



# May 2023 Newsletter

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*Welcome from*

*Phil Castang*



## Chair's welcome

Diversity is what we have, inclusion is what we do...

In this edition of the newsletter, we are focusing on EDI.

It was around 2015 while working at Bristol Beacon (formerly Colston Hall), my then colleague Siggy Patchitt and I were searching for a form of words that would define the work we were doing to position 'musical inclusion' at the heart of music education strategy.

We arrived at the term 'Inclusive Excellence'. The idea being that you can't have excellence without inclusion and that everyone, without exception, should be able to join in and appreciate musical activity. Our reference point was the progress sport had made in demonstrating the brilliance of disabled athletes taking part in the 2012 Paralympics.

Musical inclusion has made great strides forward in recent years thanks to the support of Youth Music who invested significant funding in musical inclusion and other outliers like Open Up Music who helped demonstrate the potential for inclusive high-quality music-making and performance.

Two of the best professional ensembles to establish themselves in recent years are Paraorchestra and Chineke! Orchestra. These world-class orchestras prove the creative case and business case for diversity. The moral case for diversity was made at the birth of humankind.

Phil Castang, Chair, MEC



## MEC Seminar Series 2023

MEC's 2023 Seminar Series is asking challenging questions about the wider music education landscape including the changing roles of our concert venues, professional ensembles, community music organisations and HE institutions as well as looking at emerging practice in singing for mental health and disabled-led organisations.

Seminars take place online via Zoom and are free for Members. For non-Members the cost is £15 per seminar, for student Members it is £7.50. Free access to these Seminars alone makes

it worth the cost of Membership which is just £30 for an individual. To become a Member, visit this page on our website:

<https://www.musiceducationcouncil.org.uk/join-us>



## Higher Education & Excellence

*“Academic excellence is not possible without a diverse and inclusive community.”*

Ohio State University President Michael V. Drake

Join us for what will surely be a fascinating conversation about Higher Education and Excellence.

### MEC Seminar: Higher Education and excellence

15 Jun, 10:00 – 12:00 BST

#### Webinar

What do we mean by excellence? How do we value creativity in the same space as virtuosity? Excellence in the same space as participation?

#### Panelists include:

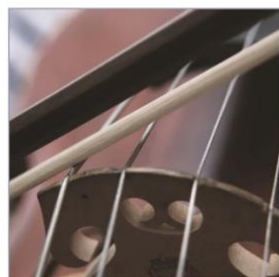
- Dr Rachael Durkin, Assistant Professor, Music, Department of Humanities, Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences
- Professor Tony Harris BA, PGCE, PhD, PFHEA, Principal, The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance
- Tabby Estell, Head of Children’s and Young People’s Programmes (Music), Trinity Laban
- Dr Stephen Graham, Head of School of Arts and Humanities, Goldsmiths, University of London
- Andy Grappy, musician

The 360-portfolio career for musicians has changed dramatically in the last 5-10 years. Are we preparing young musicians for the world of work that awaits them? Join the MEC panel of experts and course leaders from various academic institutions including conservatoires, universities, and music academies.

### MEC Seminar Series

Free for MEC Members / 50% discount Student Members

£15 per ticket for non Members



Membership Offer

#### MEC Seminar: Higher Educatio...

Thu, 15 Jun | Webinar

Reserve tickets



Membership Offer

#### MEC Seminar: Community musi...

Thu, 13 Jul | Webinar

Reserve tickets



Membership Offer

#### MEC Seminar: Singing & menta...

Thu, 14 Sept | Webinar

Reserve tickets

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*Natasha Hendry  
writes about implicit  
bias in the music  
classroom*

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## Representation Matters (for who?)

With growing globalisation, multicultural presence in UK society and schools, plus the added spotlight on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) that we appear to be seeing at present, we hear plenty about the need for better racial representation in education. This is particularly so for the teacher workforce in schools where there is a large diverse studentship. Rightly so perhaps, considering facts such as were presented by UK government figures in 2018, that showed whilst the London borough of Westminster had a studentship of 85% Global Majority (my preferred term to BAME, [learn more here](#)), only 40% of teachers were not White. The number of Global Majority teachers outside of London Boroughs is likely to be even fewer.

