

CLASSICAL MUSIC FUTURES PRACTICES OF INNOVATION

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3. Roundtable 2: Documenting Change: The Role of Best- Practice Guidelines

*Neil Thomas Smith (MCICM) with
contributions from Hannah Bujic (Sound and
Music), Francine Gorman (Keychange), and
Fiona Robertson (Sound)*

Visions for the future of classical music usually contain an implicit critique of the present. Getting from 'here' to 'there' requires a process of change, yet starting to change a practice with such seemingly well-worn grooves of activity can seem an insurmountable challenge.

This chapter considers three recent sets of best-practice guidelines that address urgent areas requiring change within the UK classical music sector and beyond: the way that organisations work with composers; the representation of women at all levels of the music industry; and the way organisations work with neurodiverse artists and participants. Each document seeks to crystallise practical steps that organisations can take to begin bringing about change in these areas. At the same time, the documents themselves become vital parts of the efforts to make change happen. The authors describe both the contents and the goals of their documents, as well as the way in which they were created. The aim is to provide a practical insight for people who may wish to create or use such guidelines, but also to critically assess the role of such documents in processes of change. Guidelines are a useful tool for considering what it takes for real change to embed in a practice, as well as the challenges and barriers that exist.

The chapter begins with a summary of each document and the process of its creation. Hannah Bujic from the national new music charity in the UK, Sound and Music, discusses the creation of their Fair Access Principles, which outline practical steps towards dismantling barriers that composers face when accessing opportunities for performances and professional development. Francine Gorman from Keychange – an organisation promoting better gender representation within all music sectors – describes the evolution of the organisation and their pledge and manifesto, which are used to help initiatives of all kinds work towards more equal representation in their activities. Finally, Fiona Robertson from the new-music incubator, Sound, based in North-East Scotland, discusses the process of creating ‘What we need to thrive: working with neurodiverse composers’, which illuminates the sometimes surprising facets of participants’ experiences that promoters must consider to make their work open to autistic artists.

The chapter ends with a brief discussion of these documents with all four authors, highlighting their benefits and limitations, as well as the requirements for long-term change to really take place. Though the documents explored here have specific aims in particular sectors, much of the process of engaging with stakeholders and promoting the findings is easily transferrable to radically different contexts, while the recommendations that came out of their creation are often highly relevant for other parts of the music industry, and other sectors entirely. What emerges as a theme is that these documents are never the end of a process. Rather, for their effect to spread within the sector, consistent work is required to talk with stakeholders to keep the recommendations relevant.

At the same time, it is clear that all three find such documents are extremely useful tools to help people take first steps to address what can feel like overwhelming, systemic issues. In the concluding discussion the authors stress the importance of offering a positive vision of change, one that others can engage with and get behind. This relates to an important theme in this volume regarding change within and outwith the systems and organisations in which we find ourselves. This is picked up further in the reflection on this chapter by Antonio Cuyler, whose work on blacktivism amongst opera administrators is the basis for considering the issues raised below.

1. The Fair Access Principles

Hannah Bujic

Traditional approaches to talent development within the music industry have relied on an assumption of equity, that open call processes are, by their nature, open to all, and therefore theoretically should achieve equality: that it is the best music, the best applicant, who will be offered a potentially career-changing opportunity. However, when we look at progress in terms of how representative the music industry is – across gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background and disability – there is still a fundamental problem. The point in the pipeline where artists are accessing talent development opportunities often excludes those who face other barriers in their work and practice. This can be due to application and selection processes, financial barriers, or inflexibility in what is on offer, meaning those with particular needs cannot access an opportunity.

