

Newsletter #4 March / April 2024

Partnerships

Working in partnership with various music education providers across Wales is a key priority of the National Music Service.

It is essential that we build and develop our relationships with local, regional and national partners, working together with a range of community music groups, local youth organisations, brass bands and choirs – as well as national organisations, local authorities, social partnerships and much more. In this newsletter, our intention is to give you a taste of some of the work already underway with some of our partners.

Free access to Urdd Eisteddfod practice tracks

In collaboration with **Charanga Cymru** and the **Urdd Eisteddfod**, the **National Music Service for Wales** announced a new development, which will open the door for more Welsh schools to be able to take part in Wales' main children and youth festival.

As part of the new partnership – the first of its kind between NMS Wales and the Urdd Eisteddfod – rehearsal tracks for set pieces in the Year 6 and junior singing categories of the Urdd Eisteddfod Maldwyn 2024 were published on the Charanga Cymru online platform.

The aim is to increase the opportunity for children to learn and practise the set pieces, whilst giving more young people and their teachers the opportunity to take part in Wales' largest youth cultural festival. In addition to the rehearsal tracks, children can use YuStudio, Charanga's digital audio



workstation (DAW), to support their entries in the festival's Music Composition categories. The practice tracks will help tutors, and provide equal opportunities for all.

NMS Wales and the Urdd Eisteddfod also plan to add to the numbers of online tracks over the next few years. After the Urdd Eisteddfod Maldwyn 2024, the tracks will remain available to all schools using

Charanga Cymru to support their day-to-day music teaching.

Charanga Cymru is a digital music platform that has been available for free to all Welsh schools since October 2022, thanks to investment from the National Music Service. To date, over 1,000 schools have logged into their account, and more than 3,100 teachers at those schools have their own personal link to the platform.

The response was fantastic, with parents, teachers and tutors saying the resource was going to be of huge help to them. Some schools have decided to compete this year solely because they have this resource to practice – with some competing for the first time ever. Good luck to everyone competing at the District and County Eisteddfodau over the next few weeks!

Training course on working inclusively through music

The **Music Masters** charity, in a new partnership with the **National Music Service for Wales**, has developed bespoke training 'modules' to empower and raise the confidence of music teachers in Wales.

"Notes on Inclusion: Empowering Educators was a pilot training course, developed in response to aspects of inclusion, equality and diversity discussed in the National Plan for Music Education (Wales), and as a Wales-specific dimension of the Master of Music's PGCE programme, Musicians of Change, this academic year.

Using Katrina Damigos' course leadership of Musicians of Change, and Dr Beth Pickard from the University of South Wales's research and experience in critical disability studies and inclusive music education, this two day event was developed for music educators in Wales eager to begin their journey in increasing access and inclusion, specifically working with children and young people with additional learning needs.

A **consultation event** was held in December 2023 with disabled musicians Ellen Davies, Gareth Churchill, Siobhan Clough and Rebecca Jolliffe, to discuss the

aspiration, agenda and inform the focus of the training. With their insight and expertise, a programme of theory, philosophy, activities and reflections were shared with music service tutors and wider music education colleagues over two rich days in January 2024.

The highlight of the training was a panel event, where **Rebecca Jolliffe** and **Right Keys Only** generously shared their lived experiences and responded to discussion points informed by the National Plan for Music Education and contemporary research into disabled musicians experiences. **Alex Lupo** shared his lived and professional experience across a wide range of contexts to provide delegates with creative and exciting resources and strategies for developing the inclusivity of their provision.

Music Masters is now supporting many of the participants through their planning. The training will be accompanied by a resource list, informed and written by disabled, Welsh musicians. The further two-day course of this module will take place at Pontypridd YMa centre on March 4 & 5 2024, where Ruth Montgomery, Right Keys Only, Gareth Churchill and Rhian Davies will share their expertise with representatives in South Wales. The course is open to any educator in Wales. If you would like to attend please email nmspost@wlga.gov.uk

Open Orchestra

Open Orchestras is the largest community of inclusive ensembles in the UK and supports delivery of the National Plan for Music Education in Wales.