When we turn to music education, though there is a limited picture in the UK of how racial representation looks across the board, the recent and first of its kind, 2022 major report on EDI in Higher Education music studies ([Slow Train Coming](#)) points to even wider disparities amongst both students and educators. Only 1% of music conservatoire students were Black British between 2016 – 2020 and there were no Black music professors. Although there is limited data on pre-tertiary music education, findings from my own research into UK secondary school music (Hendry, 2023) suggest that Global Majority students and teachers experience multiple barriers to access and progression, which most concerningly is having adverse psychological consequences for them. Clearly there are pipeline problems in music education.



Photo: CK Golding

Natasha Hendry

Some education initiatives, including music education, are working to increase racial representation so students can ‘see themselves’ in positions of responsibility and career roles they might aspire to. However, across my research studies I have noticed a neglect in asserting the relevance of a diverse workforce or content in White majority schools. We may well take steps to change the landscape by encouraging music engagement within diverse populations, but how do we ensure retention of Global Majority students and protect them from the psychological pressures that come with navigating White spaces, which the vast majority of music education settings remain? As I repeatedly assert when I deliver EDI training, ‘access ain’t inclusion’. Change is indeed a ‘slow train coming’ and while we are in

that process, support is needed for the ones and twos that come through whilst simultaneously working to prepare the environment for them. That is work that needs a much wider reach. It is not just simply a case of changing the landscape but also a case of adjusting the climate.

**“Diversity work is not just for racially diverse schools in urban areas”**

In White majority schools there is the greatest risk of implicit bias in White students and internalised racism and lack of belonging for Global Majority students. This is because Whiteness (referring to an ideology not simply White people) is normalized in these settings. Students from diverse backgrounds in these settings are going to feel the least seen and the least protected. Simultaneously, students of the majority (White) ethnic group are likely to be the least challenged and informed about racial biases.

Cultural racism, particularly when expressed via implicit bias, is the hardest of all types of racial discrimination to address, as by nature it is hidden, with the bearer often being starkly unaware. In non-diverse environments, to a far greater degree, White privilege can be continually played out and go unchallenged. Systemic and institutional racism can thrive as priority is given to the perspectives of the majority group. Cultural hegemony in music education has been left unchecked for far too long and remains a totally invisible phenomenon in many White majority spaces. However, music education and anti-racism researcher Deborah Bradley asserted that social justice only ever prevails when the perspective of the least advantaged is the lens through which we work.

**“In White majority schools there is the greatest risk of implicit bias in White students and internalised racism and lack of belonging for Global Majority students”**

To not make a shift towards this perspective is to totally miss the point of EDI. I believe anti-racism in music education will only truly exist when in fact the White majority in UK education are targeted with the task of becoming more racially literate. If we do not educate teachers, stakeholders and pupils on concepts surrounding race, little will change on a grand scale. Too often the EDI work I see being carried out in music education is preaching to the choir (excuse the pun), but we need to affirm that diversity work is not just for racially diverse schools in urban areas.

The goal should be to contribute towards creating an anti-racist society with a universal anti-racist education system as a norm, music education included. I long to see EDI work that is more than an added, optional extra that some opt in to while others opt out. It should be an example of best practice for all students, everywhere. Without which, no matter the success of existing isolated initiatives for social justice in music education, young people will be going into a land they are unprepared for and which is unprepared to receive them.

What we see as well as what we don't see forms our world view, our attitudes and opinions, also what we accept and embrace and what we reject and feel afraid of. Even when Global Majority people are made visible, the context they are placed in is also of significance. Without considered representation, some racial visibility can have a more negative affect than invisibility. Dr Dovidio, professor of Psychology and public Health at Yale University has conducted research on aversive racism and conscious and unconscious bias. Dovidio describes one US study on police officers that showed through a simulation program, that the police officers who took part had shooter bias which was related to implicit bias. More unarmed Black men were shot at in the simulation than unarmed White men. Similarly, in a series of 7 studies, researchers repeatedly found that people see Black men as larger and more threatening than similarly sized White men, again showing how implicit bias can play out in what we think and how we interact with people.

Negative associations with Black people because we mostly see them portrayed in menial, lower paid jobs and not in senior roles, or in newspapers and other media as perpetrators of

**Representation matters, not just for Black & brown people, but in a very significant way for White people in White-majority settings”**

crime or as the one and only person in the school orchestra who is not White for example, can build up strong negative schemas which wire our brain in a certain way. Whilst race is viewed as a social construct, neuroscience is bringing revelations to the study of racism by showing that differences in brain activity exist when we interact with people of different races. Studies are showing that there is greater activation in the region of the brain where we assess threat, the amygdala, while viewing other-race faces than same-race faces. The amygdala is associated with fear conditioning and emotion-memory. There used to be the belief that there was little we can do to eliminate implicit bias, however, new breakthroughs in neuroscience again are showing that fear conditioning in the brain can be re-wired. This was done using positive pairing, an idea built upon classical conditioning in psychology. The study showed that with enough repetition of enforced reappraisal by re-framing images that were seen as threatening with positive depictions, brain activity changed to show less fear (amygdala activity) to the images than in previous rounds or without positive reappraisal.