The new-music charity Sound and Music has been capturing evidence of these inequalities for many years through data from equal opportunities monitoring of applicants to our programmes and those who are selected. In the 2018-19 financial year, thirty-four percent of applicants to our programmes were women, and nine percent disabled. For selected applicants, those figures were forty percent and five percent—which for gender diversity was still short of our target of fifty percent, and very poor for disability given that the percentage of working-age adults identifying as disabled is nineteen percent.¹ We also had anecdotal evidence from composers within our networks that barriers were consistently preventing them from applying to opportunities across the industry. We started work on a set of best-practice guidelines, to act as a manifesto for change. This became the Fair Access Principles, which launched in February 2020 with a group of six partners from across the UK (including Sound, who have also contributed to the present chapter).²

1 Office of National Statistics, UK, *Family Resources Survey, Financial Year 2019 to 2020*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020>

2 Sound and Music Website, 'Fair Access Principles', <https://soundandmusic.org/our-impact/fair-access-principles>

The first step in this process was pooling our collective knowledge within the organisation with brainstorming sessions. This relied on our experience of running artist development programmes including the experimental Pathways programme (2016; open to disabled composers and composers from minority ethnic backgrounds), and New Voices (2018 onwards; open to any composers). Managing application and selection processes for a large number of composer calls across many years had given us a wealth of insight into common barriers, such as caring responsibilities, work commitments and difficulties with written applications. We had been progressively working to break many of these down, for instance ensuring we brought inclusive, fresh perspectives into selection panels by rotating external panellists.

It was important to us that we did not produce the Fair Access Principles in isolation, that this was a collaborative process both internally and externally. Externally we began a consultation process with partners and composers, to ask advice and further explore the need for a set of best-practice guidelines. From this external consultation, we quickly gathered a list of common ‘dos and don’ts’ for artist development programmes. We used an iterative approach of asking for feedback on draft sets of guidelines, including via Composer Advisory Group meetings,³ constantly refining and improving the material. A key principle of our approach was taken from the way we had already started to publicly share our equal opportunities monitoring data, presenting it not because we have all the answers as an organisation but because we want to start conversations and enable change.

Our goal was to produce something streamlined, memorable and powerful. A long and impenetrable set of guidelines would be counterproductive, so we worked to build a set of concise principles. It was also important to us that, as far as possible, they were framed positively – so turning ‘don’ts’ into ‘dos’ to reinforce the positive actions they contained. Themes emerged that helped us to streamline the Fair Access Principles into key headings: Application, Selection, Money and Conversation. Talking with composers, we realised how regularly these barriers were encountered, though we were certain that the vast majority

3 The Composer Advisory Group includes a diverse range of composers who inform the work of the charity.

were in place unintentionally and that the problems were caused by lack of knowledge rather than intentionally excluding composers.

One of the principles which continues to prove most challenging to explain is 'do not use anonymised selection' (interestingly our only 'negative' principle). In recruitment and some areas of the music sector, such as orchestral auditions, anonymised selection is considered best practice, with evidence to back up its effectiveness in removing barriers for under-represented groups. In talent development however, where what is being assessed is as much (or even more) about potential as what someone has already achieved, having the full picture of an applicant's background and any challenging circumstances makes for a fairer process. The playing field for composers is not level in terms of access to opportunities, but anonymised selection assumes that it is.

The Fair Access Principles launched in February 2020 with a group of six launch partners: Drake Music Scotland, Opera North Projects, Sage Gateshead, Sound Festival, Tŷ Cerdd-Music Centre Wales and Unlimited. We also received endorsement from the Performing Rights Society for Music Foundation.⁴ The launch was in the form of a press release and social media campaign with new video content released over a number of weeks, including short interviews with composers talking about the importance of the Fair Access Principles to them. It was important to us that we had partners on board at the point of launching, to give weight to the principles as well as national reach across England, Scotland and Wales. Our primary audience was other organisations and gatekeepers of talent development opportunities, with a secondary audience of composers in order to raise awareness of Fair Access as a 'kitemark'. Organisations who sign up to the network can display the Fair Access logo on their websites, which acts as a public statement of their commitment to removing barriers to participation in their programmes.

The commitment we ask from organisations who sign up is that within two years they adhere to all of the principles, and in addition that they contribute to an annual assembly to share learning and challenges. Now that we are two years on from the launch, we are in the process of

4 The Performing Rights Society is the licensing and collection agency for the UK. The PRS for Music Foundation is a charity supporting grassroots music that benefits from a significant PRS grant.

designing a data-sharing platform to gather data on the impact of the principles, which will allow signatory organisations to share anonymised applicant data. Anecdotally, we know that most organisations within the network have made significant changes to their composer development programmes. At Sound and Music this has included standardising the option for video applications across our programmes, adding budget lines for access costs (such as paying support workers to put together applications), and offering 'Infrequently Asked Questions' zoom sessions about programmes for d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse composers.

