable musical education and activists.

Recording & Broadcasting

How can the MU best improve and expand the services it provides to music writers?

Reporter: Phil Kear

Recommendations to EC:

1. Look at modernising the Union's Copyright Registration Service.
2. We need more collaborative events to satisfy the appetite of music writers to network with their peers.
3. Provide more advice for singer-songwriters and self-releasing bands on the MU website.
4. Explore joint membership initiatives with The Ivors and connect with well-attended Spotify and other networking events.
5. Improve representation of singer-songwriters and other creative music writers on Music Writers' Section committee.

Live Performance

Touring: it's no good for my health. A look at the mental and physical effects of life on the road and what the MU can do to encourage healthier workplaces and environments.

Reporter: Dave Webster

Recommendations to EC:

“Touring conditions affect mental and physical health. They can trigger anxiety, boredom, fatigue, loneliness, drink and substance abuse, alongside the positive aspects of creativity. What can we do to help our members counteract the difficulties?”

1. Promote good travel, good accommodation and good food.
2. Provide a checklist that's specific to touring, an on-the-road toolkit covering risk assessments, job descriptions, etc. We could also commission a nutritionist to look at diet and physical health for musicians on the road.

Education & Equalities

Access to music education: is music becoming the preserve of those who can afford it?

Reporter: David Barnard, Music Education Official

“The answer’s ‘Yes!’ Does it matter? Yes! Music affects wellbeing and health, self-confidence and self-esteem. The music industry has an economic impact of almost £5 billion a year and music engages huge numbers of people in amateur groups around the country. Should every child learn a musical instrument? The group consensus was that every child should have the chance to experience a foundation in good classroom music teaching, from primary through to secondary school. From that fertile ground, comes instrumental learning. Those who want to learn an instrument should have the opportunity to do so.”

Recommendations to EC:

1. The MU should continue lobbying

for music education in schools and not be frightened to tell it as it is. The sector, on the whole, is so grateful for funding from Arts Council England or government that it's frightened to say there's a problem. We should make as much noise as possible about threats to music education and what that means. Take coaches of young musicians to play outside Parliament and it would be front-page news!

2. We need to work with organisations like the MIA to redefine what Music Hubs should be. We should ask questions about the workforce, campaign to abolish contracts that are not fit for purpose, make sure music teachers are respected and paid accordingly, and ensure they receive adequate training and professional development.

Orchestras

Examine the power of the Union in the employed and freelance orchestral sector. How can the MU empower our activists

in the face of anti-union or recalcitrant managements and against apathy from colleagues or non-union members?

Reporter: Jo Laverty

Recommendations to EC:

“Orchestras are already collectively powerful as musical forces; we want them to feel collectively powerful when they’re not making music. We talked about formalising ways to help our activists communicate their successes and achievements with each other. We also looked at activist training days we held in Scotland & Northern Ireland, London and Manchester and agreed they were powerful. We need more of these around the country.”

1. The MU needs to shout about our successes. The more people know about them, the more they will be drawn to join the Union. We need campaign advocates among our members to communicate positive messages. We want an activists’ toolkit for orchestras, complete with

guidelines, common scenarios and case studies. And we should increase ways of reaching out to freelance members, to engage with them and reflect their concerns.

Communications & Government Relations

Moving from slacktivist to activist: online to offline organising.

Reporter: Isabelle Gutierrez

Recommendations to EC:

“We’re clear that the MU as a Union does not have enough activists. Maddy Ratcliff, our Campaigns & Social Media Official, talked about an ‘Activism Ladder’, which starts off with signing a petition and escalates by degrees. Activism can be standing up for a colleague, calling something out when it’s not right, putting a campaign photo on Facebook. It’s also about promoting our Shared Values campaigns around the climate change emergency, getting involved with the People’s Vote, participation in Pride

marches. Our shared values are equality, solidarity and community.”

1. We recommend building a campaigns toolkit, to ensure the Union has the tools it needs to mobilise quickly and effectively when something comes out of the blue. It should include actions accessible to all members. We're here for all musicians, our members and each other. The more we reflect that, the more activists we will have.

FINAL THANKS

Dave Lee, Conference and EC Chair, thanked Horace Trubridge, the Union's staff and all participants for their contributions to the first MU Members' Conference. "You have made today a success and shown that we need to do more of it," he said. In

response, Horace praised the MU's officials for their amazing competence, experience and professionalism and the EC members for deep knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment.

Conference recommendations will be edited and prioritised to form a report to the EC. "You have done all our work for us in terms of deciding what we need to do for the next two years," said Horace. "That's a fantastic achievement. It has been enormously worthwhile. Thank you."

Musical Truth

MD Kojo Samuel has had a hand in some of the biggest live pop moments of our times. But he feels that his musical heritage has helped him along the way...

Profile by Will Simpson

There's no doubt it was a moment. Stormzy's Glastonbury show was remarkable not just because it was the first time a British urban act had headlined the festival – nor even the way it seamlessly mixed grime, pop, gospel and ballet – but the fact it genuinely was as good as everyone wanted it to be. Certainly, it united critics, fans and even politicians to hail it as a triumph, and confirmed that the South London rapper is now in that rare space that few artists ever reach: not just at the top of their game creatively, but also commercially successful and critically adored.

But the performance was nothing if not a team effort, and two weeks later the man responsible for fitting all the show's musical parts together is sitting in front of me in a South London pub. Kojo

Samuel is the Musical Director for a range of acts such as Plan B, Jess Glynne and Rudimental. He claims he felt no pressure prior to Glastonbury, even though it was his debut show with Stormzy. “From my point of view it was just something exciting to do,” he shrugs. “I’m from a different generation to him, but growing up in that hip-hop era I know what usually happens with those shows, and I always felt there was an opportunity for those things to be better.”

Both artist and MD had agreed they wanted it to be a multi-part extravaganza involving a DJ, live band, dance, interludes and spoken word that would still, despite all that, retain a fluidity. A cast of 90 people were involved in all – an organisational feat that went far beyond those of the other Pyramid Stage headliners. “I think that considering the scale of it, to do that first time without any hiccups of note – well, I felt everyone felt pleased that we managed to get through it and pull it off.”

In the blood

A career highlight then, but one he’s spent many years working towards. Music is in Samuel’s blood – he’s the son of PP Arnold, the soul

vocalist and studio stalwart whose long career has encompassed work with a small army of high profile acts (see p21), and Calvin 'Fuzzy' Samuel, bassist to Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, among many others, and a stellar musician in his own right. "Music was always there. It was never pushed, but I guess you want to follow in your parents' footsteps, especially when you're younger. You grow up around rehearsal rooms and studios and you want to be involved."

The first instrument Kojo gravitated to was the keyboard. He worked his way through various school bands, but when he moved to the UK in the late 80s he decided that, rather than pursuing pop stardom, he'd move into production work. Thus began a period working in the r'n'b/pop field, helming tracks for Mica Paris and the 90s boy band Damage. "I did everything that you do when you're a young producer in London," he recalls. "I was writing, remixing, got a couple of cuts on albums here and there, but nothing that was ever massively successful. I was always working though, trying to find the right artist and the right project to get involved in, trying to get that big hit."

The move into MDing came after he arrived back in the UK after a stint in the States. He was still producing and hustling, but people started offering him live work here and there. He found himself gradually drawn into the life of the jobbing live musician.

Then one time he went for an audition for the Sugababes touring band and got the gig. “It opened my eyes up to another world I didn’t know existed. It had never dawned on me to be a keyboard player on one of these type of affairs. My thing was always production and writing behind the scenes.”

About you now

After four years, as many of his bandmates were leaving or had already left, Kojo was asked to be the group’s road MD. “It involved recruiting a new band and dealing with things on a day-to-day level. I wasn’t sure if it was something I could do but I was happy to give it a shot. Early on I remember saying to someone ‘actually this is like producing a band isn’t it?’ I was like ‘hmm ok I can do that’.”

Many musicians (and indeed MU members) may

not be aware of what the MD role actually entails. In its most basic sense it revolves around how you adapt the sound of an artist's record to the live setting. However, in the pop market that glib definition scarcely does justice to the complexity of the task at hand.

“It varies from project to project,” Kojo explains. “Say you're working with a solo singer who's worked with producers and writers in the studio – those people aren't going to be involved in the live thing. So your job will be to listen to the music, understand it, select and audition musicians. Then you have to rehearse them and make decisions about how you're going to transfer it live. So that could be: is it going to be fully live or involve technology? Is it going to be two keyboards or one? What's the line up going to be?”

There is technical aspect too. “You get the stems from the record company, and your job is to decide how you are going to deconstruct this record and build it back together in a live context. That's where my production background is useful, because deconstructing and putting back together is very within my comfort zone.

“You could play it exactly like the record. But usually people go (bored) ‘Oh yeah great... why are we here?’ I think live performance is an opportunity to showcase not only the record but the talents of the artist. So you could start a song off the same as the record, or you could give it an intro. But how long is that intro going to be? Slow or fast? Or something expansive? Maybe you want to start with the strings. Maybe you could take the strings from the middle eight and put them at the beginning.”