In partnership with Music Services and special schools our groundbreaking programme makes learning an instrument and playing with others independently, expressively and in real time accessible to all 8-18 year-old disabled students.

For more information on how to start your own Open Orchestra, go to www.openorchestras.org

Registration opens on 01 March 2024.



National Youth Arts Wales

Three senior members of the **National Youth Brass Band of Wales (NYBBW)** have been selected to represent Wales in the annual European Youth Brass Band (EYBB) this year. Alice Tracey from Swansea, Erin Maloney from Anglesey, and Patrick Miller from Newport (who have been members of NYAW since 2019) will travel to Palanga, Lithuania at the end of April. As well as representing NYBBW, Alice and Patrick will also represent the Llwyncoed Brass Band and Erin will represent the Flowers Band.

Although all three are now students at the **Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama**, all three have experienced musical paths with their county Music

Services and with their local brass bands – Erin with Beaumaris Brass Band, Alice with West Glamorgan Music Service, and Patrick was a member of the Newport Borough Brass Band. The three's time with the European Youth Brass Band will come to an end with a series of concerts taking place in the first week of May.

During the same week a large number of young people from brass bands across Wales will also travel to Lithuania to compete in the European Brass Band competition. This competition is one of the biggest prizes in the Brass Band calendar. We wish them all well!



D.S.

In our newsletter we want to give you the opportunity to get to know those involved in music education in Wales. The Urdd Eisteddfod and the Welsh Music Service have announced a partnership to publish free rehearsal tracks for set pieces in some of the singing categories for Welsh schools on the Charanga Cymru online platform. This time we speak to Llio Maddocks from the Urdd.

1

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Llan Ffestiniog, at the foot of Moelwynion. I see the mountains and sea from my childhood bedroom, so those have definitely helped me become a creative person! I lived a stone's throw from the River Cynfal, which is rooted in the stories of the Mabinogi, so storytelling through the arts has always been a huge part of my life. But now I live in Cardiff and I love it – There's so much to do, and a lot of exciting work coming from the city right now! It's nice to be able to pick to the theatre or to a gig, and everything is on the doorstep.

2

Do you remember your first musical experience?

Singing at the Cylch Ffestiniog Eisteddfod was probably my first musical experience. We are fortunate here in Wales to have a tradition of singing in front of an audience. I always felt safe on the Eisteddfod stage, whether it was with the Urdd or at local Eisteddfodau. And I had a fantastic music teacher at Ysgol y Moelwyn – Owain Arwel Davies – who made music fun by playing the trombone for us. Good teachers are invaluable, aren't they, and Arwel (or 'Our Music Man' as we affectionately called him), certainly inspired me to experiment and create sounds. It didn't all have to sound good. Having fun through music was his ethos.

3

The Urdd has just announced a new partnership with National Music Service Wales and Charanga Cymru. How will children benefit from this?

This partnership is so important to us, to ensure that all children are supported to practice and enjoy the Urdd pieces. Not everyone has

a piano in the house, but having tracks available for free can help every child who wants to give it a go! I hope that it will be a useful resource for teachers and coaches too, and that they also encourage their pupils to be brave. We are keen for this partnership to grow, to ensure that every child in Wales has the opportunity and is given the experience of being on stage at the Eisteddfod, or to enjoy through music. Because that's what matters – the participation.

4

You're preparing for the Urdd Montgomery Eisteddfod 2024 in May. How can you persuade someone who has never been to the Eisteddfod to come for a day?

There's nowhere like the Urdd Eisteddfod. Watching children and young people run from one Pavilion to another is a thrill in itself; the Urdd Eisteddfod is a celebration and the pinnacle of the whole 'Eisteddfod experience' after months of practice, and it's a privilege that so many competitors are taking part. But in addition to the competition, there are so many opportunities out on the Eisteddfod field, through workshops

and events throughout the week. It's a perfectly safe place and encourages thousands of children to embark on their arts path. There's a sense of community there, and everyone is so supportive of each other. It's a safe place to feel the excitement of music.

5

What's the best concert you've ever been to?