The annual assemblies (of which we have now run two) have allowed us to share learning across the network, in particular our most recent one in February 2022 which focussed on breaking down barriers faced by composers for socio-economic reasons. As this is arguably an area of disadvantage that is least discussed in the music sector, our aim for the assembly was to accelerate our collective understanding in order to enable action. As organisations we have all made changes to the way we work and as a network are more powerful than the sum of our parts.

The chief lesson from this process is best condensed in the following three points:

- Assume you do not know everything: the Fair Access Principles originated for Sound and Music as a way of starting positive conversations within the music sector, with the aim of increasing our understanding about the difficulties composers face in accessing opportunities. We started from a position of knowing quite a lot, but this knowledge increased dramatically with every conversation we held in the initial stages of putting the principles together.
- Keep assuming you do not know everything: if you have put work into researching best-practice guidelines, be prepared that circumstances and knowledge will keep developing. An example of this is the research we did recently to put together an open call for an award specifically for composers from low socio-economic backgrounds. Over the course of a few conversations our understanding had transformed and allowed us to put out a much fairer, inclusive call than the one we had initially conceived.

- Be generous and curious: think about who you are including in the conversations you're having, and in particular bring in the voices of those you're aiming to support with your best-practice guidelines.

In the work of Sound and Music we have seen that women and minorities are more likely to be adversely affected by the barriers explored above and, therefore, more likely to benefit from fair access. As such, we have been an enthusiastic supporter of Keychange and its mission, which is explored further in the next section.

2. The Keychange Manifesto

In conversation with Francine Gorman of Keychange

Keychange started in 2017 after conversations between the Performing Rights Society for Music Foundation (PRSf), headed at that time by Vanessa Reed; Reeperbahn Festival (Germany); and the Swedish music information centre Musikcentrum Öst. Up to that point, these conversations had been quite informal, mainly focusing on how best to represent women in the music industry. It was a subject that had been around for years but was becoming more significant in various arenas, such as scrutiny of festival line-ups, studio spaces and representation panels. PRS's Women Make Music fund was an important jumping-off point. It was created because the membership of women and gender minorities within PRS's membership scheme was so low. We knew there were many more music creators out there than were registered, so this fund was put together to encourage women creators to apply for funding, to register for PRS, to enter into the royalty and collections ecosystem, and to gain all the benefits, experience and access that they could from that. It provided a lot of important data that we could use for the Keychange project.

The original Keychange focus was talent development: a Europe-wide programme that would help artists and music industry professionals access opportunities in different territories. Quite quickly, however, the feedback received from peers, friends and colleagues was that more industry-wide action needed to take place. This was where the Keychange pledge idea was initiated, with the manifesto following soon

after. We define the manifesto, launched in 2018, as a statement of the ambitions of the full Keychange programme, while the pledge is a set of guidelines to help people realise these aims.⁵ We are now gathering data from all the pledge signatories and are looking at best practices to feed into an updated manifesto at the end of the current phase of the project (2024).

The Keychange pledge was created in response to the industry requiring some practical steps that could assist people who had the ambition of changing the gender representation of their set-up but who did not necessarily know where to start. It is very much an outreach tool, a flexible framework to put in front of a music organisation to help begin what are sometimes difficult conversations. When the pledge first started it was very much about festivals with the initial headline: '50/50 by 2022', while the pledge document that supported it created a space to say in which area an organisation wanted to improve their representation and what they wanted to achieve. Festivals and conference panels were the main target at that time. The aim was: fifty percent of speakers in panels, fifty percent of moderators, and fifty percent of artists on stage should be women. After going out with '50/50 by 2022' in festivals and conferences we got a lot of feedback from the wider industry to say that this framework could be applied to so many other areas and we were asked to look into a possible expansion.