The significance of these findings for racism studies is that increased positive representation of Black and Global Majority people to White ethnic groups, could be a powerful tool for addressing implicit bias. To this end, representation matters, not just for Black & Brown people, but in a very significant way for White people in White majority settings. Another recent study, more specific to music, involved the deliberate inclusion of Black or Brown bodies in music videos. The researchers found that ‘just changing a single racialized body into one that is differently racialized can construct new, anti-racist meanings in music’. Findings pointed to the fact that, it is possible to portray racist or anti-racist messages via the type of personnel we choose or do not choose to make visible in music content. Interestingly, the researchers also commented, ‘when people step out of their white comfort zone, white bodies can also contribute to creating anti-racist spaces’.

***Representation matters... for everyone***

How willing are you as a music education stakeholder, educator, practitioner or otherwise to step out of comfort zones and talk about race issues? To challenge how and who you are recruiting in your music education setting? To re-evaluate what and how you are teaching students and to be deliberate about improving positive racial representation and operating from an anti-racist stance? To invest in becoming racially-literate? The take-home message is that racial representation matters for *everyone*. I urge for the ultimate goal to not just be pockets of anti-racist music education, but to reach even higher and make the goal to contribute to an anti-racist society. That can only be achieved if we stop preaching to the choir and take the message of racial literacy to those who *really* need to hear it.

**Representation matters...for everyone.**

[For Natasha’s Bio and sources, visit our blog.](#)

*Report from*  
**Sharon Jagdev Powell**

## Music & Drama Education Expo 2023

### The refreshed National Plan for Music Education: Equity, diversity, and inclusion

On the 23rd of February 2023, I was delighted to represent the Music Education Council at the Music and Drama Expo at the Business Design Centre in London. I was chairing a panel discussion on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within the refreshed National Plan for Music Education (NPME) and MEC was there to put the spotlight on voices that are not usually heard in the sector. The panel included Sam Sikiru (Young Producer), Keith Sykes (Director of Community Music) and Tolu McCarthy (Music Educator).

The provocation discussed was: *The national plan does not do enough to overhaul the way the sector views EDI. Urgent systemic change is needed to ensure that there is a unified understanding and sector-wide commitments to EDI.*



***Whilst ‘inclusion’ has many references, ‘equity’ and ‘diversity’ don’t really feature***

#### **Equity, diversity and inclusion within the National Plan**

To begin the session we looked at the goals of the NPME:

1. All children and young people receive a high-quality music education in the early years and in schools
2. All music educators work in partnership, with children and young people’s needs and interests at their heart
3. All children and young people with musical interests and talents have the opportunity to progress, including professionally.

It was clear from a word-analysis of the NPME that whilst ‘inclusion’ has many references, ‘equity’, ‘equality’ and ‘diversity’ don’t really feature within the plan.

Our panel members then went on to discuss this relating to their personal experiences.

*“You can have diversity plastered all over the NPME but if the person delivering music education doesn’t see the importance, it might not have much effect.”*

Sam talked about growing up and studying the arts and he highlighted that under-represented groups can be included for the wrong reasons. It is important that all children and young people are included not just because the policy makers want them there, it’s not just a tick box exercise. Becoming aware that this is why you’ve been included can make you feel like your experience is invalidated. Sam made a plea to the policy makers to ensure that there is something in place whereby underrepresented groups of pupils don't feel like their experiences and achievements are not valid.

We then heard from Tolu who talked about her experience on a teacher training course. The course lecturer asked everybody what their musical backgrounds were and when Tolu spoke about singing in church and playing the keyboard the lecturer looked at her and asked, “Oh, so do you read sheet music?”. This is a valid question for a music course but it was interesting that he didn't ask anybody else, highlighting the need for systemic changes to attitudes within the sector. Tolu went on to explain that it's often down to the individual attitude of whoever is delivering your music education and you can have diversity plastered all over the NPME, but if the person delivering music education doesn't see the importance of EDI, it might not have much effect.

