



ABRSM Diversity and Inclusion Plan

Progress Update to March 2020/21

The following is the first in a series of regular updates designed to report on ABRSM's progress in promoting greater diversity and inclusion across five key areas of its operations and organisation:

1. Active commissioning

1.1 Commissioned total of 18 new pieces for forthcoming woodwind syllabus, with one third from Black, Brown, and Indigenous People of Colour (BBIPOC) composers, 11 (61%) from female composers, two from other non-white composers, and one piece from a disabled composer.

1.2 Actively working with existing partners like Commonwealth Resounds, Music Mark, Sound and Music and Royal Philharmonic Society to raise awareness of new diverse repertoire and to integrate our new commissioning programmes into their work.

1.2 Established new partnerships with membership organisations, Ivors Academy and Musicians Union, in order to reach other new composers who might be interested in commissions.

1.3 Staged successful 'Writing for Music Education' workshop for 100 composers as part of fundamental commitment towards open-source guides and de-mystifying composition of music education. Workshop to be repeated for another 100 composers on waiting list.

1.4 Ensured that almost a third of pieces/arrangements on Nikki Iles and friends Jazz Piano albums to be published this spring are by composers/arrangers from underrepresented ethnic groups, primarily Black composers.

1.5 Developing plans for dedicated 'composing for music education' area of ABRSM website to complement workshops and related activity. Already established dedicated email address to manage increase in interest from composers and ensure inquiries effectively handled.

2. Transforming syllabuses

2.1 Significantly increased proportion of pieces by BBIPOC and female composers in new woodwind syllabus to be published this summer. This work was continuing as this update was compiled but, as of mid-March 2021, was expected to mean that:

- Five per cent of flute syllabus pieces (up from 1% in 2018) are by BBIPOC musicians and 16% by female composers (previously 8%);
- Five per cent of clarinet pieces (up from 1% in 2018) are by BBIPOC composers and 10% (from 4% in 2018) by female composers;
- Five per cent of oboe pieces are by BBIPOC composers (up from 0.5%) and 11% by female composers (3% increase);
- Almost a quarter (24%) of the new saxophone syllabus features compositions by female composers and 8% of pieces are by BBIPOC composers (an increase from 0% in 2018);
- The bassoon syllabus includes 26 pieces (11% of the syllabus) by female composers and eight pieces (3%) by BBIPOC composers (up from 0% in 2018).
- The diversity of composers providing recorder compositions is also under development and will be reported on in a future update.

2.2 Total of 30 BBIPOC composers, including Yolanda Brown, Errollyn Wallen and Duke Ellington due to feature in new woodwind syllabus.

2.3 Researched, sourced, and considered almost 150 pieces by composers from underrepresented groups for all woodwind instruments which led to new contacts with dozens of composers and some publishers new to ABRSM.

2.4 Developed new support for an external advisory advisory team with monthly meeting of group convened by the Ivors Academy, co-chaired by ABRSM, to receive advice, share plans and offer support.

2.5 Adopted following statement and commitments with reference to musical theatre which appear in the Singing for Musical Theatre syllabus:

ABRSM is committed to creating greater diversity, equality, and inclusion in the field of music and actively working to achieve this across key areas of operations, including the content of our syllabuses.

Musical Theatre has a long history, enriched by the range and depth of its composers and arrangers, characters, performers, cultures, intentions, and themes. This complex nature currently makes it extremely difficult properly to represent a broad historical sweep of the genre without including pieces which contain outdated attitudes and cultural stereotypes. We are working to reduce the significance of all such pieces within the syllabus.

In the meantime, we draw attention to the nature of the contents of some pieces featured – not simply as a warning to customers but so that we can learn from them too. We will continue raising awareness of such issues as we make progress on our broader diversity commitments.

2.6 Working closely with five composers from underrepresented groups to contribute additional compositions for use as digital publications.

3. Mentorship and development programme for composers

3.1 As above, delivered successful Writing for Music Education workshop with 100 participants with a further 100 on waiting list for repeat event.

3.2 Scheduled composer mentoring scheme to start spring 2021 with early career composers identified through new partnership with the Ivors Academy. Max. six participants to be involved initially on advice re optimum numbers. Scheme to be overseen by composer in music education, Sarah Watts, and teacher, educator, and performer Andy Grappy.

3.3 Gained valuable new awareness of mentor programmes established by other organisations and identified opportunities to work with partners like Commonwealth Resounds, National Youth Jazz Orchestra and Royal Philharmonic Society to realise ambition of supporting 100 new composers by 2030, with:

- Plans already in place for series of workshops for composers from commonwealth countries. Workshops to feature composers who are already known to be interested in writing for music education and act as a fast track into getting to know, and hopefully commissioning, them.
- Plan to work through National Youth Jazz Orchestra by complementing its Diversity and Inclusion commitment by having young composers working within NYJO ensembles and introducing the specific composition needs of ABRSM.
- Building on ABRSM sponsorship of the Royal Philharmonic Society's established mentor programme with workshops with composers identified by RPS.

3.4 Developing plans for composition for education section of ABRSM website as part of commitment to publication of open-source guides and support materials to make music education composition more transparent and accessible.

4. Developing partnerships and advocacy

4.1 Harnessing power of sponsorship relationships with National Youth Jazz Orchestra, National Youth Orchestra, National Youth Choir of Great Britain, National Open Youth Orchestra, and a range of local/grass roots initiatives to set specific Diversity and Inclusion targets covering numbers of participants, range of voices and good practice dissemination.

4.2 Actively referencing Diversity and Inclusion impacts and implications within all conversations with Arts Council England and DfE.

4.3 Sponsored article referencing diversity in music education in January issue of Music Teacher magazine.

4.4 Acknowledged the sector-wide shift towards greater Diversity and Inclusion eg with partner publishers Hal Leonard publishing their own D&I approach

4.5 In discussions with Ivors Academy about establishing Diversity and Inclusion advisory forum for music education sector.

4.6 Recognising multiplicity and richness of the umbrella term 'Diversity and Inclusion' and the value of also reflecting the contribution of musicians from other under-represented groups.

4.7 Evolving partnership with National Open Youth Orchestra.

5. Transforming the organisation

5.1 Working towards Diversity and Inclusion review of ABRSM governance. Progress report is expected in our next Diversity and Inclusion update.

5.2 Launched survey to understand diversity within ABRSM examiner panel as part of commitment supported by Musicians Union to explore greater diversity in recruitment.

5.3 Delivered unconscious bias training for all ABRSM staff and initiated internal survey to establish diversity of staff

5.4 Established cross organisational Diversity & Inclusion Resource Group, with 20 regular members meeting monthly. Group chaired by ABRSM executive director, features updates and discussion on diversity and inclusion progress and enjoys very high levels of engagement.

5.5 Established Diversity and Inclusion as standing agenda item on both monthly staff meetings and weekly SMT meetings.

5.6 Reinforced organisational commitment to Diversity and Inclusion through statement from new CEO.

5.7 Inspired a genuine culture change within the organisation within short space of time, with new sense of collaboration and ownership of work to make ABRSM more diverse. This has resulted in staff preferring to take a broader view which sees ABRSM's diversity agenda simply in terms of championing a sense of fairness across and beyond the organisation.