In late 2018, therefore, we opened up the Keychange pledge to any music organisation and we changed the phrasing from '50/50 by 2022' to 'at least fifty percent representation within your chosen area'. And since we opened up the scope of the pledge, we have had all sorts of different people signing up. We currently have 565 signatories and they range from conservatoires to orchestras, from booking agents to record labels and music magazines.

There was initially some pushback from people who took the word 'quota' as being quite a legalistic term. This is a global project and the term has a very different weight in different languages. We were always clear that people should not be booking or commissioning things based on quotas, it should always be based on talent. What Keychange does

5 Keychange, 'Keychange Manifesto', <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e3ac2fec69e2663a9b793c/t/5f0324b481fcf002f4f702c9/1594041527239/1052-keychange-A5-v15-web.pdf>

with this fifty percent is to encourage people to look at *why* the pool that they are booking from does not already contain the brilliant female talent that we know is out there. As a pledge organisation, I have to ask myself: what is the gender representation of my current line-up? If it's twenty percent women, am I actively saying that there is only one woman artist to four men who is of equal talent or is it because I am just booking from the same old pools? There is a lot to be gained from internally asking questions about whether an organisation is actively changing the landscape or passively letting it continue to exist.

Becoming a pledge signatory is a very involved process, so it is not just a case of signing up on a website and then sticking a logo on your poster. It is a real conversation with us to look into and examine the various facets of an organisation and to have a chat about the actions that could be put in place. The document is then completed in collaboration with the Keychange team, with us offering resources and support as they try and meet the criteria.

The three core partners of the project were responsible for writing the original manifesto, with PRSF and Vanessa Reed leading. The project is now at an exciting moment in that we are moving towards the next manifesto. Everything we do at the moment is gathering information to inform and inspire what the project will do after our Creative Europe funding ends in 2024. When we first started the project, gender equality was the absolute heart and soul of what we were working on and, even at that time, there were many other considerations and barriers people were experiencing in accessing the industry. We decided to focus on one. However, we know from our experience of the past couple of years, and the feedback from our participants on the programme, that we need to be much more intersectional in our focus. What we know is that being a woman in the music industry is one barrier, being a black woman in the music industry is a second barrier, being a queer black woman in the music industry just adds further dimensions to this. The next stage is to consider what can we put in place to make this industry as safe and accessible as it can be for anybody experiencing one or more of these barriers.

Our key message was about positive action to inspire change. The idea was never to call people out for not being representative in the work they were doing but to encourage people to look internally at the

representation in their teams and on their stages and to put some actions in place to change that. If they wanted to be very public about that then they were in their rights to do so, but quite a number of the signatories wanted to keep their actions to themselves and put frameworks and structures in place to create change. This is also important because it means that these conversations are still happening, though not necessarily out in the open.

To sum up, we really try to put the responsibility of change, of action, into the hands of those who are working on the project and our best legacy would be to have educated and inspired many different people and many different areas of the industry. The responsibility is with everybody in the music industry to make change, from the CEOs to the musicians stepping into a club for the very first time. After achieving their first goals, there are likely other areas that organisations can work on. Quite a few people who have signed the pledge have come back with additional goals. After all, we want security to be representative, stage hands, performers, organisers, promoters: everybody in the room. A big part of what we do is to keep the conversation going, to make sure that post-pandemic (or wherever we are), that gender equality is still a huge subject on the agenda and that we have not forgotten it, that it still needs to be front and centre of every single action that we are taking and everything we do.

3. 'What We Need to Thrive: Working with Neurodiverse Composers'

In conversation with Fiona Robertson of Sound

'What we need to thrive: improving collaboration with autistic composers' was created for Sound as well as other promoters and ensembles to give them a helping hand working with neurodiverse people.⁶ The impetus came from conversations with other talent development organisations around disabilities. I realised we generally fell into the habit of talking about people with physical disabilities, and not people with hidden challenges such as autism. There is no obvious sign that someone is

6 Sound Website, 'What we need to thrive: improving collaboration with autistic composers', <https://sound-scotland.co.uk/news/what-we-need-to-thrive>

autistic so it seemed like there was a useful piece of work to do on this issue.

