



# Making Music London

## Question Time No.3 – 3Feb10 at 1901 Arts Club, Waterloo

### MEETING NOTES

#### Panel

Heather Tomala, MM London Development Officer  
Tom Hammond, MM London Development Officer

#### Attendance

There were 11 groups represented here: 6 choirs / vocal groups, 5 orchestras / instrumental groups, 0 music clubs.

#### Guest speaker session:

#### Brendon le Page, Head of Lambeth Music Service and Director of *In Harmony* project

Brendon gave us a very engaging insight into *In Harmony*, Lambeth's flagship Government funded project and 1 of only 3 such pilots in England. The scheme is designed to meet all objectives of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda and is the English answer to Venezuela's *El Sistema* model.

Based at the Lansdowne Green Estate in Stockwell and involving Herbert Morrison and St. Stephen's C of E primary schools, *In Harmony* uses music to improve children's lives and boost social cohesion in the most deprived areas in the country. In partnership with housing group AmicusHorizon, the Southbank Centre and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Lambeth's programme uses songs, movement, percussion and string instruments to develop and provide opportunities for the children to learn and perform together, and also trips to observe and interact with professional musicians.

The presentation included a comparison of the Government's directives regarding education and health targets, and how *In Harmony* meets them better than more 'conventional' methods. Not only does the project give local children unique and specially tailored access to music, it also considers their families and, over a period of time, aims to change long-held and possibly mistaken views about music and participation.

Brendon finished by showing us a series of photos and a video recording of the project's first informal concert. It sparked discussion as to how all music groups, both professional and voluntary, could better engage audiences they do not currently reach. The issues are numerous and complex but most definitely worth striving to solve.

#### Making Music London Question Time and discussion

This session allowed time for specific questions regarding Making Music London, its projects, plans and services available to member groups and the wider music-making community. Members also took the opportunity throughout the evening to compare their own groups' experiences and problems.

#### ISSUES DISCUSSED in addition to 'community music education' already mentioned above

- **possibility of MM offering a service to marry up vocal soloists and member choirs (and equally instrumental soloists and member orchestras)**

The (Philip and Dorothy Green) Award for Young Concert Artists (AYCA) scheme and its timescale and subsidy were explained; if no suitable musician is available in the current listing, previous years' winners can be looked up, although obviously without subsidy. In addition there may be suitable Fox (instrumental) and Hodgson (vocal) bursary winners available. There was discussion regarding seeking music college students and members were advised to be very careful over paying 'fees' or 'expenses' as there is no consistent framework in place here and RDOs know of groups being unfairly manipulated; it was advised to offer a clear amount of expenses only if pursuing this route. Groups should also be aware that younger performers may not be ready to take on certain repertoire whilst their techniques are still in development, and be guided if possible by the student's teacher.

- **possibility of MM (London) setting up rehearsal track / lighting / staging exchange schemes**

This was requested as an extension to the existing Music Exchange Scheme. Regarding rehearsal tracks or teach-tapes, the following were suggested (by RDOs and attendees combined):

- Music Dynamics: [www.musicdynamics.co.uk](http://www.musicdynamics.co.uk)
- CyberBass: [www.cyberbass.com](http://www.cyberbass.com)
- ChoraLine: recordings available from Music Dynamics (see above)

Groups frequently require items of lighting, staging, rostra, etc. for concerts and have neither space nor funds to acquire these permanently. MM London doesn't either! However, RDOs would be very happy to create an exchange area on the London website where members can list items owned and wanted, using it to contact other members and set up a loan or hire agreement between themselves. For this to be successful, groups must obviously ensure they submit their own information so as to ensure there is content on the page, and RDOs will place a call-out prominently on the website. MM also offers an (underused) interest-free Staging and Instrument Loan: of usually no more than £2,500 repayable in 4 equal annual instalments, which will cover up to 50% of the equipment purchase cost; further details are available from the MM office.

- **results of recent online membership questionnaire**

There was a request to know what is happening with the results of this questionnaire. RDOs didn't know but have since learned that the findings are being used by the strategy group to help inform Making Music's next 5-Year Plan, including awareness of and satisfaction levels with current services and suggestions for new or improved services in the future. A summary document has been circulated amongst staff and Board and some of the key findings will also be summarised for the national website and general promotion.

- **partnership schemes with BBC, Classic FM, etc.**

Everyone agreed these offer great opportunity for exposure, publicity, funding, etc. depending on what's on offer, but run-in time is always too short. More than one group complained that there had been insufficient time between advert and deadline to put together a high quality application to *Choral Ambition*. Other recent examples of short turnaround periods were Classic FM's callout for choral recordings for its *Full Works* programme on Christmas Day (show entitled 'Making Music') and BBC Radio 4's request for recordings for its *Today* programme, resulting in an online audio map of Great Britain. RDOs explained that inevitably when we are the 'smaller' partner in such a scheme, we will have to jump to the other's deadline – however, this is certainly not the first time the same complaint about unrealistic timelines has been received and it will of course be passed back to MM centrally.

