



Press Release

For release: Friday 25 September 2015

MUSICAL LEARNING AT A CROSSROADS

***Musical Routes*, a report on the provision of musical education for school-aged children and young people in England published**

- Report finds that inequity of opportunity is exacerbated by a bias in the music education sector towards formal learning that undervalues a broader approach to musical learning.
- Many children and families simply don't realise what opportunities for musical learning are available: music education and professional music organisations don't co-ordinate effectively to articulate the full range and variety of musical routes.
- There is widespread good practice, but a postcode lottery sees lean pickings for musical learning in some parts of England, and a feast of opportunity in others.

READ THE FULL REPORT AT: www.philharmonicsociety.uk

Musical Routes, A Landscape for Music Education, is an independently commissioned report into the provision of musical education for school-aged children and young people in England, by **Sarah Derbyshire MBE** in partnership with the **Royal Philharmonic Society** (published today – 25 September 2015). The report concludes that musical provision is failing to reach children from all social and ethnic backgrounds, and a 'postcode lottery' results in inequity of opportunity.

The report suggests that the National Plan for Music Education, adopted by the Department of Education in 2012, has some way to go in overcoming the barriers to access that still exist, not least because of the fragmented landscape of progression routes offered to children and young people. The principal failing is the lack of *"an infrastructure that knits together the many and various strands for delivery"*; the current structure for music education is widely acknowledged as complex and disjointed. The fault lies not so much with the range of provision on offer – the report highlights excellent practice from a profession deeply committed to music education - but in the way that it's articulated.

- The report identifies a bias within the established music education sector towards learning via the formal exam structure, and a tendency to downplay the achievements of those who choose alternative musical routes and those who provide less formal opportunities to learn. This includes creative learning provided by a range of established ensembles and organisations, and informal activities arising from local groups formed to address a perceived need.
- The sector has yet to embrace fully the richness and diversity of musical forms and the ways in which young people engage with music.
- The outstanding range of opportunities available is poorly communicated to children, families, carers and teachers; too many organisations work in isolation, making it difficult for an individual to get an overall picture of musical learning available, both locally and nationally, and opportunities are lost to replicate

good practice.

- Whilst many examples of best practice exist, they cannot be widely adopted until mechanisms are put in place to support Music Education Hubs* in extending their horizons beyond local circumstances or long-standing learning practices. *“Only then can they contribute to the national picture, systematically address matters of broadening access and fully incorporate informal learning alongside the traditional progression routes”.*

ABOUT THE REPORT

Musical Routes assesses the access which children and young people have to music education, the equality of access, and whether that access will enable them to fulfill their individual musical potential. Bringing together, for the first time, recent research by national bodies, evaluation reports on recent and current music education initiatives, online surveys of professional music organisations and Music Services/Hubs and interviews with representatives of music organisations and music education providers, the report examines the nature of the opportunities offered, who provides them, and whether and how they equip young musicians for continuing their musical journey.

The report attempts to draw together findings and views from across the profession, cross-referencing and identifying commonalities so that the music education and professional music sectors can begin to articulate shared aims and ambitions for future development.

Speaking at the launch of the Musical Routes Report at Wigmore Hall (25 September), percussionist and RPS Honorary Member, **Dame Evelyn Glennie** commented: *“This report is to be welcomed by anyone who loves and cares about music. It offers practical suggestions that could help more children to enjoy music in its many different forms and it, quite rightly, demands equality of opportunity for all young people. It is important that the music profession takes careful note of areas of difficulty highlighted in the report, and comes together to find a way forward. We need to inspire, to create, to engage and to empower every child with an interest in music to fulfill his or her potential.”*

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to implement the National Plan for Music Education more effectively and inclusively, the report makes a number of recommendations for the music industry:

- **Clearly articulate the key elements required to provide excellent music progression opportunities in a national statement of music education offer that gives equal weight to formal, non-formal and informal learning programmes.**
- **Foster mutual respect and understanding between deliverers in order to articulate clearly what musical progression and success looks like in terms that are relevant and applicable across different genres and traditions, and which embrace the full breadth of progression routes.**
- **Provide the means for children and those guiding them to make informed choices about their musical route, through clear information resources and myth-busting mentoring.**
- **Encourage high quality experiences that convey the impact that music can have on a child’s learning and well-being, and a wide range of role models amongst musicians and music leaders, and across musical styles, in order to promote diversity and open children’s eyes to the possibilities before them.**
- **Encourage an entrepreneurial approach to developing models of best practice in order to maximise the impact of high quality programmes**

- **Improve targeted advocacy of education leaders, so that head teachers and governors have a clear understanding of the value of music**
- **Invest in high quality, tested resources for the profession (including school and instrumental teachers, and music leaders) and new approaches to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in conservatoires and across the music profession**

