

# **ABRSM Diversity and Inclusion Plan**

## **Progress Update 5 – September 2022**

This is our fifth regular update designed to report on ABRSM's progress in promoting greater diversity and inclusion across the following five key areas of our operations and organisation.

We are currently redesigning the format of our diversity and inclusion updates to go beyond statistical reporting to place a far stronger emphasis on the voices and experiences of the people impacted by our work in the area of diversity and inclusion.

### **1. Active commissioning**

1.1 We have been working to address the particular under representation of female composers and composers from a wider range of ethnic backgrounds writing for brass instruments by commissioning new material through our new Brass Mix albums, some of which will feature on our new Brass syllabus lists

1.2 Brass Mix 1 (Grades 1-3) will feature 12 arrangements of works, all originally by a diverse range of composers, such as Ignatius Sancho, Ethel Smyth, Amanda Ira Aldridge, or from indigenous musical cultures. Brass Mix 2 (Grades 4-5) will include 8 newly commissioned pieces, with work by composers from underrepresented groups including Callum Au, Shanti Paul Jayasinha and Christopher Augustine. Fifteen of these pieces appear on lists in the new brass syllabus. The two books will be a key contribution to the diversity of the wider brass players' canon as well as ABRSM's own repertoire lists.

### **2. Transforming syllabuses**

2.1 We have continued transforming syllabuses by exploring a wide range of repertoire that was previously unknown to us and by working with selectors, teachers and publishers to identify recently published pieces which have a particular focus on composers with different ethnic heritages. We have worked hard to include these in syllabus lists where possible.

2.2 Some of this work has contributed to the new Brass syllabus which was launched in September 2022 and has 5.3% more composers from under-represented ethnic backgrounds than the 2021, with Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and Charles Ingram amongst those appearing for the first time.

2.3 There has also been an 8.2% increase in the proportion of women composers on the brass instrument repertoire, with several female composers, including Barbara York, Elizabeth Raum, Joy Webb and Florence Price, appearing for the first time.

- 2.4 One list in the new repertoire, Bass Trombone 6B, has achieved a 50-50 split of male/female composers.
- 2.5 We have also undertaken consultation with specialists around referencing and accuracy of terminology, including taking the decision to more firmly acknowledge the African-American roots of some of the traditional spiritual music listed.
- 2.6 Our Singing for Musical Theatre lists are revisited annually, providing the opportunity add to and diversify the choice of repertoire available for candidates.
- 2.7 The most recent revision, in December 2021, added 116 songs: 32% of these were by female composers and 27% were by composers – or most commonly portrayed on stage by performers – from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds.
- 2.8 Non-binary composers such as Tony Marlow also appear on the Singing for Musical Theatre repertoire lists.

### **3. Mentorship and development programme for composers**

- 3.1 Following the success of the pilot ABRSM composer mentoring programme in 2021, the next programme was launched in September 2022 and will run until February 2023. The programme, now titled 'Writing for music education', has been enhanced to include a broader range of partner organisations, compositional tasks and music education contexts.
- 3.2 Six composers from diverse backgrounds, pictured left to right, Amit Anand, Ben Lunn, Florence Anna Maunders, Hyokyung Jung, Michael Betteridge and Natalie Bleicher, have been selected to take part in the programme. They include composers from underrepresented backgrounds such as the LGBTQ+ community and composers that identify as having a disability. The cohort has been recruited in partnership with Black Lives in Music, the Ivors Academy and Musicians' Union.



- 3.3 As part of our aims to develop a roadshow version of the programme, we are running a pilot session in York for University of York Music Press (UYMP) composers and their networks. This will help inform plans to scale up in the future so we can reach more emerging composers from diverse backgrounds. The legacy of the inaugural programme will see composers continuing their collaborations with ABRSM and our broader work in the wider music educational landscape and one of the composers from the first cohort, Kristina Arakelyan, will help present sessions for Year 2 as part of these deepening relationships.

## 4. Developing partnerships and advocacy

- 4.1 Diversity and inclusion remain central to our partnership work, and we have recently established a new partnership with the Tri-Borough Music Hub (TBMH) in support of their sector-leading work in fairness, diversity and inclusion in music-making. ABRSM is supporting TBMH's [Musical Senses](#) workshop at the Royal College of Music in early 2023 for young musicians with visual or hearing differences, as well as their large-scale, inclusive music performance event, [Music Makes Me](#), at the Royal Albert Hall in June 2023.
- 4.2 We continue to advocate for music for all and have introduced a new monthly blog series, Spotlight on Partnerships, to highlight the partner organisations we work with and support. We have so far published blogs for The Commonwealth Resounds, London Music Fund, National Open Youth Orchestra and National Children's Orchestras of Great Britain, each with a different focus but united by their commitments to opening up opportunities for all to access and progress in music.
- 4.3 We are currently running a survey in partnership with The OHMI Trust as part of research around single hand piano repertoire (The OHMI Trust promotes music making for people with limb differences).

## 5. Transforming the organisation

- 5.1 Our Music Education Advisory Committee (MEAC) met in May to discuss a variety of topics, including developing a Youth Voice programme in collaboration with young people. Work is underway and our next steps are to identify organisations with existing youth voice programmes that we could meet with and learn from, as well as opportunities to meet with young people from our networks to shape a meaningful programme together.
- 5.2 Our monthly cross-organisational Diversity & Inclusion Resource Group continues to meet and supports the organisation in ensuring that diversity and inclusion remain a focal point in our day-to-day work and strategic plans. Recent guest speakers include Roger Wilson (Black Lives in Music) and Dana David (Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion).
- 5.3 We invited guest speakers from Music Mark and the London Music Fund to our all staff meeting in July to broaden the range of voices we hear from in these settings and will continue to make this a regular feature at future meetings.
- 5.4 Classical-soul artist Alexis Ffrench – composer, pianist, producer and passionate advocate for music education – has been appointed as ABRSM's first ever Artistic Director to help in our efforts to broaden the appeal of classical music learning around the world and help a more diverse generation of young people access the rewards of musical progression.