The discussion continued with a focus on the curriculum. Sam stated that music is very important to a lot of children and young people. It’s relied upon and is something that is used every single day, but a lot of music teachers kill the passion for music. Five lessons in a row going through Beethoven's music without exploring other genres isn’t going to have a big impact, whereas exploring different genres would be more relevant and engaging.

Tolu then joined the conversation stating that it’s about balance and no one is saying do away with the Classical, Baroque, Romantic music, but there does need to be room for more modern genres to invite more children and young people to take a place at the table, and not feel isolated and ostracised because they don't know a certain symphony. Tolu’s plea was to simply have a more holistic approach to music.

#### **Youth voice and co-production**

We then heard from Keith who felt that the biggest missing area in the NPME was around youth voice. There was no mention of co-production with young people and it felt like a missed opportunity, because this is so central to equity, diversity and inclusion. Keith then went on to highlight some gaps - for example young carers aren’t included - and highlighted the need for equity of access for all young people to be more explicit. He believed that more detail was needed in the NPME to support this.

#### **The IDEA Framework**

The panel then went on to look at the IDEA framework (IDEA stands for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access) and the IDEA project is facilitated by Youth Music and includes 8 Music Hubs (including Lewisham and Leicestershire) as part of the project.

The aim of the IDEA project is to pilot a brand-new accreditation framework and this is currently being tested through a year of action research, learning, and peer support.

**IDEA** is broken down into eight ‘pillars’ of practice:

## The IDEA Pillars



**Vision, Values and Strategy**



**Musical Offer**



**People and Culture**



**Youth Voice**



**Key Policies and Procedures**



**Communications**



**Reach and Engagement**



**Partnerships and Advocacy**

Keith described how Lewisham Music has engaged with the project and how it has reinforced the policies that sat behind their work. Every Music Hub is on a different journey but this project has enabled them to focus on their individual journey and contribute to the national picture for EDI.

### Calls to Action

The panel then shared their calls to Action:

- Speak to another teacher /Music Hub / school leader about EDI
- When you are working with your young people, make a meaningful space for them – it's not just a tick-box exercise
- Take a risk –listen to your young people
- Policy makers – look at your policies. Are they including underrepresented groups for the RIGHT reasons?
- EDI is everyone's responsibility. Make ONE commitment to yourself and hold yourself accountable
- Follow the underrepresented voices on your socials, engage with them, champion them and challenge those who go against this
- Find out more about IDEA at [www.youthmusic.org.uk/IDEA](http://www.youthmusic.org.uk/IDEA)

After the session, the panel was approached by numerous people who attended the packed-out session in the Keynote Theatre. There were many messages of support and thanks for highlighting such an important issue. We were also asked what would be appearing next? Watch this space...!

**Sharon Jagdev Powell MEC trustee and Interim Head of Leicestershire Music**



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*Rachel Coles, Director  
of School-Based  
Teaching; EDI  
Champion for NMPAT*

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## A Hub perspective on EDI

Becoming the 'Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Champion for NMPAT has been an eye-opening experience.

I've been working here for... well, let's just say 'a long time', and before that, I benefitted from the organisation as a student – having instrumental lessons and as a member of a range of bands and ensembles. The reason I am still here, is that this was the place, THE place, that I felt 'seen'. I was allowed to grow, both musically and socially, at the rate that was right for me. I wasn't pigeonholed because of my age, where I lived, or any other characteristic – protected or otherwise. I was allowed to flourish at my own rate, like the organic being that I am.

It was a no-brainer to me that NMPAT should be like that for everyone who engages in our activities. I am proud to say that we, as an organisation, have broadened our offer, and our understanding of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access, enormously, since I was a child here.

One of the organisational challenges, is finding ways to ensure that our organisational culture is reflective of our core values: to inspire, nurture and excel. We must be prepared to challenge behaviours that might signal intolerance or closed mindedness, and to be called out if we do something that disenfranchises a particular demographic. We should also be actively asking our stakeholders whether they feel able to be their full selves when engaging with NMPAT.

One of the first things I did in my role as EDI Champion, was to seek help and advice from those with more experience. I approached a range of colleagues to form an EDI Council, including: trustees, alumni, supporters, and those with an interest in or experience of, working with or living with, protected characteristics. The Council meets every half term to discuss our plans and actions for improving inclusivity for all stakeholders. It helps steer the direction of focus, keeps me accountable for my actions and supports me to overcome blind spots. Crucially, it helps enable NMPAT to take meaningful measures, rather than performative actions.