Time and place

The answers to these questions often depend on where an artist is at in their career. “When people don’t know a song and don’t know an artist you can’t go around changing everything. You might try some fancy arrangement and end up seeing a row of puzzled faces out there. The irony is you could do exactly the same thing with the same artist a year down the line and it’s genius ‘cause you’ve done something amazing with this record that everybody’s bored of now!”

Some artists are very much hands-on regarding their shows, others are more open to suggestions from their MD. “I’m happy to work

either way. My job is to help facilitate their needs, not to dictate what I want.” What is important, he suggests, is some sort of rapport with the artist: “You don’t need necessarily to be their best friend, just to have a good professional relationship, a good musical understanding and a sense of trust.”

The biggest challenge, claims Kojo, is the sheer variety of things you have to deal with. “You’re trying to be a bridge between the artist and the band, and the artist and the label and the management. They all have different expectations. And everybody will need something from you that sometimes has nothing to do with the music. If it was just going in and working out arrangements it would be easy!”

Kojo has been an MU member since the late 80s. “Since I’ve been doing the live thing I’ve tried to be more involved with the Union. The last few years I’ve become aware of lots of issues with live music. I think there’s a need for an updated understanding of what session musicians do now, especially in the pop field. For example, in a three-hour rehearsal an orchestra will have a certain number of breaks where as pop session

musicians can end up rehearsing for up to 8-10 hours at a time.

“One thing I’ve always tried to get across to younger musicians is how important it is to actually engage with the Union. A lot of the times members go ‘Oh what are they going to do for me?’ But a union is only as strong as its members. It’s important for them to understand that the way the Union does things for you is for you to engage with it and engage with each other. That way the Union is stronger and in a better position to help everybody.”

Eye on the future

Kojo’s own position is an enviable one at present. He’s taking a short break this summer, but come Q4 there will be arena tours with some of the artists he’s involved with. He also has a few as-yet unfulfilled ambitions: “At some stage I’d like to move towards artist development. In an ideal world I would maybe co-manage with someone else, or co-develop. But I’d also love to do a proper international touring artist’s world tour. You know, one where you go everywhere: America, South America and Asia.”

He's aware he's lucky to have made the leap into live work just as it began to flourish in the UK. How long can that boom continue? "Well, there's a need for it certainly. Making records: that's something that everyone understands now. I think the genie's out of the bottle – everyone has Apple Loops or GarageBand on their phone! But the one thing that is harder to replicate is somebody standing in front of you impressing you and creating a one-off experience that is special and unique. And I don't see that going away any time soon."

For more info on Kojo visit kojosamuel.com and his Instagram [@kojomusicofficial](https://www.instagram.com/kojomusicofficial)

PP ARNOLD

Kojo's mother is one of the most respected vocalists in the music industry, a figure who has worked for over six decades, had hits of her own in the 60s, and provided backing for everyone from the Small Faces to the KLF, from Ocean Colour Scene to Roger Waters. She's also still working, having released only her fourth solo album *The New Adventures of... P.P. Arnold* this summer. "My mother has always had a major influence in my life and career in general," he explains. "Just her example has always been very encouraging and inspiring to me – she has shown me how to be strong and relentless and focused. The love that she has for music has come down to me and I'm a part of it. She probably has more of it than me and she is still out touring! I look at that and think 'wow'."

The Value Of Teaching

How teachers are pushing back on the obsession with grade exams.

Report by Neil Churchman

In today's under-resourced and target-driven educational climate, instrumental and vocal teachers face a variety of stresses. One of these is mounting pressure from parents, students and schools to ensure that music grade exams are acquired with mechanical regularity, with little regard for a broader, more balanced approach to learning.

Music grades can boost a pupil's chance of a university or school place, so it's easy to see why they are equated with success. But this becomes an unhealthy approach when exams are prioritised over real learning.

Point scoring

Across education, progress is increasingly measured by exam results, leading to a

narrowing of the learning experience. The introduction of the English Baccalaureate in 2010, with its emphasis on a portfolio of 'core' academic subjects at GCSE, is related to the rush for grades, according to MU Education Official Chris Walters.

“The EBacc has sidelined creative subjects and led to a mindset in schools that you can only do something if it’s going to reflect positively on the league tables,” he says. “It’s just one example of the points-scoring culture in education, and schools and parents are increasingly seeing music this way too – if there are no bankable exam results, it’s not worth doing.”

Caught in the middle are MU members. About two-thirds of the 31,000-strong Union are involved in teaching. Maxim Rowlands has been teaching piano for 40 years. A former lecturer at Goldsmiths College, he is a long-standing trustee of the Bromley Youth Music Trust, and a tutor at London’s Centre for Young Musicians. He is worried about the pressure to climb the grade ladder. “Some parents have an unrealistic idea of what is involved in taking the exam. A pupil might just scrape through, say, Grade 2, and then turn

up for the next lesson with a Grade 3 book in their hands. After a grade exam, a pupil should want to do other pieces and repertoire and then, after about a year, they are ready to go on to the next level.”

Pamela Rose is a piano teacher with a busy practice in south-west London, working privately and in schools. She, too, has experience of pushy parents and pupils. “It’s the sense of competition these days,” she explains. “The first thing children say to each other when they know their friend is taking lessons is, ‘What grade are you on?’ It’s narrowed down to that. You get children who just want to take the grade. They don’t realise the work involved and only want to buy the next book. It’s something that goes right through the system.”

Broadening the scope

Pamela says that this obsession with grades is having an effect on music at all levels. “One of the most excruciating things for me to do is go along to a school concert and hear nothing but exam pieces. That’s a mark of the pressure. I tell parents it’s really important for your child to learn other repertoire, to become independent as a

musician and not to be confined to their exam pieces for the rest of their lives.”

David Miles teaches classical bass, as well as popular guitar and bass, drawing a firm distinction between the two disciplines. “Parents want a bench-mark of achievement so they naturally gravitate towards the idea of grade exams, which in the strictly classical model I don’t have any argument with. But for non-classical music I don’t find it appropriate or fit for purpose.”

David says pressure often rises towards the first year of sixth form, when UCAS applications loom. “You’re sometimes expected to teach to Grade 6 level in about two terms from nowhere,” he says. “And that’s just nonsense.”

“Experienced teachers develop ways of downplaying unreal expectations,” explains David. “I will pose the question: ‘In the time and the resources available, I can teach you to play the instrument to a degree, or I can teach you to pass an exam. Which would you like?’ If it comes back fairly strongly for exams I will then ask for an absolute commitment that

you will practise for half an hour every day, or for higher grades, an hour a day. That's usually the end of the discussion, and results in lessons continuing as before."

Maxim Rowlands says he will sometimes go through a student's previous mark sheets with them, highlighting where they need improvement, or get them to do some sight reading, which is a good indicator of their true level. "I usually wait for them to work it out for themselves," he says.

Pamela Rose understands the need for exams in music teaching. "Exams have a value. They are great in setting goals, students feel a sense of achievement and they can work a lot harder when they know there's an exam at the end of it."

But Pamela also believes that persuasion is better than confrontation. "I am nothing but honest, I won't enter a pupil into an exam they are not ready for, but I don't refuse to teach because they'll just go somewhere else and a tiger mother will just take their child off to a tiger teacher, and what happens to the poor child then?"

Chris Walters says the financial implications of standing your ground can be hard. Losing students over an exam disagreement means losing fees, and that is only one consideration for music educators.

“There are a lot of other pressures on teachers. They’re often up against poor pay, dodgy contracts and challenging working conditions. If a school tells you to put students through Grade 2 by the end of the year, it’s difficult to be an advocate for a more enlightened approach to music education if you’re already up against it.”

Guide for members

Chris says one way forward for the MU lies in creating a guide for members that will show them how to respond to grade pressure. And he wants members’ help in compiling it. “I have in mind a resource that contains information for teachers to read, but also might include different versions targeted at parents, students and schools. It’s not about criticising grade exams. They are a fantastic tool. But we need to support our members in getting the message out there that musical learning is about a lot more than pushing on in this linear way through the grades.

“It’s about broadening in all sorts of different directions and exploring things that aren’t covered by the graded exams syllabus that are hugely valuable musically – the all-round skills you will take forward in your life as a musician. That’s what teaching music is really all about.”

If you are a music teacher with any valuable advice to pass on, then please contact teachers@theMU.org

GOOD THINGS ABOUT GRADES

Grades have been around for a long time. The ABRSM was founded in 1889 and now runs exams in more than 90 countries.

“Used properly, grades are a very good way of encouraging progress in a pupil, providing the teacher decides if and when the pupil enters the exam,” explains Maxim Rowlands.

But exams are good for teachers, too. Maxim keeps the exam mark sheets for his

students, going back decades, and uses them to check on his own progress.

“If your students are, for instance, generally doing worse in their scales, you can concentrate on that area in your teaching. For most pupils exams are a good incentive. I think I would have done less practise myself than I did if it wasn't for the grade system,” Maxim adds.

Songs Of Change

As the effects of global warming and pollution grow ever greater, the music industry is adding its voice to the climate change protest.