The report suggests practical initiatives and a strategic pathway to implement recommendations, including:

- **six 'building blocks' for musical progression and 'replicable models' of good practice**
- **a network of national musical mentors and champions to widen diversity in music**
- **a national online music education map and resource centre to improve communication**
- **a national celebration of young people's many and varied musical achievements.**

Rosemary Johnson, Chief Executive of the Royal Philharmonic Society comments: *"The Royal Philharmonic Society is delighted to work with Sarah Derbyshire on this important report, which highlights some key challenges to ensuring that all children have access to musical learning. The RPS has been at the centre of collaboration between listeners and the music profession for over 200 years, and we understand how important it is for children and young people to have the opportunity to develop their musical interests and skills, and the value and wider benefits that music brings.*

Enjoyment, engagement and enthusiasm are essential ingredients of an effective progress through music learning, whether the goal is to produce a musical adult – player or listener – or a professional musician, and whilst the report shows there is much to celebrate, the inequity of opportunity that it highlights is worrying. The joys and benefits of a musical life must not become the preserve of those who can call on social or financial advantage, or who come from a musical background. This report offers a constructive way forward."

Sarah Derbyshire, the report's author comments: *"'Musical Routes' shows that very many individual musicians, teachers, practitioners and organisations recognise that inequalities of opportunity exist and are devising ways to fill the gaps. However, a fault line is developing between formal and informal approaches to learning. We need to change the debate so that we better value all areas of provision, and sign-post more clearly to children and their families the diversity of musical routes open to them, and the wonderful opportunities for musical learning across the board, provided by a music sector rich in talent, experience and creative ideas: whatever your background or musical interests, there's a place for you to learn and fulfill your musical potential.*

If these inequities and barriers are not addressed, and addressed soon, we will fail many, many young people with musical talent who are not currently engaged in music education. They will not have the chance to realise their musical potential, with the result that the music profession will not be representative of today's society and the richness of our amateur music-making and audience-going public will suffer".

The RPS is grateful to the J Paul Getty Jr Charitable Trust and to many other individuals whose concern for the future of music education prompted them to contribute to the funding of the report.

Further press information from

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Notes to editors:

- Music Education Hubs were introduced in 2012 as a new way of organizing music education.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Derbyshire MBE is an independent music professional with extensive experience in the development and management of professional music and music education organisations. She has a deep commitment to the life-changing impact which involvement in high quality music making can have on people of all ages, and its wider impact on the creativity and health of our society.

In a career spanning over 25 years in the music sector, her belief in and commitment to the power of music to change lives and support communities has remained not only a guiding principle, but has been strengthened by a profound understanding gained through experience. Throughout her career, she has been involved the development of young musicians – whether as emerging professional performers, young people seeking new musical opportunities, musically talented children or those becoming involved in music for the very first time. She has also initiated programmes focusing on diversity and the role of the musician in society.

Sarah had a long association with Live Music Now, which she led for ten years as the UK Executive Director. After a period as the Managing Director of the National Children’s Orchestras of Great Britain, she resumed a freelance career. Her most recent role is as consultant to CapeUK (the Bridge organisation for Yorkshire and the Humber), developing a Local Cultural Education Partnership for Kirklees. Sarah Derbyshire is Chair of NYMAZ (the young people’s music development charity for North Yorkshire) and a Board member of Jazz North. She is also a trustee of the Mayfield Valley Arts Trust and has recently joined the Board of the University of York Music Press.

ABOUT THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

The Royal Philharmonic Society unites the music profession and its audiences to create a vibrant future for music: supporting and working creatively with talented young performers and composers, championing excellence, and encouraging audiences to listen to, and talk about, great music. The Society has been at the heart of music for over 200 years, with direct links to Beethoven (it commissioned the composer’s Ninth Symphony), Mendelssohn, Wagner and many of the iconic figures of classical music.

CHAMPIONS OF EXCELLENCE: The Society sets the standard and lets the world know about the finest classical music making. From its historic Gold Medal to the annual RPS Music Awards for live music, recognition by the RPS is a guarantee of outstanding music achievement.

YOUNG MUSICIANS: The RPS invests in talented young performers at the start of their careers, offering much needed funding to buy instruments, teaching tailored to their individual needs, or the chance to be mentored by an experienced, established performer.

COMPOSERS: The Society supports new music through commissioning new work, repeat performances, workshops, residency schemes and encouraging interaction between composers and audiences.

AUDIENCES: The RPS is a voice for music, putting music at the centre of cultural life. Whether a regular listener or just beginning to explore classical music, the RPS encourages people to listen and talk about music through a series of events, talks and debates.