We did not embark on this journey without any background of working with neurodiverse composers. We had already been working with individuals who we knew were on the autism spectrum. We first met up with two of these composers in June 2018, who then identified Ben Lunn, a prominent young autistic composer, as an important contact to take the project further. An open call was put out for neurodiverse composers, contact was made with Ben, and personal invites were sent out to composers for a specific day-long workshop on neurodiverse needs. In the end, six composers joined Sound and disability charity Drake Music Scotland to discuss their access needs, which gave us the basis for the guidelines as they exist now. It is worth noting that all the composers were invited rather than responding to the open call.

Organising such a day is not without challenge. Everything you do, you have to think about harder: the space, the time allocated, and certain facilities the need for which can be surprising for 'neurotypicals'. For example, Ben Lunn, who was now a key contact in organising the event, suggested having soft toys to hold if the participants got tired and, later in the afternoon, we could see them making use of these. Organisers have to accept the need to leave time because you do not want to be stressing people out: you cannot blast through your agenda but have to be more thoughtful. The process of talking to these composers and organising these events fed directly into the guidelines, indeed we almost needed the guidelines at the beginning of the process of their own creation.

The main team who took the document further was in place after that meeting: Ben Lunn; Fiona Robertson and Ellen Thomson from Sound; and Pete Sparks from Drake Music Scotland. Sharing and collaboration were very important to the writing process. At one point, Sound was going to write the guidelines, at another there was meant to be a communal writing process on the part of the composers. In the end, we commissioned Ben Lunn to write the document, partly because the communal process was not progressing, and partly because we did not want to be putting unnecessary pressure on individuals who might easily be overwhelmed. The whole process took much longer than initially thought, with Ben doing the writing and much to-ing and fro-ing

taking place between the other team members so that it reflected autistic composers' needs but was also understandable to a wide audience.

My erroneous preconception was that the challenges faced by autistic composers would be primarily around social contact and networking. All composers can find this a difficult facet of the music world but autistic people face even greater barriers. Instead, what came across from talking with the composers was the potential for small changes or setbacks to be amplified and become overwhelming, as well as the huge variety of aspects that feed into participants' experiences when working with an organisation. We were looking with them from the beginning of the commissioning process to the end: how to make rehearsals easier; how to make social interaction easier; how to communicate; trains, bedsheets and hotels – each can make a situation manageable and a collaboration successful.

The main takeaway was that *all* of this is relevant, all of this is important—not necessarily for every composer, but promoters need to understand that all of this *may* be relevant to a composer they are working with. It is not about how composers communicate with us but how we communicate with them and the information we need to know to make their journey with us as easy as possible.

We organised a conference in January 2021 (naturally delayed due to COVID-19) with ensembles, organisations, neurodiverse composers and creators. This was linked to Sound's annual festival in North-East Scotland. We used that conference as a soft launch for the guidelines, asking everyone to go home and read a draft. We contacted as many organisations as possible, focusing primarily on Scottish festivals, ensembles, and promoters involved in new music, as well as (inter) national networks through Sound and Music, personal networks and social media. Similarly, when it came out as a finalised document, it was sent out to these same people. One misstep occurred during the conference, when we programmed a piece by Siobhan Dyson, which sought to portray the feeling of being neurodiverse and was, therefore, something of an assault to the senses. We should have thought about this and warned the audience in advance, and although one or two people had to leave for the performance, they were able to come back in for the rest of the conference.

When we started the guidelines, it felt like we were on the cusp of something, but by the time we finished things had moved on. You start out on these journeys thinking you are doing something unique, only to find lots of other people are doing something similar. It is rather like giving your children names you think are original without realising everyone else has chosen the same original names. You are not alone in being in that flow. Raising these issues is not necessarily new but hopefully these guidelines help bring the ideas to a wider audience.

Perhaps the main lesson to draw from working with neurodiverse composers, and people in general, is taking time to think about how you interact with people. Occasionally we do not have time to think about our interactions enough due to the pressures of being an arts organisation today, such as limited capacity and financial economy. We need to make time to think about that better, to work with neurodiverse composers and, really, any other collaborators.

