

# Cross-Party Group on Music

7 June, 2022. 18.00

Minute

Present

MSPs

Michelle Thomson MSP (chair), Claire Baker MSP

Invited guests

Andy Provan (PRS for Music), Beverley Whitrick (Music Venue Trust)

Non-MSP Group Members

Alan Morrison (Creative Scotland), Mae Murray (MEPG), Hanna Madalska-Gayer (Association of British Orchestras), Adam Behr (Newcastle University), Jen O'Brien (Music Broth), Kenneth Taylor (St Mary's Music School), Keith Miller (Help Musicians Scotland), Shonagh Stevenson (HITS), Alison Reeves (Making Music UK), Jamie Munn (Nevis Ensemble), Karen Dufour (New Music Scotland), David Francis (Traditional Music Forum), Alistair Mackie (RSNO)

In attendance: Diane McIntyre

Apologies

Stuart McMillan MSP, Brian Whittle MSP, Clare Adamson MSP, Fiona Hyslop MSP, Rab Noakes (MU), Hilary Brooks (SWIM), Carol Main (Live Music Now Scotland), Nick Stewart (Sneaky Pete's), , Caroline Sewell (MU), John Wallace (MEPG), Lois Fitch (RCS), , Andrew Cruickshank (MU), Stuart Fleming (PRS for Music), Lisa Whytock (Active), Allan Dumbreck (Univ of West of Scotland), Gica Loening (E. Lothian Council), Sharon Mair (SMIA), Luke McCullough (BBC), Jenna Main (ABRSM)

Agenda item 1

**Alistair Mackie (RSNO)**

Alistair Mackie outlined his career history (noting the similarity of its trajectory with that of John Wallace). He emphasised that a key role of the RSNO as a National Company was to form partnerships particularly in the education sector, bringing the expertise and experience of the orchestra to bear at all levels of education. He discussed the importance of engaging with digital technology as a starting point for encouraging people to attend live music, always the desired end point of the RSNO's activities. Film

and TV are also important and it is crucial that the facilities we have in Scotland are used and that outsourcing to London is kept to a minimum. He concluded by stating that the RSNO is always open to ideas and innovation.

David Francis: What is your view on getting the orchestra out to places in Scotland other than the main urban centres?

AM: Very important. There are obviously many places where you can't take the full orchestra but at the time of the meeting a 17 piece ensemble was currently touring in Galloway. The intention is to look at structures and players' contracts so that small groups can be distributed more often to more parts of Scotland. It does rely, however, on getting the right partners.

Adam Behr: Welcomed the initiative to make partnerships with HE sustainable. There is an untapped desire among students to work with composition as well as performance. How can the RSNO meet that desire?

AM: The orchestra operate a Composers' Hub which enables young composers to work through from workshops to small groups to the full orchestra. The ideal, however, would be working at module level within HE courses.

Michelle Thomson: How do you see the orchestra's contribution to the wellbeing agenda?

AM: Scotland is lagging behind in structuring links between healthcare and culture. The RSNO needs help in articulating how it can be useful in contributing to the relationship between culture and health.

Kenneth Taylor: 'Excellence' isn't a popular concept with a lot of people these days. To get to the level where you can play with an orchestra like the RSNO requires a great deal in terms of personal practice as well ensemble playing, listening skills and so on. Emphasising the work involved doesn't always play well, but the results in terms of not only musical skills but communication and 'people' skills are worth it and something to be proud of from an educator's point of view.

## Agenda item 2

### **Andy Provan (Head of Licensing, PRS for Music): Single Licensing for Education in Scotland**

The area under discussion is not licensing of schools for public performance, but additional activities which may also need to be licensed, e.g. the recording of student performances, the production of student films containing music, hosting content online, etc. The Hooper Report, published by the UK Government in 2012, identified the many challenges and complexities of licensing for schools and small organisations and recommended that ways of simplifying the barriers should be sought. Discussions with the Dept of Education in England resulted in a centralised licensing, administered by CEFM, which means that state-maintained schools can cut down on time and administration. PRS has also concluded an agreement with the Education Department in Northern Ireland.

Despite negotiations with the Curriculum Unit at Scottish Government and some local authorities, agreement on a central licensing scheme for Scotland has not been reached. All 32 local authorities have to agree to the approach but five have either not responded or declined to be involved. Efforts have been made through CEFM for local authorities to take out central licences on behalf of schools within their boundaries. However, despite widespread support for the national level licence, this presents challenges: local authorities don't hold funds on behalf of the schools, and therefore they have to try and recover those monies from the schools and undertake the administration for this, which is an unattractive proposition for them. Only 195 schools in Scotland are currently licensed for activities outside public performance – less than 8%. Five authorities have been persuaded to take out central cover for their schools as well as 30 individual schools that have directly acquired licences.