- **MM's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday**

There was disappointment that the only celebration publicised so far was a national Conference – which MM organises annually so it does not feel like a special event. Was MM London organising anything, such as a Come & Sing Day? RDOs said that there are no funds easily available for this sort of event, which in fairness should also be inclusive to instrumental and promoting groups, so maybe a Rediscover Music Day... Members have already been canvassed for their opinions on several occasions and it is now rather late in the day to be planning this, although as the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday could be taken to mean the 2010/11 season, something new may be feasible for January 2011.

RDOs asked all present for suggestions, and received the following:

- Could RDOs ask around the London membership to see if there is an appetite to get together and celebrate somehow?
- How about a cabaret style event where players and singers of all genres could participate?
- This could be a great showcase for MM if marketed more as a public sort of event.

RDOs agreed to investigate. It was stated that groups would have to volunteer to participate, with little scope for payment of expenses. However, if such an event could be outward-facing, promoting MM and MM London and voluntary music-making generally to the public, it could do a lot of good and therefore groups may be keen to get involved because of the possible exposure.

- **MM's outward-facing role as supporter and champion of voluntary music-making**

It was suggested that MM should be replicating Lambeth's *In Harmony* model on a smaller scale – perhaps in individual schools, communities, adult education groups, other community settings, etc. The main hurdle is funding the resource of a professional musician going into the project's home every week, although there is no reason why volunteers and even MM member groups could not support this process if appropriately trained and managed. A discussion took place over obtaining funds for the educational part of a multi-faceted project in contrast to the voluntary performing part – RDOs are available and well placed to advise on funding applications for educational projects, as both work professionally with young people and have been successful at gaining funding for both MM and non-MM projects. The Elgar Society was also suggested as a possible funder for performances of lesser known works, with preference given to Elgar's own music.

- **lobbying on issues relevant to music generally**

The imminent closure / redistribution of the Victoria & Albert Museum's musical instrument collections was raised. Opinion was that MM nationally should be supporting this campaign. RDOs pointed out that there is an online petition available for individuals to sign, which they can certainly publicise via the London website and therefore encourage others to sign, and that they will also ask Robin Osterley if MM as an organisation can do any more.

- **locating unusual sheet music**

Sourcing less standard repertoire, for example South American music for a themed concert, can be difficult and guidance was requested. Hire costs can also be unreasonably high. RDOs mentioned *Orchestral Music Online* – [www.orchestralmusic.com](http://www.orchestralmusic.com) – an online database of standard and lesser known repertoire. Users pay an annual subscription to access information including duration, instrumentation and publishers for each piece. Although inexpensive, it was asked if MM London could purchase a subscription on behalf of the region and make the log-in information available to the membership – RDOs will investigate. Alternatively, *Access Music Direct* is a one-man sheet music sourcing company which is very efficient and usually at no more than the cost of purchasing items

from a shop. RDOs are running an investigative project on music hire charges (see projects below), and suspect that if publishers could be persuaded to drop prices, pieces in copyright would be more affordable and therefore played more frequently, meaning that publishing houses would bring in more performances and also more revenue in the long run. Members present were asked to send RDOs details of their experiences of hiring copyright music to feed into the research being carried out.

## **MM LONDON PROJECTS AND PLANS**

RDOs brought those present up to date on plans and progress in the region.

MM London's new structure was outlined, as part of which a request was put out for groups to submit their own photos for inclusion on the London website, which RDOs now manage. There is evidently still confusion between national and regional websites. RDOs encouraged members to check the London website regularly, which they plan to use as the principal means of communicating important and in particular short notice information such as opportunities, ticket offers, new sources of funding, training, etc. This will be supported by targeted e-mails via the Message Focus software MM uses both regionally and nationally.

London Harmony's final printed issue was circulated in January and the magazine will now appear online only, in a version reduced from 12 pages to 8 to improve readability, and possibly also with an online reader – currently under investigation. There may be further changes in future as an 8-page magazine in digital format could still be rather unwieldy and risks not being read in full.

MM London's partnership with the Southbank Centre has proved extremely successful, despite some planning problems, and there is now a voluntary music thread – the Making Music Series – running within the Bernstein Project. Collaboration during the 2011/12 season is currently under discussion.

RDOs plan to do large-scale research into the problem of hiring music (usually orchestral parts) in copyright, with the aim of making a proposal to the Music Publishers' Association to reduce hire costs for voluntary groups in order to increase both the number of performances and resultant revenue through better affordability for users.

2010 brings MM London's partnership project with the British Lung Foundation, beginning with pilot sessions in several 'Breathe Easy' groups. These will involve a professional vocal leader encouraging lung patients to pursue breathing exercises and singing, emphasising the tie-up between health and music, and generally raising awareness of how singing can support breathing. An evaluation will use facts and comments gathered during these sessions to put together a larger bid for funding to roll out the scheme across London. Members of local member groups will be invited to take part by joining the sessions to give both vocal and moral support.

Finally, members were reminded once more to make use of their RDOs. Although not all downloadable from the national or regional website, they maintain a stack of resources available to members, such as listings of venues, funding sources, workshop leaders, photographers, print and web designers, sound recording engineers, etc. – plus the knowledge and experience of the RDOs themselves, including assisting with plans and funding applications for member group projects.

HT, 12Feb10

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