Discussion

The authors met in April 2022 to discuss themes that emerged from comparing their experiences in working on these documents. It is clear that such processes are not to be undertaken lightly, both in terms of creating the documents through stakeholder engagement and then publicising the ideas once they are created. The process of their creation, however, has also led to wide ranging reflection on the authors' professional practice, starting with the time and care they give to artists and professionals in their daily work.

Time and Care

Neil T. Smith (NTS): What resonated with you reading the other contributions?

Fiona Robertson (FR): It all reinforced for me the need for time and care. *Anything* can make it really difficult for people to access opportunities, to go through those processes and to manage them and I think for us it's going from 'under-represented groups are really important' to actually being caring throughout the whole process.

Hannah Bujic (HB): That also resonated with me, especially how we should be taking the time to have these meaningful interactions with everybody we're engaging with. That then opens up the possibilities of making opportunities available to people and increasing our own learning at every stage of these conversations.

NTS: That's pretty challenging, I imagine. For an organisation reading this, what is their first step for trying to make this a habit rather than something you do on special occasions?

FR: We're just addressing that at the moment. We're going to focus more on time, taking time to evaluate properly, taking time to improve everything rather than doing it all in a rush because we're all too stressed. Not that it is necessarily going to work...

Reading Francine's contribution, though, I have no worries about female representation because it's so embedded in what we do. It has become absolute second nature. We did a plus fifty percent festival in 2017, so we've been doing it for a while and it just seems natural now. And I think if you take the time to do it, then it will eventually take less time because it becomes embedded in the process and the system.

Francine Gorman (FG): I completely agree, what you've just said there is a really good example of what we try and encourage people to do through Keychange, which is to make changes to their own set-ups and systems. Hopefully in the incremental steps that are made to reach their targets there is sustainable change being made because it does become second nature to look at your programming and do a quick tally of what the gender balance looks like.

Learning to Improve

NTS: Has any one organisation that you have worked with ever slid back? Do you find that this process of learning is cumulative and that people do keep on improving?

HB: I wouldn't say it's linear. I suppose there are two sides to that: there's the stuff that we can take responsibility for as an organisation and there are things outside of your control. Because we're relying on people applying to our programmes and talent development we are having to

make changes that will encourage people to apply to our programmes. We can look at who we are selecting but we rely to a degree on who is actually applying to our programmes. That is not something we can actually strongly affect in that we can say we are definitely going to have fifty percent women this year, for example.

That is where the non-linear part comes in because we are doing everything we can to encourage under-represented groups to apply to our programmes but there are external factors that come into play that increase or decrease those numbers. Covid has had a huge impact, I think, on who feels they can apply to our programmes, who has the time, and the financial position to actually make the time to engage. I'd like to say we're heading towards equal representation but, in terms of people applying to our programmes, we're going through a bit of a wavy cycle. It's not all uninterrupted progress.

FR: At the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland it feels as if there is a good bunch of young women and gender-diverse people coming through. But we struggle with ethnic minorities, there seems to be hardly anyone coming through the pipeline so how do you manage those other under-represented groups when it is difficult to have an impact directly? And that probably means going back to schools. We do encourage young people but it's going to be a while before that has an impact and they come out the other end.

NTS: Francine, have people struggled to maintain the changes?

FG: I wouldn't say so with the pledge signatories because these are people who have gone through the process to really make this a target and an ambition for their organisation. But I'm sure there have been festivals or organisations that we've been in touch with, who have not signed the pledge who may have experienced some of what you described.

In terms of the pipeline, there need to be changes at every single level. Things like the Fair Access Principles being applied to all these different levels – school spaces, education spaces all the way through – things like that are so important just to make sure that the pipeline is open for musicians coming through and that gender balance is considered at every stage.

How Caring Can Classical Music Be?

NTS: Care and attention is not really what classical music is known for if you look from the outside. It is often hyper-competitive, rewards 'talent', 'excellence' and 'skill'.

