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A Manifesto for Music Education in Scotland

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The background is a vibrant teal color. It is decorated with several thick, diagonal stripes in various colors: magenta, light purple, white, dark blue, and light green. The stripes are scattered across the page, creating a dynamic and modern aesthetic. Two horizontal magenta lines are positioned above and below the main text.

A Manifesto for Music Education in Scotland



In December 2016, it was announced that Scotland had slipped down world education rankings in the areas of reading, science, and maths, according to the Programme for International Assessment (PISA). Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney, publicly stated in response that “we now must be clear: reform is required. This data reinforces the case for radical change that this government is determined to pursue.”¹

Our aim is to make the case for music as a crucially important component in the education of Scotland’s young people – particularly within the current context of potential radical reforms during a challenging time for our education sector.

The authors of this manifesto convened a series of research workshops to complement the 32nd World Conference for the International Society for Music Education, hosted by The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in 2016. These workshops brought together leading music educators, researchers, and learners to discuss the current state and possible future of music education in Scotland. Here we outline our findings and our vision for music education, with specific reference to the following four national outcomes taken from the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework:

- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.
- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.
- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.
- We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.

We make specific policy recommendations for the Music Education Partnership Group and Scottish Government pertaining to each of the outcomes above, and overall recommend that music education be supported through legislation by Scottish Parliament and the development of a National Framework for Music Education.

1. Quoted in The Scotsman, ‘Scotland slips down world education rankings in key subjects’, 6 December 2016.

‘Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.’

Music is a natural part of childhood, from early years play to initial music education. As well as allowing children to explore music in its own right, engaging in structured music activities at a young age has been shown to enhance literacy, numeracy, and language development,² as well as improving social and emotional skills.³

Primary school is key to reaching the majority of children. Amidst cuts to specialist provision, generalist teachers are increasingly responsible for delivering music, yet initial teacher education can provide as little as three hours of music-specific training. Confidence in music continues to be a significant issue for generalist teachers – research shows that little has changed in how teachers experience the music curriculum under the current Curriculum for Excellence⁴ and its predecessor, 5-14.⁵

In our workshops, we sought to explore ideas of what an early music education should look like in Scotland, and the impact it might have on a child’s musical future. Participants suggested that it should be based on principles such as giving more control to learners, allowing them input into their own education. It was also suggested that it would be worth developing policy to ensure that early years workers are equipped to embed music-making with children into their daily practices. A journey-mapping activity highlighted the importance of early music education as a platform for further learning opportunities. International participants provided insights into other models: Finland, for example, places greater emphasis on access to music education in childhood years, including statutory early childhood music education in public day care and in compulsory basic education.⁶



Meanwhile, the Australian government-supported National Music Teacher Mentoring Programme⁷ is a model of a national programme that helps generalist teachers gain more confidence. The full potential of partnership with third sector organisations should be maximised, building on existing good practice in this area, to benefit both in-school music activity and training for teachers. Universities should also share publicly recognized good practice in teaching music to young people.⁸

Consequently, our vision for music education in Scotland advocates the improvement of the quality of primary music education, recognising generalist primary teachers as gatekeepers to early music education experiences and further opportunities. Primary teacher education should include a minimum benchmark on training in delivering music, so that generalist primary classroom teachers feel more confident, empowered and equipped to work with music with their pupils.



2. Arts Council England (2014) The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society: An evidence review. www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Value_arts_culture_evidence_review.pdf. Last accessed April 7 2017
3. University of Queensland (2015) Jamming with toddlers trumps hitting the books. Available: <https://www.uq.edu.au/news/article/2015/09/jamming-toddlers-trumps-hitting-books>. Last accessed April 7 2017
4. Bhachu, D. (2016) ‘Exploring Scottish generalist primary teachers experiences with and perceptions of music education’. Paper presented at the International Society for Music Education World Conference, Glasgow, July
5. Wilson, G. B., MacDonald, R. A. R., Byrne, C., Ewing, S., and Sheridan, M. (2008) ‘Dread and passion: primary and secondary teachers’ views on teaching the arts’. *The Curriculum Journal*, 19(1), 37-53.
6. Korpela, P., Kuoppamäki, A., Laes, T., Miettinen, L., Muhonen, S., Muukkonen, M., Nikkanen, H., Ojala, A., Partti, H., Pihkanen T. & Rikandi, I. (2010). Music Education in Finland. In: I. Rikandi (Ed), Mapping the common ground: Philosophical perspectives on Finnish music education. Helsinki: BTJ Finland & Sibelius-Akatemia, 16-31.
7. Music Mentoring is Making a Difference: Summary of Research Findings <http://www.ago.com.au/content/national-music-teacher-mentoring-program/gk2vag>
8. Creative Scotland produced 24 in depth case studies from the retrospective 2014-15 YMI Evaluation and 2015-16 YMI Impact Report which highlight good practice across all types of music education activity in Scotland: <http://www.creativescotland.com/resources/professional-resources/research/creative-scotland-research/youth-music-initiative-impact-report-201516> <http://www.creativescotland.com/resources/professional-resources/research/creative-scotland-research/evaluation-of-youth-music-initiative>



‘We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.’