There is a strong feeling that more has to be done, especially with the success in bringing in the scheme in England and Northern Ireland. There is an understanding that schools might not want to use music in various ways for fear of falling foul of licensing or because the administration is too onerous. PRS has two aims in this regard: to encourage schools to use music and to ensure that its creators are fairly paid.

Would like the support of the CPG when taking the matter back to the Curriculum Unit.

MT: Would be useful to understand the objections from those councils not wishing to participate.

AP: Administration and getting the money back from the schools in some cases, and a desire to let individual schools make their own decision in others.

MT: Scottish Government is looking at Councils sharing services, so once, or if, that becomes a reality, centralised licensing could be part of that.

Claire Baker: Are some schools using music unlicensed?

AP: Yes, probably most of them. It would be good to see if there might be an alternative way to approach the issue for those local authorities who are willing to participate.

## Agenda item 3

### **Music Education (Mae Murray)**

Report attached.

Shonagh Stevenson: Instrumental instruction is slowly getting back to pre-pandemic levels and face to face tuition. HITS is working with the Improvement Service on music education data, and with GTCS on instructors' registration, which is still awaiting legislation to take that forward.

MT: How is young people's participation in music in general?

SS: We are seeing that after two years of no contact, the confidence of young people taking part in groups and ensembles has definitely been affected. Coming together to do things is having almost to be rediscovered.

## Agenda item 4

### **Beverley Whitrick (Music Venue Trust)**

Music Venue Trust has created a Scottish Steering Group which is working on developing plans in Scotland and working towards appointing a permanent Scottish co-ordinator. Their first meeting raised some important questions about the night-time economy, taking in rural and urban venues. There are three priority areas.

The biggest challenge is transport. Many transport systems (leaving aside the current rail disputes) do not operate beyond 9 in the evening, and in many parts of the country it's unusual to find any kind of public transport after 6, which affects musicians as well as audiences, and restricts the range of people who can have access to live music. It's not only a problem for rural areas. Even a large city like Glasgow is not immune. The time of the last underground train could be extended, and there is also a shortage of taxi drivers at the moment.

Second, licensing, especially licensing variations, continues to be a challenge. The licensing regime can be problematic and opaque.

Third, venues are experiencing audiences who don't feel confident to return to live music. This is having a major impact on promoters and venues. Advance sales are low, with some gigs being cancelled months in advance. Positive messaging from Government might help.

CB: Is there a generational aspect to the confidence issue?

BW: Younger audiences have been more enthusiastic, but there is the issue alluded to earlier, that teenage audiences have lost two years during which they might have been socialised into gig-going, and there is a concern that there might be a cohort that is lost to the habit. Genres experiencing more problems are those which tend to attract older audiences. Grass roots music venues are operating on the tightest of margins, so the downturn in the hoped-for return to activity has potentially existential implications for many.

MT: This will impact on the current town centres enquiry. Culture should be at the heart of place, but these restrictions make that hard to realise.

Alan Morrison: Is there any hard evidence that people who had hung on to tickets for cancelled and then re-scheduled gigs are more likely to turn out to those and will wait until their tickets-in-hand have been used before considering new gigs.

BW: Varied stories – anecdotal evidence that people are not turning up to gigs for which they may have held tickets for a long time. *Live* is currently compiling a report.

Alistair Mackie: Orchestras are about 30% down on pre-Covid ticket sales. Covid safety concerns are receding. Changed habits are the biggest challenge. There needs to be a proactive campaign. The cost of living crisis is also a factor (Uber prices for example).

Alison Reeves: The issues being raised also apply to people making music in their leisure time, as well as those attending events. Any campaign should also include making music – encouraging choirs, for example.

## Agenda item 5

### Other Business

MT: Looking at introducing a Members' debate possibly after the summer, perhaps on the value of music post-Covid. The advantage of Members' debates is that the Minister has to respond.

Jen O'Brien: Music Broth is a musical instrument and equipment library (now over 2000 instruments in the library), delivering 500 instruments to homes during the pandemic.

AR: Thanks to the many CPG members who will be participating in Make Music Day on June 21<sup>st</sup>.

DF: Shonagh Stevenson's last CPG as Chair of HITS.

MT: Thanked Shonagh for her contribution.

Next date should be a live one at the Parliament if possible, with a celebratory air. Provisionally September 13.