FB: I think there is a tension as well, certainly when you're working with composers and creating new pieces. Ensembles are so good: they come in, read the music and power through to the other side. It's not often that they've got an enormous amount of time to rehearse and spend with whichever composer you have given a commission or opportunity. There are opportunities to space things out a bit more and give more time and care to the composers so that they are meeting the players before the first rehearsal, for example. The other thing we've found really successful is that we have a local new music ensemble, Any Enemy, and they're all teachers and students up here and they do this as volunteers – they get paid for gigs, minorly – but they do it basically as a voluntary ensemble because they want to. In programmes we do with them we find there is a lot more care, time and nurturing when we have young composers working with them.

HB: I think there's a slight backlash about the language of talent and excellence – in the field of talent development ironically. That in itself is exclusionary language as it is less likely that someone who has not been able to access opportunities will identify themselves as talented. And so using a word like 'potential', or just leaving that out altogether, or making sure that it is understood that it is as much about looking at where someone can get to as opposed to where they are right now is so crucial in all of what we did for putting together the Fair Access Principles. Classical music in particular is guilty of laying a lot at the door of 'this is about talent', 'this is about excellence', when really we need to look at why somebody could be considered talented or excellent. What access have they had to resources and opportunities, in terms of their upbringing and education that allows them to step foot into those opportunities and progress through the pipeline?

FR: One of the questions is why the UK seems to be taking a lead on these issues. I worked in France for years and started off in the music sector. Where the arts in the UK tends to have fairly left-wing people

working for it (*Guardian* reading), in France it can be very different. I worked in an office where everyone read *Le Figaro*. I have seen tour proposals from France going round with ten male composers and there is certainly a different level of understanding, but that is evolving now. And probably it is completely different in Scandinavia.

FG: This is definitely the experience we've had with the pledge. We were having such different conversations in Scandinavia to those we were having in Southern Europe, for example. But what was really interesting at that point was that in Scandinavia, because gender representation and equality has been so ingrained in their society for such a long time, they felt that they didn't want to go out publicly and say they were actively giving these issues thought or working on them because it would give the impression that they had not been thinking about it before the pledge. Whereas in Southern Europe, it was about starting a fresh conversation. But now, five years into the project, we're seeing that in Italy, for example, where we really did have to knock on doors at the start to get the project rolling, there is a huge number of gender-focused initiatives that are happening throughout the music industry.

Making Change Happen

NTS: There seems to be an assumption that exclusions are happening unintentionally and the guidelines discussed above all focus on positive action. Are we going too easy on the music industry? Can some of these exclusions be rather more deliberate?

HB: Firstly, I have genuinely not yet come across someone who is at least willing to say 'no, we really do want to exclude certain people and we'll carry on doing that, thank you very much'. Every conversation that I've had is around people wanting to find out more about how to be more inclusive. There is an assumption with the question that there are more effective methods of making change happen other than positive action, that by preaching or cracking a whip you'll get more change happening. The idea that positive action is a way of enacting change is a viewpoint that goes beyond music. Negative arguments are rarely as effective as persuasive as positive ones and using the psychology of collaboration and support is more effective than preaching. Everything we have found

with the Fair Access Principles doesn't mean we're avoiding difficult conversations. In fact, the whole idea, as Francine mentions, is creating a framework for difficult conversations. We didn't want to get into Twitter spats saying 'we're not going to publicise your call because we don't think what you're doing is right'. That shuts down conversations and using best practice guidelines as a framework for opening up difficult conversations allows them to happen in a way that helps everybody progress to more positive outcomes.

FR: We work quite closely with smaller organisations. The local music clubs etc. There *are* some real dinosaurs there. I'm not sure it's entirely unconscious but there are one or two organisations where the board are all middle-aged blokes, and they're all volunteers because it's a volunteer organisation more or less and they're programming classical music concerts. But those things matter because they're part of the landscape and some of them are commissioning composers and some of them are performing all-male programmes. I don't think it's actively misogynistic, but I certainly have heard jokey comments about the 'nonsense, of having to have female composers' or 'us white, male composers aren't going to have any work left!'. It could just be individuals, but I think it is a little more ingrained than that. And I'm wondering: we all communicate well among ourselves because we're all organisations with a fairly national outreach, but what about the local ones? The guidelines we've all prepared are perhaps too big for them, it would have to be something much simpler.