Our vision for an inclusive, connected approach to music education would ensure that all learners have the opportunity to follow music as far as it can take them. There must be clearer opportunities for further and higher study for everybody, regardless of their age, SIMD status,¹³ care-experience, location, nationality, ethnicity, religion, disability, or gender identity. The need to tackle inequalities in accessing music courses at colleges and universities is clearly linked to the Scottish Government’s drive to improve access to lifelong and higher education,¹⁴ and the recently appointed Commissioner on Fair Access is well placed to work with a Scottish Music Officer to address the significant inequalities and gaps in Scottish music education as a whole.

To address the under-representation of undergraduate musicians from marginalised sections of Scottish society, the commissioner needs to work closely with all stages of music education to close gaps in provision. For example, charges for instrumental music lessons can vary widely depending on where a learner goes to school,¹⁵ and national SQA qualifications fall short of most undergraduate entry requirement guidance.¹⁶

These factors create potential barriers to studying music, like the cost of private tuition and continued education, and implicitly favour first time applicants who can fund learning privately.¹⁷ Clearer routes to musical study would reduce vocational uncertainty, which is especially important for learners who face financial barriers or who are the first in their families to access higher education.¹⁸

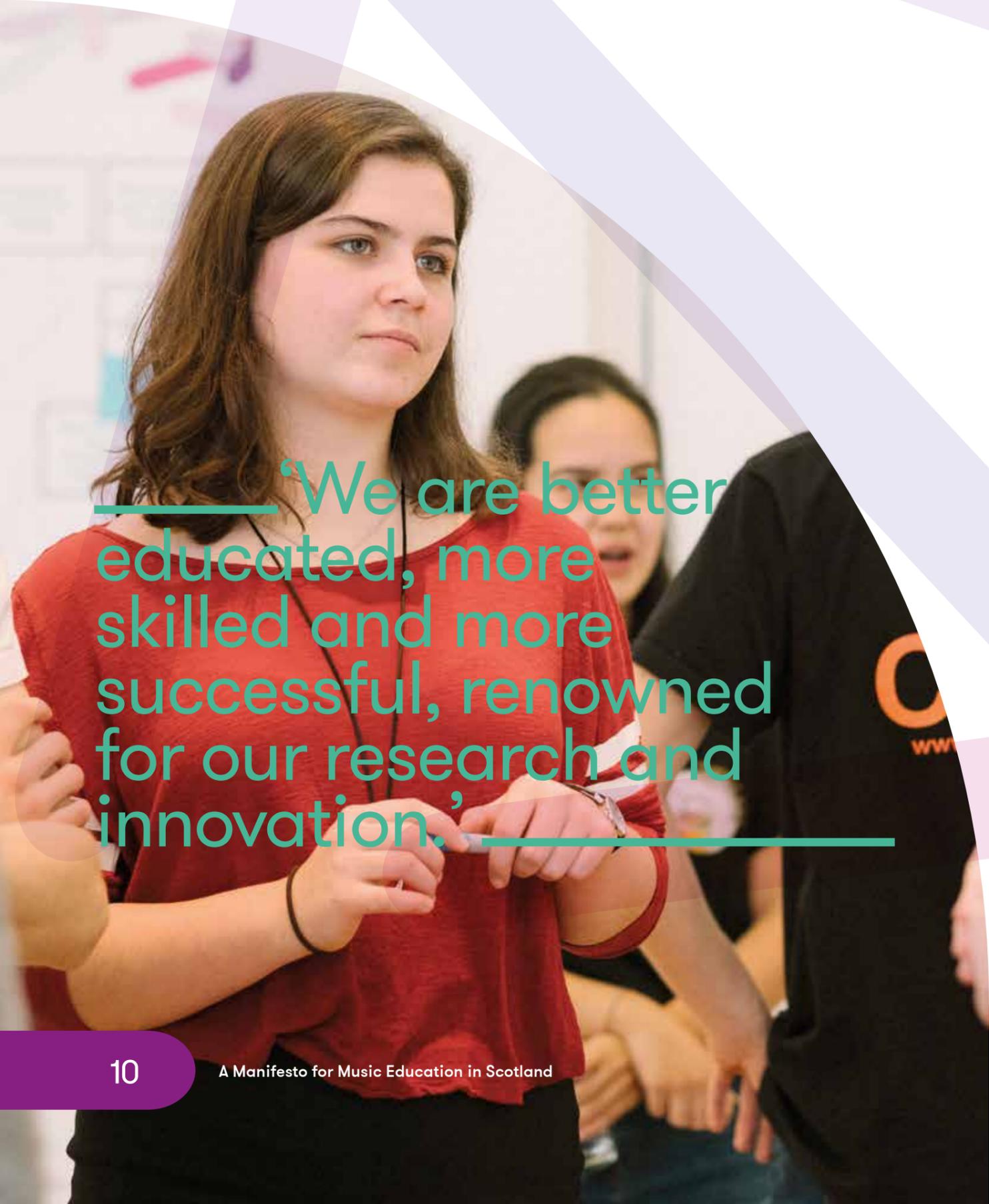
Workshop participants agreed that Scotland should protect and enhance its strengths. However, the undergraduate programme requirements and available paths to pursue music in higher education should be clearly signposted to all learners from an early age, and appropriate support should be available in particular for students from non-traditional backgrounds. More vernacular musical styles should be encouraged within higher education as a way of connecting with grassroots music activity more effectively.