By Katie Nicholls

In April 2019, thousands of activists blocked roads and bridges in London as part of protest movement Extinction Rebellion, while David Attenborough's *Climate Change: The Facts* aired to a shocked audience. In the same month, 16-year-old Swedish activist Greta Thunberg met with UK party leaders and gave a speech in parliament condemning the UK's inadequate policies in tackling the growing threat of an environmental disaster. It was a perfect storm. The government declared an environmental emergency in the UK and the climate change message was suddenly no longer the concern of a growing minority, instead becoming fully absorbed into the mainstream cultural consciousness.

Of course, warnings about climate change are not new, with Neil Young (*Mother Earth*) and Joni

Mitchell (*Big Yellow Taxi*) to Radiohead (*Idioteque*), Michael Jackson (*Earth Song*) and Antony Hegarty (*4 Degrees*) discussing this issue through their work since the 1960s. What happened in spring 2019, however, was the sense of emergency reaching new levels. Naturally, musicians, festivals and venues have been responding to the crisis.

Ticking clock

“It seemed like the music world had lost touch with reality, partying like there’s no tomorrow, when ‘no tomorrow’ has become the forecast,” says Fay Milton, drummer with Savages and one of the eight-person working group leading Music Declares Emergency. The new group was formed to “enable the UK music industry to declare a climate and ecological emergency, to accelerate collaboration and ambition in order to meet critical targets and to call on government to use their policy and investment tools to help us to reach those goals”. So far, over 700 artists, venues, festivals and promoters have signed up to the group’s aim of a carbon neutral music scene, including Radiohead, The Cambridge Folk Festival and Abbey Road Studios.

“The most powerful thing we can do is to build communities to work together, share knowledge, and accelerate ambition. So that’s how we work to support everyone – from individuals to large institutions,” says Chiara Badiali from environmental action charity Julie’s Bicycle. Its goal is to galvanise creative communities to act on climate change. It has also been the driving force behind the formation of Music Declares Emergency.

Meanwhile, UK festivals are upping their engagement with the issue. Shambala, a leading light in promoting green credentials since its first event in 1999, has been meat free since 2016 and now uses 100 per cent renewable energy using vegetable oil and solar power units. In 2019 Glastonbury banned single use plastic from the festival site.

Voice of protest

By virtue of their audience, musicians have the opportunity to champion a cause and engage their audiences in the issues that concern them. “Artists and creatives are uniquely placed because we have a very specific relationship to how we make, experience, and reflect on the

world around us,” says Chiara. “The arts and creative communities are better placed than any other to drive a peaceful, consensual and positive transformation... And now is the time to act.”

“I think it’s vital,” agrees Emily Barker, singer-songwriter, and UK Americana Artist of the Year 2018. “I think in any form of art it’s crucial that we emotive the science and we’re able to do that through the medium of music. It can be moving, it can be touching, we can tell stories.” Born in Australia, Emily says she was raised in a family who were proactive about sustainability, but then, “chose a job that flies [me] around the world; driving around in smelly diesel vans”.

Riding it home

Herein lies the crux of a huge dichotomy for musicians concerned about the environment. In an industry in which musicians mainly earn a living by touring, how do they marry this reality with frequently boarding planes and driving trucks full of gear, eating fast food en route? “I have thought about this because I’m such a hypocrite in so many ways,” says Emily. “I care so much about the environment and there being a

future for all species. How do I go about sharing that concern but then also visiting my family in Australia or hopping on a plane to tour America? We do our best within the infrastructure that we currently have. For example, we can't afford an electric van and there isn't the infrastructure for that in the UK at the moment, so we wouldn't get very far. So, instead we got rid of our big transit and got a much smaller van, which is about half the emissions and we've remapped the engine so it's about 20 per cent more effective."

"So much of what we do involves travel, and budgetary constraints impact on the choices of mode of transport," says Rick Finlay, West End and jazz drummer, and MU Executive Committee member. "That sounds inflexible and smug, but the economies of touring are already incredibly tight, often subsidised by the musicians themselves, and if you ask an ensemble to take 24 hours to travel by train (I recently looked at such a trip to Oslo) compared to flying, that working time has to be paid for, which is going to impact on the budget.

"The cultural value of music is built on the life-enhancing experience of taking music and

musicians out to audiences...” he continues, “the history of music is the history of cultural exchange and the unique social and political value of that. So, you can see the case for a different attitude to financial support for the arts if we are to address the carbon footprint of touring.”

The MU acknowledges that ‘green touring’ is a dilemma for its members. “Arts Council England’s draft strategy 2020-30 places significant emphasis on environmental sustainability, so I think we and our members will have to grapple with it,” says Naomi Pohl, MU Deputy General Secretary. “The emphasis on our side will be on offering advice on realistic, practical and cost-effective ways to lower your carbon footprint.”

A major way in which musicians can reduce their carbon footprint is by tackling their rider requests. And we’re not talking Van Halen infamously demanding all the brown M&Ms be removed from the bowl. “We haven’t had water bottles on our rider for a few years now. Ask for a jug of water and glasses,” suggests Emily when it comes to reducing the carbon footprint of a

show. “Try and have less meat, or rotate your rider and only have meat three times a week, rather than every night.”

Act now, think later

The drivers of change come from myriad sources, and while individual responsibility is key, the emphasis lies, as Chiara suggests, with the government to adopt green policies.

Musicians are important (if they so choose) in making that voice for change as collectively loud as possible from the ground up. “Grassroots action is absolutely important,” considers Emily, who has performed at Extinction Rebellion protests. “But I’m obsessed with thinking about how to reach people outside of that as well. I know that Extinction Rebellion does turn some people off and with everything being so polarised politically, unfortunately, grassroots action and the environmental issue sometimes gets labelled as being leftist, which is absurd.

As the sense of urgency grows and pressure for change at a governmental level increases, we can expect that musicians will be increasingly involved in keeping the issue of climate change a prominent political concern.

As Naomi Pohl says: “Musicians have always highlighted political issues in their work and it doesn’t get much bigger than this.”

ONE STEP AT A TIME...

Chiara Badiali from Julie’s Bicycles advises on making small changes

“If you can, do fly less. It is a real choice. You can talk to your management about avoiding one-off international engagements and use your voice wisely when speaking to your audiences and fans. And when you fly there are some common-sense measures, such as avoiding the most expensive seats; and always offset or make a donation to an environmental cause. If you’re driving, choose a fuel efficient vehicle and do common sense things like make sure your tyre pressure is right, don’t idle. And remember that trains are a really comfortable way of getting around where that is an option.

“Speak to your fans about sustainable choices: public transport, sharing cars, and incentivise them for travelling sustainably – for example, many festivals already have terrific advice on sustainable travel, so there are a lot of inspirational ideas already out there.”

GREEN MEANS GO GREEN

Where musicians can go to find help and advice on reducing their carbon footprint:

Julie's Bicycle

This London-based charity supports the creative community to act on climate change and environmental sustainability. It believes that the creative community is uniquely placed to transform the conversation around climate change and translate it into action, and it can offer advice and support to individuals

and organisations. Resources including webinars, podcasts, research and reports are readily available on its website.

juliesbicycle.com

Music Declares Emergency

This is a group of artists, music industry professionals and organisations that stand together to declare a climate and ecological emergency and call for an immediate governmental response “to protect all life on Earth”. Music Declares Emergency says: “We believe in the power of music to promote the cultural change needed to create a better future.” Visit the website and sign up to show support, add donations or to find out how to assist with events.

musicdeclares.net

Musicians’ Union

As well as offering advice on how musicians can adopt the strategies outlined by groups such as Music Declares Emergency and Julie’s Bicycle, the MU will be aiming to help comply with Arts Council England’s 10-year

strategy, which is due in December. It is expected that environmental sustainability will feature heavily.

theMU.org

Tools Of The Trade

Guitarist-composer Antonio Forcione shares his tips on how to protect and maintain instruments in transit.

Report by Clive Somerville

Charismatic Italian Antonio Forcione is a world-renowned jazz guitarist and composer. Weaving Latin and African influences with flamenco and classical, he creates a vividly intricate sound. He has worked with artists such as Phil Collins, John McLaughlin, Eduardo Niebla and comedian Bill Bailey, and directed and performed with award-winning flamenco comedy troupe Olé. He has made 21 albums to date, the latest Joy as part of AKA Trio with Seckou Keita and Adriano Adewale.

“When I was 11, my older brother bought me a second-hand Hollywood drum kit and I would bash it for hours,” recalls Antonio of his early foray into music. “It did not go down well with the shoemaker below us! So my dad bought a guitar and suggested I try that instead.”

After initial misgivings that the instrument was somehow “less cool” than drums, Antonio was hooked. Two years later he was touring Italy playing lead guitar, with his brother on rhythm and uncle on accordion. It began a life-long love affair with travel and musical tradition.

Damage limitation

“I’m a curious and restless soul,” he muses. “I travel and I hear beautiful music and I play what I feel.” Such a lifestyle has bestowed a wealth of musical influences, but a precarious existence for his precious guitars.

“It is nerve-wracking, especially on planes,” he agrees. “It’s become a lot harder with tighter airline regulations. Wearing a soft gig bag upside down on your back doesn’t look so overpowering when you board, but often you’re forced to put guitars in the hold.