FG: I fully support everything Hannah said about positive action and that is the experience we had throughout this project. You're never going to start a useful conversation by shouting at somebody. Our approach has always been to invite people to self-reflect, meaning that by looking at their workspace and organisation then letting them engineer change.

NTS: One theme that emerges is that guidelines, once written, need support and attention to make their way in the world. Completing them is by no means the end of the story.

FG: It's important that any project or plans or principles that we're putting in place have a fairly long life after the launch time because it does take people a long time to get the idea, or to understand the

conversation, or to see how it applies to their own context. I do think there has to be some kind of plan and sustained activity for whatever guidelines are coming out to keep the conversation active: if after three months it slips off the agenda, then you need something to happen that keeps it fresh and in mind.

NTS: I think that's useful for anyone thinking about writing these, that finishing them is not the endpoint but the beginning of a different process.

HB: The idea that best practice guidelines and work around equality and inclusion is just going to continue, is disheartening. I think in reality there will always be some level of work required around developing understanding and that curiosity that allows us to understand what other people are going through, whether that's underrepresented groups or just anybody that we're having conversations with. But the idea that this current push that we're all part of will have to be sustained for quite a long time, I find that quite depressing. I would hope, though, at some point in the future when the landscape has changed for the better that the conversations we're having are more about the nuances: about being curious and including people in conversations because we understand the issues and the challenges and we want to include their viewpoints, rather than because there is such a bleak lack of representation within the industry.

FR: I'd hope that certainly for some aspects it would go away. You'd hope that for gender and ethnic minorities once we get to fifty percent, or the representative proportion, that that would go away and that we would not need guidelines. I'm slightly less optimistic about neurodiversity because it is so complicated the whole way through the whole thing, even if you get them through there is so much to deal with and so much to take into account and every person is so different, it will just need ongoing attention and will not disappear.

Socio-Political Factors

NTS: We're talking about equity and there's a wide range of factors that affect this. Is there a danger that guidelines tend to work within a system or political horizon and that true equity may need to overstep these bounds?

FR: I think socio-economic background is becoming a major issue and will become even more important. The way music education is going and things are going post-COVID, there's going to be less and less opportunity. I know a lot of players now from working-class backgrounds but I don't think you'll get the same thing in ten years' time. It becomes very much about 'haves' and 'have-nots'.

HB: And as you said earlier Fiona about what is happening further downstream, where we perhaps have less impact: we have less impact because of the socio-political factors that are at play there. We can do what we can in our areas but if opportunities are being lost for children and young people to enter the arena and become aware of the opportunities, let alone to then access them, then what we're doing is going to continue to be a struggle.

Concluding Remarks

The documents described in this chapter did not emerge from nothing. It is clear that there are currents in society that gain momentum, forming an important backdrop to these ideas, while the change sought by these three examples requires partners and allies to be effective: people who are passionate about the cause in question and with a shared sense of direction. Yet, it is difficult to imagine these networks being created without the documents discussed above, making them a vital part of the process of real-life change. They do not merely reflect the concerns of an area of artistic practice, but define these concerns to a significant degree. The changes of approach they seek can then snowball as the themes and actions explored are picked up in other sectors and locations. For organisations and individuals, the first step in the face of huge social issues can be the most difficult to take and these guidelines can clarify people's thinking and make such a first step possible. Work in equalities is also obviously vulnerable to a whole range of other societal issues, including access to education, healthcare, musical opportunities and care provision. Documents such as these cannot always acknowledge this interconnectedness, as their remit must be specific enough to inspire concrete, practical steps. Yet, it is clear that work here can never be fully divorced from political activity in the wider world, both in the sense that access to the arts is influenced by all these other societal factors,

and in the sense that work within an artistic field promoting equalities is a political act that can resonate throughout wider society. The change described here requires consistent care and work to communicate and promote the ideals these documents embody. In many ways such guidelines can only become as strong as the networks that are built around them.

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