Building on the Scottish Government’s vision of music enhancing learning and enriching living, we propose that providing free school instrumental provision should be a national commitment.¹⁹

Connecting the SQA curriculum with further and higher education admissions departments should also be prioritised, alongside a continued effort to offer more diverse advanced training options at undergraduate level, with opportunities to articulate into university music programmes for adult returners.

We therefore recommend that the Commissioner on Fair Access works directly with the Scottish Music Officer to address the discipline specific gaps in provision that create barriers for marginalised learners in accessing further and higher music education in Scotland.

13. Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. A Scottish government ranking of geographical areas in Scotland based on indicators such as health, income, employment, housing, access to services, crime, and education.
14. Sturgeon, N. (2014). First Minister - Programme for Government. Available: <http://news.gov.scot/speeches-and-briefings/first-minister-programme-for-government>. Last accessed 10th Jan 2017.
15. Improvement Service. (2015). Instrumental Music Services Results from the IMS Survey, May-July 2015. Available: <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/research/music-tuition-report-2015.pdf>. Last accessed 10 Jan 2017.
16. Advanced Higher performance requirements are Grade 5 while most applicants to university courses are expected to be of Grade 8 standard.
17. Kingsbury, H. (1988). Music, talent, and performance: A conservatory cultural system. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
18. Smillie, G. (2016) 'Understanding social and cultural participation in a junior conservatoire: Chronicling the realities of young musicians from deprived areas'. Paper presented at the International Society for Music Education World Conference, Glasgow, July 2016.
19. Scottish Government. National Vision for Instrumental Music Tuition. Available: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/InstrumentalMusic/ImplementationGroup/VisionStatement>. See also Instrumental Music Tuition in Scotland: A Report by the Scottish Government’s Instrumental Music Group. Available: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0042/00426852.pdf>. Both accessed 7 April 2017.



‘We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.’

Consequently, our vision for music education in Scotland is to ensure that Scotland’s music education policy is adaptive, and continues to be informed by the best research, evidence, and practices available in the field.

We therefore recommend that Scottish Government commission a biennial roundtable and short written report that gathers both local and international examples of best practice in music education and assesses their suitability across Scotland. This report should be used to inform any reforms to music education policy.

Scotland’s musical culture enjoys an enviable international reputation, and there is no reason why Scotland’s music education policy should not be equally well known for being innovative, evidence-based, and among the most successful in the world.

We gathered evidence in our workshops of innovative practice in music education occurring in nations of comparable size and means to Scotland. These ranged from activist teaching practices in Finnish schools that foster inclusivity among students with special educational needs,²⁰ to the Cultural and Artistic Education programme in the Netherlands that supports students to choose and attend cultural events that are meaningful to them.²¹

Research suggests that music has faced de-prioritization in many countries in the face of currently-favoured curriculum models, international rankings based on standardised testing, and the ongoing challenge of resources. However, the latest research literature also gives strong evidence for the positive effect of participation in the arts and music. Such participation has been shown to aid “learning, remembering and problem-solving, and the formation of transferable skills such as communication skills and social competency.”²² Furthermore, according to a 2016 review of the research in this area, it was found that “these effects are particularly positive for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.”²³



20. Laes, T. & Schmidt, P. (2016) Activism within music education: working towards inclusion and policy change in the Finnish music school context. *British Journal of Music Education*, doi: 10.1017/S0265051716000012.
21. Nagel, I. & Damen, M.L. Haanstra, F. (2010). The arts course CKV1 and cultural participation in the Netherlands. *Poetics* 38 (4), 365-385.
22. Crossick, G. & Kaszynska, P. 2016. *Understanding the value of arts & culture*. Swindon: Arts and Humanities Research Council, pp.116-117.
23. *Ibid*, p.117.

Overall, the authors believe that music education would be best supported in the form of a firm commitment from Scottish Government written into legislation. To this end, we encourage any initiative from the Music Education Partnership Group or other stakeholders to develop a National Framework for Music Education and for the specific inclusion of music as a focal point in any forthcoming legislation on education in Scotland.

Moreover, we believe that the research cited in this report supports both the recommendations above and the underlying national vision of music's key role in enhancing learning and enriching living in Scotland.



Increased cultural
...all
to take
Everyone will have access
of school until
will have access
creatively

College music
Secondary school music
Community Music Groups



Meeting scene with people sitting around a table, discussing documents and using a laptop.

Workshop scene with people sitting at a table, writing in notebooks.



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About the authors

Matt Brennan is a Chancellor's Fellow of Music at the University of Edinburgh.

Diljeet Bhachu is a doctoral candidate in Music at the University of Edinburgh.

Jo Collinson Scott is a Lecturer in Commercial Music at the University of the West of Scotland.

Graeme Smillie is a doctoral candidate at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Get in touch: m.t.brennan@ed.ac.uk

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