So my number one tip would be: buy a good quality hard case, label it professionally with ‘FRAGILE – GUITAR’ and your website, and wrap the guitar in bubble-wrap or soft clothing. Don’t lock the case, because if security want to check inside, they’ll just force it open, risking damage.”

For two years Antonio has been travelling to and from Cuba making a documentary on trova, the folk tradition of guitar-playing troubadours. “It reminds me of growing up in a dusty village in Italy. It might disappear soon, so I thought I’d better document it,” he explains. “I met one trovador in the beautiful old town of Trinidad – and was amazed to discover he had two of my albums. His wife kissed my hand and said ‘I don’t know who you are, but your name was enough to get him out of bed after ten days with dengue fever!’”

But Caribbean climes bring their own risks to acoustic guitars. “They go out of tune quicker, so I always have a tuner on my phone,” says Antonio. “For an authentic Latin sound, I use nylon-stringed acoustic guitars. Steel strings snap more easily and rust quicker, so take plenty of spares. In Cuba I was always being asked for nylon D strings, as they’re the thinnest among the wound strings and the first to go.”

Finger techniques

But Antonio points out it’s not just your guitar you need to look after. “Classical guitarists have a whole tool kit just for their nails! My kit bag

always includes nail clippers to snip string-ends and untidy nails, and a nail file. I've even seen flamenco players glue bits of ping-pong balls to broken nails!"

Finally, he advises to be selective about which guitars you risk in transit. "I was given a beautiful vintage Ramirez in Spain, but I take reliable, modern versions, with a damn good pick-up, on tour. And if you take more than one guitar, get your friends to share the load by bringing them for you."

For more on Antonio Forcione, visit antonioforcione.com

History of the Banjo

Rhiannon Giddens and other players rewind the banjo's controversial history, from African origins and white US usurpation to the present.

Profile by Henry Yates

The banjo is a master of reinvention. To the casual music fan in modern times, it might be chiefly the weapon of choice for the bluegrass scene and indie-folk stadium-fillers Mumford & Sons. But scratch the surface, stick a pin in the history books, and few instruments have shed more skins or existed in such a state of flux.

Depending on when you enter the timeline, the banjo is either a sociopolitical icon or a laughing-stock. It's been embraced – and rejected – by genres as eclectic as Celtic folk and Caribbean mento. “It's a huge topic that, unfortunately, we reduce to just saying, ‘the banjo is a bluegrass instrument’,” says Rhiannon Giddens, frontwoman of acclaimed old-time act the Carolina Chocolate Drops and an authority on the instrument's evolution. “But if you'll pardon the pun, it's never as black and white as we want it to be.”

Heart of Africa

In this tangled narrative, there is at least one point we know to be a cast-iron certainty: the banjo was created in white America. But as Giddens reminds us, this is perhaps the greatest falsehood of all. In reality, the banjo evolved from various West African gourd instruments that accompanied the first black slaves to America in the 17th century. “You have the akonting from Senegambia and the n’goni from Mali. All the lute instruments that existed in West Africa would have gone into this melting pot that created what we know as the banjo in the new world. The Haitian banza is the earliest instrument that has all the characteristics of a banjo: the short string, the flat fingerboard. For me, the banjo exemplifies everything about America – y’know, African creation with European innovation.”

“The banjo has a politically complicated history,” adds Ed Hicks, one of the UK’s leading banjo players and music educators. “It’s now increasingly seen as an African instrument again, which is kind of how it was seen in the 19th century too. The battle for cultural ownership of the instrument goes on.”

That cultural tug-of-war is one of the most fascinating – and troubling – aspects of the banjo’s history. In the early years, explains Giddens, the instrument was a mainstay of black musicians on Southern plantations. “The majority of string bands for a long time were black, because that was seen as a servant’s function. So that meant enslaved musicians were often creating the music for the square dances. Then, at the turn of the century, you have 50/50 between white and black string bands. Thirty years later, it’s like people have already forgotten that black people can play this music. And then you had minstrelsy, where you have black innovation being homogenised for white culture. Minstrelsy really starts that, and you have this idea of whites performing what becomes known as ‘black music’ on the banjo.

“To me, it shows how quickly the narrative can completely flip,” adds Giddens. “It only takes a generation, it only takes 20 years, and an instrument that was known as an exclusively black instrument is known as exclusively white. It’s dizzying how fast it can happen. Luckily, we’ve got lots of historical record that shows very clearly how it happened. Once you start

looking at the research, it's obvious. But it's been so thoroughly whitewashed, so thoroughly forgotten how much the banjo was associated with black people. It's a very good example of rewriting a country's cultural narrative for racist and economic reasons."

If the banjo's demographic was shifting in the 20th century, its exponents were taking quantum leaps. By the post-war era, the towering figure of Earl Scruggs had mobilised the nascent bluegrass scene with his trailblazing three-finger style. "The five-string banjo was originally played with a sort of half-strumming and half-fingerpicking style," explains respected banjo player and tutor Howard Burton from the BassTree String Band. "It then evolved to a two-finger style, then famously developed into the three-finger style used by the majority of players today – accredited to Earl Scruggs back in the 40s."

Facing extinction

In 1950, the virtuoso dazzle of Scruggs' signature tunes such as Foggy Mountain Breakdown could still dent the charts, but the banjo was facing obsolescence at the hands of a deadly rival. In a

recent interview, the US luminary Béla Fleck noted that black jazz and pop musicians “loved the guitar because it was a move away from that old instrument white folks would play when they’d paint themselves in blackface and sing songs about how great it was on the plantation”.

Giddens believes there were also practical reasons for the new world order: “An instrument like the banjo – especially the older style, with five strings, with one short string – means it’s an instrument that’s in a key. So it’s very good for modal music, it’s very good for dance music, but it’s not so good as American music developed, aged and changed. More European ideas come into it, so you have chord changes and more complex harmonics – the six-string guitar is a much more versatile instrument for that. Then there’s how loud a guitar could be. Previously, banjos were used a lot for recordings in the 20s, because they were loud. Then the guitar catches up and it’s all over. In old-time music, the banjo used to hold the rhythm down, then the guitar came along and sort of took over that function. The banjo did get displaced in some ways. But it held on.”

Surprising flexibility

Measured by sales and cultural prevalence, the guitar might have won the war. But it's an oversimplification to suggest the banjo was kept alive solely by the bluegrass community. "It's surprising the variation of music the banjo has actually played over the years," notes Dan Walsh, whose fluid picking drove this year's acclaimed Trio album. "There was a perception, for example, that playing Celtic folk music in clawhammer banjo style was first done in the 70s, when in fact it had happened way before that, but had been forgotten about. I've never understood why the banjo is thought of as so one-dimensional. I mean, it's not a kazoo or something – it's got five strings and 22 frets. It can be used really well in anything from funk, jazz and classical to bluegrass, folk and Indian."

"The banjo's modern form has been with us over 100 years," picks up Hicks. "Plectrum banjo featured in early New Orleans jazz bands and continues to be a staple of trad-jazz and Dixieland. It was big in skiffle with Lonnie Donegan. The tenor banjo is used in Irish trad – it even has a home in Caribbean mento."

But even the banjo's most ardent admirer would admit there have been lean spells. Fleck recalls that when he broke through with New Grass Revival in the 80s, "banjo was the kiss of death – if you put it on a track, you could pretty much guarantee you wouldn't have a hit record." Hicks concedes that the instrument "fell out of fashion" after the folk revival of the 50s and 60s. Casual music fans might have overlooked it entirely, were it not for cinematic flashpoints like *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and the nagging *Dueling Banjos* theme of *Deliverance* (a film largely responsible for the 'redneck' stigma). "The banjo has been the butt of a cultural joke for a long time because of that damn movie," says Giddens. "It's terrible, and that's still what people think of. It's tough to be a banjo player sometimes."

Coming full circle

But the banjo has a knack for survival. And in light of the multi-million sales of their 2012 album *Babel* and the following year's headline set at Glastonbury, there's a case that no band has done more to elevate the instrument in the post-millennium than Mumford & Sons. "The perception definitely changed with their rise,"

reflects Walsh. “I remember my early days of playing in pubs and the howls of derision as the banjo came out of the case. The banjo suddenly was ‘in’ and the average age of my students dropped dramatically. To have a banjo in a genuinely popular and cool band – and not as a novelty – made a huge difference.”

Giddens gives due credit to Mumfords banjo player Winston Marshall for pricking up ears with hits like *I Will Wait*, but urges newcomers to use these mass-market moments as a gateway to the instrument’s more rewarding sunken treasure. “The banjo is best when you can’t pin it down,” she concludes. “I just wish people knew more about the other styles of banjo, about the history of it. The banjo doesn’t belong to anybody. Anybody can pick it up and do whatever they want with it. And the more I dig back and make historical connections, the more I find some really funky, awesome stuff. I feel like that’s where the fresh sounds are to be found. I feel like the way forwards for the banjo is backwards...”