Without a doubt, watching Björk in Bestival is my favorite musical experience. She is otherworldly and takes you to another planet through her utterly unique voice and music. But I'm also looking forward to our concerts during the Urdd Eisteddfod – a selection of Montgomery Theatre Company shows in the primary schools show, and a musical with popular Rhydian Meilir songs by the secondary cast. I can assure you that those will be performances to remember, with hundreds of children and young people from the Montgomery area singing their hearts out on the Pavilion stage!



Open Forum – Pontio

The first **National Music Service Open Forum** was held at Pontio in Bangor on 14 November 2023. The Open Forum was created by the National Music Service and the Welsh Music Partnership Forum as a space for people to explore current topics in music education, hear about the progress of the National Music Education Plan, network and share opportunities. The theme of this first meeting was 'Pathways in Music Education'.

The Forum began with a welcome from **Osian Gwynn**, Director of Pontio, and a presentation by Pontio's Arts Development Coordinator, **Mared Elliw Huws**, exploring some of the project work Pontio is undertaking with schools and young people.

After the warm welcome, we received a series of updates from the various partners delivering the National Plan for Music Education in Wales. National Music Service Co-ordinator **Mari Pritchard** gave an overview of the programme across Wales and some key statistics from the provision to date. All music services across Wales take part in the Scheme, and 60% of schools have experienced the First Experiences programme, which provides 6 weeks of free music experiences to primary school children; Charanga Cymru has been introduced as a dedicated music platform for

teachers in Wales; New ensembles have been introduced in each county, and the digital offering is also increasing across Wales. Mari also talked about some of the partnerships being created with music organisations across Wales and beyond to support the work of the National Plan.

Heather Powell, Director of the Denbigh and Wrexham Music Co-operative, gave an overview of the work taking place across North Wales, including a joint training day for tutors from across the region. Tudur Eames then outlined the work being carried out through the Gwynedd and Anglesey Schools Music Service. He told the audience that the number of music lessons being delivered in schools in both counties has increased. The forum also heard that strong partnerships are being built across the region between schools, the local authority, and a wide range of arts organisations and artists to deliver music and the wider Expressive Arts Curriculum in schools.

Tudur Eames also presented a case study of the work that has been taking place in special schools across the region, and a video of the work that has been taking place at Y Bont Education Centre in Llangefni was shown to the audience. The video showed the musical journey of four pupils from the centre learning trombone,

piano and drums with one-to-one tutors. It was great to see the pupils enthusiasm, and to witness how much progress they had made in such a short space of time.

In a workshop led by **Alan Thomas Williams**, from the Cardiff Curriculum Team, the main points of the Expressive Arts curriculum were presented to the audience. He also outlined the process of change currently underway around GCSEs. The Cardiff Curriculum Team supports the curriculum with an offer of activities and experiences, linking schools, the music service, and music organisations across Cardiff - including the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and the Wales Millennium Centre.

Finally, **Tim Rhys-Evans**, Director of Music at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, chaired a panel discussion exploring the pathways of music in Wales. The panel was joined by music producer Endaf Roberts, harpist Elfair Grug, musician and arranger Nathan Williams, and singer-songwriter Eadyth Crawford, and each artist outlined their journey in music and what had influenced and inspired them. It was interesting to see the different ways each person experienced them. What was impressive was the range of skills each panel member had mastered to build their career as a musician, including teaching,

running a record label, producing, and promoting. There was a wide-ranging discussion that included a number of topics: how learning music in school isn't always right for everyone and that some people need to find different ways to engage with music; how to engage young people with digital music now that that software is much easier to access; how to learn music business awareness; equal access to different instruments; how to build stronger partnerships with Further Education as a resource.

The second Open Forum will take place at Pontypridd YMA on 28 February 2024.

Our website

Several new domains have opened on our website, so be sure to visit www.music-service.wales constantly to see what's new there. There is also a page for schools to register for **Charanga Cymru**.

We share all sorts of news on our social accounts, so search for us on **Facebook**, **Instagram** and **X**. We have a new **YouTube** channel, which has a video of the first exciting year of our work programme, First Experiences, and a special film from Y Bont Education Centre, Anglesey.

There are links to all these sites on our [website](#).