



Book Launch with Nate Holder – April 2024

Rewriting the story of music education

The Book Launch with Nate Holder seminar was more than a celebration of new writing; it was an invitation to rethink who music education is for, whose stories it tells, and how those stories shape what—and who—we value.

In conversation with Sharon Jagdev Powell, author, musician and educator Nate Holder discussed the ideas behind his latest publication, exploring how books can act as tools for inclusion, representation and systemic change. Holder's work has become known for challenging dominant narratives in music education, particularly around race, colonialism and power.

"The way we teach music tells young people what's worth knowing," Holder said. "If they never see themselves or their cultures reflected, we're not just excluding them from lessons—we're excluding them from the story of music itself." His words resonated strongly with attendees who recognised the gap between good intentions and practical change.

Powell reflected on the impact of representation in her own classroom, noting that authentic resources can help children "feel seen and validated." She added, "It's not about tokenism—it's about truth. When we broaden our curriculum, we're not diluting it; we're enriching it."

Holder also addressed the publishing process itself, pointing out how gatekeeping in the education and publishing industries affects whose voices reach schools. "We need to support diverse authors and illustrators," he said, "not just to write about inclusion, but to define what good writing and good teaching look like."

The conversation broadened into a reflection on what it means to decolonise music education—not as an abstract theory, but as a daily practice of listening, questioning and

co-creating knowledge. Holder reminded the audience that change happens incrementally but intentionally: “You can’t flip a switch and have an inclusive curriculum. But you can start today, with one song, one story, one conversation.”

Powell agreed, emphasising that real progress relies on teachers feeling empowered to begin, even when the path is uncertain. “It’s about courage and curiosity,” she said. “We don’t need to know everything before we start—we just need to be willing to learn.”

As the session closed, Holder captured the essence of the event: “Representation and equity aren’t side projects—they’re the curriculum itself.” The launch ended not with applause alone, but with a collective commitment to rewriting music education so every child can recognise themselves in its pages.