ON THE RECORD

“My new record with Francesco Turrisi is called *There Is No Other*,” says Rhiannon Giddens, “and on the title track, I’m using my minstrel banjo. I’ve been playing music written for that instrument for a long time now. It really harkens more back to the African instruments that directly preceded it. So you have the skin head, you have the fretless fingerboard – there’s a different rhythm and a different bounce in that instrument than there is to the modern banjo. What I’m doing is taking these really old 1850s tunes – but people don’t know the music is that old, and they hear some really fresh sounds. I’m one of the few people to really study minstrel music and minstrel banjo, on a historical instrument. There’s no recordings of these tunes, so I’m kind of free to interpret them how I want, how the instrument speaks to me. But also, they haven’t been beaten into the ground in terms of banjo sounds. I find all that stuff works really well with Francesco’s

frame drumming, like, I can't even tell who's playing what. I didn't realise how amazingly well the banjo and frame drum were going to go together, but when I think about it, it makes sense."

Using Music In Dementia Care

For the last decade, Orchestra of the Swan has been delivering a programme of live performance workshops to help tackle this condition.

Report by George Hall

Dementia is a term with which we have all become sadly familiar over recent decades. Not a single disease, but rather a range of conditions, it is something directly experienced by roughly 10% of the world's population, while countless others are affected by its impact. Though currently incurable, various therapies are known to be helpful to those living with the condition. One of these is therapeutic music, which has proved highly beneficial to those lucky enough to encounter it.

Trained and advised by specialist music therapists, musicians are increasingly engaging with the challenge and privilege of providing therapeutic treatment for those living with

dementia. One leading UK ensemble engaged in this work for more than a decade now is Orchestra of the Swan. Founded in 1995 in the historic town of Stratford-upon-Avon it is internationally admired for its recordings, tours and its commitment to new music.

Currently 22 of the orchestra's 32 core members are involved with this branch of its regular activity. One of these is Louise Braithwaite (associated with the orchestra for 15 years and now its principal cor anglais and co-principal oboist), who from 2006 to 2016 also managed the orchestra's learning and participation programme. Louise explains how the orchestra's work in care homes began.

“About ten years ago we received funding to operate a rural series in Warwickshire,” she says. “Part of that application was to try to reach groups that might not attend local concerts. Access to transport in rural areas is often a barrier, and one also associated with an ageing population.”

Sweet spot

The orchestra contacted day centres and

activity clubs for older people to see if anyone would welcome free live music.

“We got a good uptake, so we started sending out a string quartet to do programmes of light classical and tea-dance-style music. Initially we didn’t always get the repertoire quite right, but the clients were happy to tell us what they’d like. Eventually we found a sweet spot that worked for them and was good for us.”

Following the Warwickshire experience the orchestra put in a bid to work in east Birmingham – an area with significant social and economic challenges for residents where day centres offered a meal to isolated elderly people. “We sent out duos – including violin and cello, or flute and harp – to create a series of up to six visits in different centres of maybe 60 or 90 minutes each.”

What did Louise and her fellow musicians encounter? “People living with dementia at different stages, as well as those who have developed dementia as part of other conditions: family or staff members are often able to support us in communicating with that person.

“I always ask the care staff, ‘Who’s with you today? Is there anyone who would particularly benefit from our music?’” explains Louise. “You can’t know how that person is going to respond – it can be incredibly powerful.”

Personal connection was crucial to the project from the start. “What we didn’t want to do was to go into a room, play, and then leave: we wanted it to be meaningful both for our clients and ourselves.” Repeat visits meant that the musicians were able to get to know people by name and to talk about what they had been doing during the week.

In terms of finding a repertoire, Louise says, “we’ve become adept at raiding charity shop music shelves. We’re remembering the things our parents or grandparents enjoyed. Maybe the person used to go to dances in the 1950s, so we might play a piece of popular music from that time,” ensuring there’s variety.

But she and others taking part are acutely aware of the limitations of what they can currently offer. Cultural elements need to be extended. “As an orchestra of primarily British-trained people with

a British cultural background, we have an offering that is great for a lot of people, but which doesn't meet the needs of every older person.

“From my experience in the West Midlands, for instance, there's certainly a large population with a Caribbean background – so there are definitely opportunities for people from different cultural traditions and different music to get involved, to answer the needs of these communities.”

Important role

Unsurprisingly, Louise feels the whole process of working in this field has developed her as a human being. “I've learnt a huge amount about people's thirst for human contact. As our population is ageing the need is greater, and we have an important role to play in meeting a small part of that need.

“Many of the people we meet are bed-bound. If your life involves a room that's maybe 12 feet square, and you're essentially in the same space all of the time because your care needs are so high, anything that comes into that space during that 24-hour period that's different to yesterday

or to the day before is a positive thing. The feedback we get from the care staff is that what we do carries on making a difference after we've gone."

Making a difference

In 2016 Louise passed on her learning and participation role to Sue Pope, whose background is in museums and heritage but who is also a musician. Sue pays particular tribute to Mindsong, a Gloucestershire-based charity that works with people who have mid- to late-stage dementia.

"Our relationship began back in 2014 as a result of working together on a project at the Three Choirs Festival," says Sue. "They train any of our players who wish to be considered to deliver this work, enabling them to understand the different types of dementia, how they manifest and impact on people, and how music can help support those affected. Then the musicians go into a care home and deliver a session for the first time with a music therapist on hand to help them."

Thus far, OOTS has taken this work to Stratford,

Birmingham, Worcestershire and Herefordshire. “Depending on the funding that we’ve secured, there might be a series of six, eight or 10 consecutive weeks of half-day sessions,” says Sue. “The players will be shown how to use their music in a therapeutically informed manner that is person-centred, reacting to the people that they’re performing for and with, being mindful of what’s going on in the room and picking up on any signals.”

It’s also important to maintain a duty of care for the musicians within what is necessarily an entirely different environment from being in a concert venue or a school. “Something that can be overlooked is the impact that delivering this work can have on the deliverer, so we have reflection sessions for players, again led by Mindsong – a kind of peer-to-peer support opportunity that gives the musicians the chance to ask for further advice and support.”

Louise has found this extremely worthwhile. “The music therapists are able to interpret how clients have responded, but they can also support you in processing your emotional reaction.”

In addition to its care-home work the orchestra also visits community centres that double as local dementia cafes. It has developed a Dementia Arts Network for Stratford to bring together various other arts-based organisations and museums working with local people living with dementia, as well as offering dementia-friendly rehearsals in the Stratford Playhouse – where their key residency is.

“We are also orchestra-in-residence at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire,” explains Louise. “Some of their masters students come to us on placement, and we also have postgraduates who are doing community musician modules that involve visits to care homes where they observe our players and are mentored by them.”

The work is funded from a variety of sources – Sue Pope cites the Arts Council, a generous grant from the Linbury Trust, and others from various smaller local trusts and foundations.

“We are really committed to this work. We’ve trained our board and some of our staff and volunteers as dementia friends. But we’d also like to share what we’ve learned so that in the

fullness of time we can provide something that would add to the body of knowledge, not just for ourselves, but also for the sector as a whole.”

THE MU VIEW

“The outreach work that Orchestra of the Swan is doing is fantastic, but if you’re working in this sector as an individual member make sure that you receive the appropriate training and keep yourself up to date with that, and also be aware of safeguarding and DBS issues. Don’t forget that although this is a growing sector, and as others dwindle an area of work offering musicians alternative career paths, the same advice applies around getting proper written terms and contracts. If you’re unsure, call your Regional Office. The MU’s Musician Behind The Moment campaign is also about highlighting this area of work because our members do so much more

than gig or teach. Musicians help the wider cohesion in our society through their contribution to culture.”

**Stephen Brown, MU
Midlands Regional Organiser**

Double Impact

London duo Nova Twins reveal how their idiosyncratic sound and single-minded approach come purely from a desire to be true to themselves.

Profile by Dave Everley

When Nova Twins formed there was nothing else around like them. Two fiercely independent female musicians of mixed heritage, they made an uproarious noise that drew equal inspiration from hip-hop, punk, grime, garage rock and more. Half a decade later they're still out there on their own. And they couldn't be happier.

“People want to label us: ‘What are you? Urban Punk?’” says singer and guitarist Amy Love.

“Society labels everything, but not everybody fits them. And a lot of people don't want to be labelled. We like to exist between the lines.”

“When we started, people said we had to be more ‘pop’,” adds bassist Georgia South. “They tried to cut our riffs, like, ‘Maybe you should just play two notes of it’. We just carried on doing

what we wanted to do.”

Sitting in an on-trend East London bar that doubles up as a motorcycle garage, still dressed in the vivid outfits and make-up they wore for their photo session, the pair are an explosion of personality and colour. The same hyper-confident, take-no-prisoners approach that courses through their music fuels both their conversation and their worldview.

“I don’t think we’ve ever really had a plan,” says South. “We didn’t think, ‘This is what we want to do’. We just did it.” That initial lack of a concrete career path hasn’t hindered Nova Twins. Since releasing debut single *Bassline Bitch* in 2016 – accompanied by an attention-grabbing video filmed by South’s mother on a mobile phone – they’ve carved their name on the club and festival circuits. Impressively, they’ve done it on their own, funding and releasing the subsequent string of singles and EPs themselves.

“The DIY thing is important for us,” says Love. “That’s not to say we don’t want a deal, but we don’t want the wrong deal.”

Integrated roots

Lewisham-born South's parents are both musicians, something that has given her a clear view of what to expect from the music business. "There was also a heavy grime culture when I was growing up, and it was cool to be immersed in that," she says. "That definitely influenced the style of bass I play, mixed with the hip-hop element. And I love fat synth sounds."

South met Love when the latter attended The British Academy Of New Music with South's older brother. "It was really good in terms of opening my horizons," says Love of music college. "Being from a small town in Essex, it wasn't that diverse. Coming to London, I experienced different types of people, different ways of doing things. I really fell in love with that live sound, and I discovered different types of artists that I wouldn't have found out about being at home in Essex – MC5, New York Dolls, Betty Davis."

Both had been in bands, but when their respective projects fizzled out, they decided to team up together, pooling their influences to see what came out. "We were bored one day, and we just said, 'Shall we write a song together?'" says

Love with a laugh. “So we did. It was called *Bad Bitches*. That was the tester for what we wanted to do.”

Making it click

Nova Twins’ early songs bore the imprint of what they would become, but something was missing. After using a drum machine and then someone making beats for them, they recruited live drummer Tim Nugent. “That’s when our sound just went *whoosh*,” says Love.

“And our pedal boards grew,” adds South. “We started off with four pedals. Now we’ve got 15 and we use every one of them.” Love: “That’s why we don’t drink before shows, cos it could go horribly wrong.” *Bassline Bitch* provided the template for Nova Twins sound, although it’s one they have constantly tweaked and shifted since. “It feels like we’ve come full circle to find the sound we have now,” says South.

“*Bassline Bitch* was quite urban, then we went through things that were quite rocky and punky, really heavy. But now we’re going back to having a real urban aspect, but with the heaviness that we built up. We’ve never wanted to be just one

thing. No one can tell us, 'You can only do this, or you can only do that'."

This genre-fluid approach has won them friends and admirers from across the spectrum, landing them opening spots with everyone from Brighton indie-rock heroes Wolf Alice to rap-metal supergroup Prophets Of Rage. The latter's guitarist, Tom Morello, expressed his admiration at how the duo handled the band's notoriously partisan audience. "He was, like, 'I didn't know what to expect because some support bands get booed off'," says South. "But people were surfing and moshing."

Keeping it real

The duo's live show is a point of pride for the pair, particularly their refusal to use backing tapes or pre-recorded sounds. "We don't have synths or laptops in any of our music," says South defiantly. "We do it all manually."

"That connection with an audience is such a huge part of what we do – that interaction, being on the edge of your seat," says South. "People can play headline shows without a band, but that's not something we'd ever do."

For a band without the machinery of a label behind them, playing live is a crucial part of their continued existence. “We do make a lot of our money from playing live, especially in Europe, where you get paid a little bit more than in the UK,” says Love. “It’s still expensive because you have to take more people out on the road, but we’re not going to cut corners just for the sake of money.”

The band’s financial position was shored up this summer when they won a PRS Momentum Grant worth £10,000. The grant has allowed them to invest in a radio plugger and a PR, among other things. “We’ve applied a few times but never got it, so we thought we’d won the lottery,” says South. “We screamed a lot.”

There’s a deeper reason for their elation. The grant has alleviated the need to seek out a record deal merely to survive, meaning they continue to retain their independence – a valuable commodity to them. “A lot of bands end up signing a deal quicker because they don’t have the money to continue without one,” says Love. “We’ve heard so many horror stories from people we know who got signed by someone who said they were great, only for them to

suddenly go, ‘We’ve scrapped your ideas, let’s put you with this team of writers’.”

Into the vortex

That individuality remains Nova Twins’ defining characteristic, and their shape-shifting sound is captured on exhilarating new single *Vortex*. The song showcases what South calls the “ravey” side of their personality, even though it was written and recorded on traditional instruments. “It sounds electronic,” says Love. “The crazy sound in it is the bass, not a synth.”

Like all the great anthems, there’s a self-mythologising edge to *Vortex*, which is set to appear on the duo’s debut album, slated for release in early 2020. “We wrote it about our sound: ‘You’re in the vortex now’,” says South. “And it’s about empowering women. It’s a girl anthem. When we play it live, you see the women in the audience reacting to it straight away. It feels good that people have picked up on that.”

Empowerment and encouragement are a big part of what Nova Twins do. South cites a Beyoncé concert she attended in her early teens as a pivotal moment for her – “She had a full

band of women of colour, a female guitarist with a full afro, just shredding with a guitar behind her head, and that's the first time I went, 'I can see myself up there'" – and both hope Nova Twins can have the same impact.

"I always find it weird when artists say, 'I don't want to be a role model'." says Love. "I want our music to reach a wider audience so when other young girls grow up, they will see something different: if you're mixed, black or a woman of colour, you can still be in the punk rock scene, and play your instruments in this way. We didn't have that growing up."

There's still a long way to go on many levels – the duo point out they were just one of seven bands featuring female members at this year's Download Festival. But it's a fight they're up for. "We want to pick that baton up," adds South. "Let the females play with the boys."

"It feels like we're winning it in our small way," says Love. "We have these great opportunities, all these great things happening. But it's because we've worked hard at it, and it pays off in the end."

INVALUABLE AID

When she was starting her career as a musician, Georgia South's parents encouraged her to join the Musicians' Union. She is full of praise for how the MU can help artists in the early phase of their careers. "There are so many things that can help you out, such as gear insurance, legal advice, seminars, even cheaper ear moulds. It's the kind of basic stuff that if you're just starting out, you probably won't even know you need to know about."

"It's definitely a positive thing," says Amy Love, who recently joined her bandmate in the MU. "For instance, if you can't afford a lawyer, you can get legal advice. New bands wouldn't even think about that – a lot of artists don't have friends or parents in music to help them, so the MU would be someone they could turn to for advice. That's so important because a lot of bands make bad deals early on, just because they don't have the information."

Mahadevi Sessions

South Asian women musicians address and defy cultural stereotypes.

Report by Yasmin Prabhudas

“Everybody wanted me to be a Bhangra Bollywood babe or some kind of earth mother,” says musician and performance artist Bishi. She was referring to the cultural stereotypes facing South Asian women in the music industry at one in a series of discussion sessions held at Bethnal Green Working Men’s Club on 4 July. Entitled the Mahadevi Sessions, the name evokes the Hindu ‘great goddess’ of creation, preservation and destruction.

The impetus for the East London event, backed by the Musicians’ Union, came out of a UK Music survey ‘Diversity: Music Industry Workforce 2018’, which looked at the representation of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups in the UK music industry. It did not, however, highlight the specific contribution of South Asian musicians. Bishi, the host and organiser, explained: “When I ask industry shakers

what South Asian artists they can name, the same seven names keep cropping up, four of them are men and six were signed in the 1990s. With no disrespect to their talent, why aren't there another 40, or 400 by now?

“In the face of repeated institutional discrimination in my career, I set up these sessions to get us all together to find solidarity and identify more peers, as I know I am not the only one to have repeatedly faced these issues.”

Bishi said that she hopes the sessions are the beginning of a conversation, where people feel less alone and find solidarity. “I'd like it to be a space where people start building bridges and forming creative alliances. Most importantly, I want it to be a celebration of the talent of a bunch of kick-ass artists, who deserve every moment in the spotlight they get.

“The industry only takes a punt on artists that have ‘sold’ before, so it makes the stakes of breaking through almost impossible. That's why we have to club together to form alternative systems of support and commissioning.”

Underrepresentation and assumptions

John Shortell, MU Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Official, said: “South Asians are underrepresented in our membership and in the music industry, or less visible”. John went on to emphasise some of the key problems: “From speaking to our South Asian musicians, people assume they play a certain type of instrument or kind of music. We wanted to pin down cultural assumptions or stereotypes.”

John said the MU plans to act on issues that emerge from the event and hopes to recruit more South Asian members. “These events show South Asian members that we’re interested in them, that we do represent them.”

A DJ set – covering *Addictive* by Truth Hurts and *Bad Girls* by MIA to Cornershop’s *Natch* – provided a fitting intro. On the panel were three other South Asian women who discussed their work and explained the challenges they encounter in the industry.

Overcoming prejudice

Genre-bending musician, singer and performer Dana Mohammed, known as Ms Mohammed,

talked about her video *Alibi*. “It’s about overcoming systems of oppression. I used to perform as Dana Jade before, now I’m Ms Mohammed. It’s about the rebirth of myself and embracing my whole authentic self.” She said she feared using her last name because of anti-Muslim feeling, despite having been raised as a Christian and now being agnostic.

“Being an immigrant and gay, sometimes you don’t know which prejudice you’re dealing with. I don’t think it hurts to acknowledge the obstacles we come up against,” she revealed. For Nabihah Iqbal, who blends dance music with pop, discrimination is not overt: “It’s structural if you don’t fit in with the status quo.” She too changed her name, before starting to release music under Nabihah Iqbal rather than the moniker Throwing Shade. “I thought maybe there’s an important reason to be upfront about who I am.”

Polarising pop

Then there’s the matter of the kind of music Nabihah was making. “The music sounded really white,” she said. “I wasn’t producing typical Asian music, which created a huge debate. There are perceptions about what kind of music

you should make depending on what you look like.”

On the other hand, Bishi recalled how music executives told her she needed to be careful she didn't alienate white people. She believed this approach was misguided and did mainstream music devotees a disservice: “The way people consume culture is really diverse. Audiences are more open-minded than the gatekeepers give them credit for.”

There are initiatives that can help combat some of these challenges: such as PRS Foundation's Momentum Music Fund for emerging artists. Iqbal described it as a real stepping stone: “There's so much spotlight on minority groups. We just have to keep going. You've got to create your own scene.”

Nadia Javed, frontwoman of punk band The Tuts expressed similar thoughts: “We can't wait for opportunities to come to us. We have to create our own. For a movement to happen, there has to be a movement!”

“The only way we can start to break through is

by working together,” said Bishi. At the end of the discussion, she invited the audience to join her and her guests in a networking session in the spirit of solidarity.

Another event focusing on South Asian LGBTQ musicians is being planned.

DIVERSITY STATISTICS

The UK Music survey found that 17.8% of the UK music industry workforce were from BAME communities (up from 15.6% in 2016). The figure is higher than the UK BAME population of 12.8%, which is perhaps explained by the higher concentration of parts of the music industry in London, where 30% of the workforce are from BAME backgrounds.

An equal number of men and women replied to the survey, and 11.2% of all respondents were BAME women, while only 6.38% were BAME men.

Bishi estimated that if the data had been broken down to reflect South Asian musicians, it would have shown their representation to be in the single digits, “technically existing in the margins”.

Commenting on the survey, John Shortell observed: “The survey lumps everyone together under BAME. I don’t think it’s just an issue with the music industry. We need to be more specific about the data we collect, make it more transparent.”

Ask Us First

It is in the interest of all MU members to read this list carefully.

If you are offered work or an agreement by anyone below, consult the MU contact shown before saying yes. Or talk to MU In-House Solicitor Dawn Rodger on 020 7840 5516 or dawn.rodger@theMU.org

- **The Akademia**
Jamie Pullman 020 7840 5532
- **Band Management Universal Ltd**
- **Big AI Entertainment Group**
Scotland & Northern Ireland office
0141 341 2960
- **The Convent / Matt Roberts / Charlotte Roberts / August Templar**
Jamie Pullman 020 7840 5532
- **Fest Camden**
Ben Benson 0121 236 4028

- **Geronimo Festival /
Geronimo Events Ltd**
Ben Benson 0121 236 4028

- **Jan Mulder / Miller Music USA**
Phil Kear 020 7840 5557

- **Jonathan Gilbert aka Jonny Gilbert**
Sam Jordan 020 7840 5553

- **MB-Xperiential Limited / Guildford
Jazz Festival**
Sam Jordan 020 7840 5553

- **Neil Eckersley / Spekulation Entertainment
Ltd / Wonderland the Musical Ltd**

- **Oliver Weindling / Babel Label**

- **Oren Rosenblum**
Barry Dallman 0161 236 1764

- **Peter Frosdick Productions Ltd /
Shout Tour Ltd**

- **Productions at Southwark Playhouse**

- **Ross Dorrance t/a Skinny Music**
Sam Jordan 020 7840 5553

- **Simmonds Music Limited /**
Thomas Simmonds

- **Spirit Productions Limited**

- **Steve Robertson / Good Times Roll Ltd /**
Escape From Reality Ltd / Hi Res Agency Ltd
Ben Benson 0121 236 4028

- **Wave 365 Media Ltd**

- **Wayne Maughan / Wayne Maughn /**
Wayne Keith

The latest edition of the Ask Us First list can be obtained from the 'Advice & downloads' section by logging into theMU.org

MU STANDARD CONTRACTS

Members are strongly advised to obtain written confirmation of all engagements. The MU produces Standard Contracts for engagement and these are available from your Regional Office or at theMU.org

Members should always use an MU Standard Contract as these provide evidence of the conditions of an engagement if a dispute arises. The MU cannot always assist if a contract does not cover you. Where MU contracts are not used, written evidence is essential. A letter or note should specify the date, time and place of the engagement, the fee, and that the engagement is subject to MU rates and conditions. The letter or note should be signed by someone fully authorised to do so. We recommend reading p61-62 of *Playing Live* and p102 of *Recording and Broadcasting* in the *MU Members' Handbook*.

CONTRACT ADVISORY SERVICE

Throughout their professional life, musicians may be required to enter into complex and often long-term agreements for such services as recording, songwriting, management, touring and merchandising. It is vital that musicians receive expert advice on the terms and implications of such contracts. This service could be obtained, at a cost, from one of the many solicitors who specialise in music business matters.

However, MU members may be invited to enter into an agreement whilst not having the means to pay for such legal advice. To cater for such circumstances, the MU offers members a Contract Advisory Service (CAS), which, in the vast majority of cases, is available at no cost and grants up to an hour of our specialist solicitor's time on any music contract.

FOREIGN CLAIMS

When undertaking professional activities with a contracting party based abroad, members are strongly advised that they ensure fees are paid upfront before the contract is performed and that an advance is obtained against any future royalty payable. Members are also reminded of their obligation under Rule XI.3 to “submit written contracts for professional activities abroad to the Union before they are entered into”.

Members should be aware that requests for legal assistance in relation to claims abroad must be considered against the MU’s criteria for legal assistance. Such claims are often not cost effective to pursue and if no upfront payment is obtained, members may remain completely unpaid for their services.

Reviews

A look at some of the new albums, EPs and downloads released by MU members for 2019, together with links for more information on the featured artists.

Reviewers: Keith Ames & Tom Short

SEANY CLARKE

Seany Clarke is a singer/songwriter who is generating a growing audience for his intimate blend of folk and soul, having been inspired by an eclectic mix of major artists, including Curtis Mayfield, John Martyn, Elvis Costello and Paul Weller. His exploration of the human condition echoes Scott Walker, with his unique, delicate vocals and intricate playing forged in a contemporary intimate setting.

He has been receiving plaudits in the media, with his initial releases being lauded for their “Outstanding soul vocals” and described as “Classy 21st-century pop with a soulful undertow”. Although starting out influenced heavily by spiky punk trios, Seany is finding a home in the more relaxed, acoustic venues

across the country and winning a whole new fanbase with a style honed by regularly gigging. As he says: “I worked out that people listen harder when you’re not in their face so much”.

SEANY CLARKE

Familiar Strangers

Released in July 2019, Seany’s second album is entirely self-penned, produced and performed. He delivers an intriguing take on 21st-century life, exhibiting a keen eye and ear for the subtleties of relationships.

seanyclarke.com

BLUES/ROCK

ANDREW DEEVEY

Northern Soul

After enjoying a long and varied career, Andrew has blossomed as a songwriter of serious quality. His aptly-titled debut album is driven by Motown beats, nimble chord changes and wistful jangle-pop worthy of The La’s.

andrewdeevy.co.uk

JULIAN PIPER

Terlingua

Julian is a scholar of the blues, who easily blends reworkings of traditional pieces with songs by The Mississippi Sheiks, and his originals are grounded in local legend and extremely dextrous finger work.

[deezer.com/en/artist/13976881](https://www.deezer.com/en/artist/13976881)

STEVE HOOKER

The Old Testament Of Love

There aren't many guitarists who played during punk's golden era who still sound as good as Steve Hooker. Scuzzy, raucous garage-rock that makes you glad the rockabilly flag is still being flown.

stevehooker.co.uk

SPIKEDRIVERS

Across The Water

Vocalists Ben Tyzack and Constance Redgrave have an easy chemistry that makes for a captivating listen, whether they are singing about lazy drivers, good time gals, or delivering spellbinding spirituals.

spikedrivers.net

SOUNDTRACK

DECO ENSEMBLE

Liquido

One of the UK's finest exponents of nuevo-tango, this quintet returns with another fine album exploring the rich musical territory between the works of Piazzolla and modern jazz. One can imagine this album as a soundtrack to some breathtaking choreography.
decoensemble.com

TWOMANTING

Rhymes With Orange

Already a big hit on the festival circuit, their slinky pan-African sound is just made for summer. Built upon tasteful djembe playing, gentle vocals and looped guitar, there is something very modern about their music.
twomanting.co.uk

FOLK

THE MEADOWS

Force Of The Tide

This debut album uses a maritime theme to celebrate the astonishing variety of music from these isles, performed with an urgency that never feels less than new.

themeadowsband.co.uk

COE, PETERS & SMYTH

The Road To Peterloo

This admirable project from three north-west folk musicians, uses contemporary broadsides and ballads to bring this much misunderstood event to life.

theroadtopeterloo.bandcamp.com

5 HILLS OUT

The Snug Sessions

Building on a rich tradition of Celtic punk bands, the group meld raucous pop-punk hooks with coruscating lyrics that take aim at our nation's current politics.

tinyurl.com/5hillsout

POP/CONTEMPORARY

HANNAH ROBINSON

Endless Street

Some artists have a voice that can stop you in your tracks. Hannah is one – smoky, full of colour, addressing you from the early hours. The perfectly poised instrumentation here is a perfect vehicle to carry you away.

hannahrobinsonmusic.co.uk

BARRY BLUE

Boy In The Moon

You might think Barry has achieved everything he wanted to in the industry. This stripped-down EP of warm blue-eyed soul sees him settle some unfinished business, tackling songs which became hits for other artists, and revealing two little-known gems.

barryblue.co.uk

HELEN MCCOOKERY-BOOK

Green

Helen's band The Chefs gained the attention of John Peel, and he would surely remain a fan of

the work she produces today. Sometimes folky, sometimes jazzy, her songwriting is full of clever left turns.

mccookerybook.com

INSTRUMENTAL

KAREN MARSHALSAY

The Road To Kennacraig

The Scottish harpist's interest in migrating unusual sounds to her instrument here sees her focus on the traditional Scottish bagpipe music of pibroch in these hypnotic variations.

karenmarshalsay.com

OROPA

Into The Oasis

Originally conceived as music to accompany a yoga class, pianist Joe Thompson and harpist Seána Davey's compelling Oropa project is transportive enough to send you on a powerful journey.

tinyurl.com/oropa

BEN ROSE

Eclectic Soup

An accomplished guitarist who has supported Status Quo and Bryan Adams, Ben showcases his slick, fusion-inspired guitar across this EP, which recalls the breezy, feel-good vibes of early Steely Dan.

benroseguitar.co.uk

CLASSICAL

FINZI QUARTET

Gerald Finzi: By Footpath And Stile

This debut release explores the wide-ranging chamber works of their namesake, the great English choral composer. The title piece's melancholy Thomas Hardy song-cycle is a standout.

resonusclassics.com/finzi-quartet

MAITE AGUIRRE

Une Soirée à Grenade

Pianist Maite Aguirre perceptively explores how the idea of Spain informed some of

Claude Debussy's most energetic music, while highlighting lesser-known gems by his friends Manuel de Falla and Ricardo Viñes.

maiteaguirre.com

MARK-ANTONY TURNAGE

A Constant Obsession

With styles as disparate as baroque dance and jazz-funk, this CD traverses the extremes of English music: the titular piece draws on the haunted love songs of Britten.

resonusclassics.com/turnage-constant-obsession

JAZZ

BEATIFIK

The Long Drive Home

A founding member of Shakatak, Roger Odell has released another fine set of sultry, elegant jazz-funk. Written and produced with his son Jamie, subtle nods to hip-hop and R&B add to a contemporary flavour.

tinyurl.com/beatifik

JOHN DONEGAN

Siamsa Vol 1

An intriguing combination of classic bebop laced with Irish folk melody, this album from pianist John and his saxophonist friend Tommaso Starace is full of sublime lyrical moments.

johndoneganjazz.com

ANDRÉS LAFONE

Magical Realism

Bass player Andy Lafone's latest album features many major names from the jazz circuit, and is a delightful collection of Latin grooves and superb melodic arrangements.

tinyurl.com/andylafone

Stand out

Jazz is central to this month's highlights, with BBC recordings from the 60s and modern interpretations of standards.

HARRY SOUTH

Further South

Lovingly compiled from live BBC recordings from 1960-1967, this four CD set explores explosive performances and arrangements from a central figure of British jazz. A wonderful look into the British modernist post-war jazz scene.

historyofrnb.net

ANÖNA TRIO

One January Morning

An exuberant album of contemporary jazz that also reimagines a few standards with striking boldness. The interplay between Imogen Ryall's voice and the purring sax of Julian Nicholas is something to behold.

facebook.com/anonatrio

To submit an album or download track for review, send recordings and PR material to: *The Musician*, 60-62 Clapham Rd, London SW9 0JJ or email **TheMusician@theMU.org**

You should also forward your cover artwork and/or photos (minimum 300dpi resolution) to: **keith.ames@theMU.org**

We try to help as many members as possible, and preference is given to members not previously reviewed.

COVER STAR

Music For Everyone

Chineke! Orchestra bassoonist Linton Stephens reveals his inspiration for educating a new generation in music and diversity.

What appealed to you about the bassoon?

I literally saw a picture of one and really wanted to play it. I think because it was so different to the other woodwinds in size and shape.

I read a quote about you watching The Proms as a child and not seeing any musicians of colour in the orchestra. And your mother said: “Well, you bloody well make sure you’re the first”. Was that a really defining moment?

At the time, probably not, no. However, in later years it would come to mean a lot more to me. At that age I never recognised the barriers of there being practically no black role models.

I’m not even sure my parents realise, but I think the fact that they were so enthusiastic whenever a black person achieved any kind of national fame on the TV helped instil a positive attitude

toward our heritage in all six of my siblings and myself. Looking back I realise just how important it was for me as a young black boy of eight to subconsciously recognise the lack of diversity in the field I would later call my profession.

As a member of the MU Equalities Committee, what do you see as its major challenges?

In my opinion, words like 'equality', 'diversity' and 'inclusion' have become buzz words, particularly in the work and corporate worlds. Speaking in favour of it, it has thrust issues to do with diversity to the fore, meaning that people are actually doing something about it.

Unfortunately all too often it can become a tedious box ticking exercise for companies to complete. Diversity itself then becomes another quantifiable statistic and is tackled in terms of numbers – which ultimately only serves to treat the symptom and not the cause. I think what we need to do is to educate people as to why the playing fields are so uneven in the first place, and teach everyone to understand why a lack of diversity is an issue, why increasing diversity is beneficial for all, and why combatting it is more than just a box-ticking exercise.

You're involved in music education at a time of profound inequality within instrumental provision in schools. How vital is this to you?

It's a significant part of my musical life. I'm the product of a council-run music service and a teacher taking a chance on me, and I'm eternally grateful for that. So I get so much satisfaction being able to give that back.

I'm really lucky to have been involved in some life-changing projects for children and teenagers, some of whom are reaching great success. It is difficult seeing music in schools on the decline and its value under-appreciated, moving from 'providing quality music opportunities for all' to 'quality music opportunities for those that can afford it'.

I see a particular demographic from a whole generation potentially missing out. But there are a lot of great people out there doing all they can to help change this.

What's the best advice you've been given?

Practise hard and stay humble.

Have You Registered For Your MU Benefits?

While membership of the MU offers a wide range of free services, there are a number of benefits that you need to register or apply for.

MU website

To fully access our website – **theMU.org** – you will need to register on your first visit using your membership number.

Contract advice – before you sign

Receive professional advice on the terms and implications of any complex agreements via our Contract Advisory Service. Contact your Regional Office to find out more.

Instrument and equipment insurance

For £2,000 worth of free musical instrument and equipment cover. Register by calling Hencilla Canworth on **020 8686 5050**.

Partnership advice

If all the members of your group are already MU members, or decide to join, we can offer free partnership advice and an agreement. Contact your Regional Office for more information.

Motoring service

The MU Family Motoring and Accident Aftercare Scheme provides 24/7 cover. Members must enter discount code MU24 to obtain free membership of the scheme. Register now via telephone or the web. **mu.totalmotorassist.co.uk**

Help Musicians UK

Charity offering practical, positive support to emerging, professional and retired musicians, whatever the genre. **helpmusicians.org.uk**

Medical assistance

The British Association for Performing Arts Medicine delivers specialist health support to musicians. Visit **bapam.org.uk**

Music Minds Matter

A comprehensive mental health support service providing advice, information, resources, and professional and clinical services for musicians in

need of help. musicmindsmatter.org.uk

Music Support

A charity for individuals in the UK music industry suffering from mental, emotional and behavioural health disorders. musicsupport.org

Musician's Hearing Services

A range of hearing related services for MU members. For an appointment, call MHS on **020 7486 1053** or visit musicianshearingservices.co.uk

Full details of all the benefits of membership can be found in your MU Members' Handbook.

Are you due a royalty payment from the Musicians' Union for the use of any of your recordings in television programmes, films or adverts? Are you the next of kin of a musician who used to receive royalties from us?

The Musicians' Union pays royalties to

a growing number of musicians for the secondary exploitation of their recordings. In most cases we know which musicians performed on the recording and already have their contact and payment details, so the royalty income can be distributed straight away. However, there is a certain amount of income we have collected that we cannot distribute as we have not been able to identify who performed on the recording; or we do know the names of the musicians but we have been unable to trace them or their next of kin. If you can assist the Musicians' Union with line-up information or contact details, visit **[theMU.org/Home/Advice/Recording-Broadcasting/Royalties](https://www.themu.org.uk/home/advice/recording-broadcasting/royalties)**. Here, you will be able to find more information on the types of royalty income we collect, as well as lists of musicians and recording line-ups we are currently trying to trace.

[theMU.org/Home/Advice/Recording-Broadcasting/Royalties](https://www.themu.org.uk/home/advice/recording-broadcasting/royalties)

MU Sections

To join, contact the relevant MU Official.

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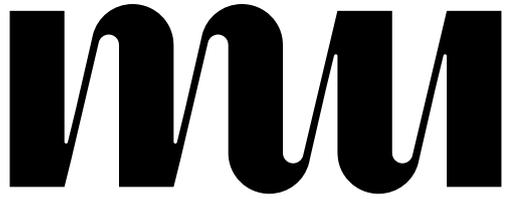
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