Through the Council, I discovered some astonishingly brilliant people in our network, who are passionate, open, and willing to challenge, in a supportive way, enabling continuous growth and learning.

Last term, two of these brilliant people, from NMPAT's team of staff, were appointed 'Wellbeing Advocates', with part of their remit being to call out negative or unsupportive behaviour. To support our Advocates, we need our whole team to maintain a growth mindset and be prepared to appreciate the perspective of people with different characteristics to them. To be fully empathetic to the idea that when two people experience an event, have a conversation, enter a venue, or make an association with a piece of music, their experiences may be diametrically opposed.

EDI Continued Professional Development has been a regular feature of our staff training for over a decade, including the recent training offered by Music Education Hubs East Midlands (MEHEM). Through MEHEM, we've benefitted from working with an EDI Consultant,

Shonagh Reid, who has looked at our practices and policies, and helped us identify areas where we need to focus.

As a result, NMPAT now facilitates much more work with students with SEND, and their families, both in and out of school settings. Our team of Music Therapists work with schools across the county, as well as individuals, and we work with Children in Challenging Circumstances, including young carers and asylum seekers.

Appointing our Wellbeing Advocates, creating new policies (including a Menopause Policy), and reviewing existing policies are steps taken towards our aim of raising the profile of mental health and wellbeing across our organisation – another positive outcome of engaging with Shonagh and our MEHEM colleagues.

At NMPAT, we aim to celebrate the rich diversity that is represented here and recognise that hosting that diversity is an immense privilege in itself. I have long said that music and performing arts are the glossy packaging of what we deliver, and that, actually, we are about the delivery of life skills, learning to communicate with and respect others, to collaborate and to have a reason to stand tall.

For us to be fully open and accepting to every child and young person that wishes to engage with us, we must be an evolving, learning organisation. We must acknowledge the privilege we hold and do all we can to create an equitable and inclusive environment for all our organic beings - staff, schools and their staff, and students – to flourish. Part of that requires us to accept that this job will never be ‘done’. This box is unlikely to ever be fully ticked, and that will motivate us to keep chasing the goal.

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*Reflections from  
new MEC Trustee,  
Tolu McCarthy*



## Desperately Seeking Diversity

Equity, diversity and inclusion are words that are rapidly rising to the top of the list of priorities in education. EDI is being discussed more now than it ever has been before but what is it all about? What exactly does it mean for those of us who work in the field of music and education? As a music teacher, this is something I find myself thinking about more and more.

When I was in school, I was fortunate enough to have access to good music education, but I cannot say that diversity and representation played a factor until much later in my schooling. I was able to have instrumental lessons and join clubs and orchestras despite growing up in a low-income household so there was no barrier to learning in that regard. However, when I was in those spaces, more often than not, I was the only black child there and if there happened to be another black child, it would be a boy. I remember all my musical experiences as a child with great fondness, but it is sad to see that now, as an adult, I am often still the only black woman in the room in musical spaces.

Having said that, it's not all doom and gloom. There has been a move towards more representation, diversity and equality in music. From the formation of ensembles like Chineke! Orchestra in 2015 to the recently published model music curriculum, there is clearly a growing awareness of the need for EDI in music spaces. Some people may ask why it is so important? Why do we need to see all cultures and races represented in music? There is a plethora of reasons but I would say one of the most important ones is that we do ourselves a huge disservice when we close ourselves off to the rich talents of those in communities we do not often get to see. According to Donald E. Brown's list of human universals, some form of music is found in almost every culture that exists on the planet. I can only imagine the vast amount of enjoyment, inspiration and musical knowledge that could be derived from

exploring music from different cultures. Maybe today is the day for you to try something new.

As a teacher and just a general consumer of music, I have discovered that championing diversity does not have to be difficult. In the music classroom it can be as simple as adding an artist from a different country to your existing curriculum or even just looking at a musician who is a woman for a change. The school I currently work in is predominantly afro-caribbean and so we look at black musicians such as Fela Kuti and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. For peripatetic staff, diversify the music you ask your students to practice and listen to. Appreciation of the music of other cultures does not have to be restricted to certain times of the year. And for those that just love music, find a genre you enjoy and do some research. Are there musicians of other races that create the music you listen to? Find out about them. Promote them. Hear their stories. There is so much more out there to discover if we are diligent enough to seek it out.

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## News via MUSIC:ED

**UK government pledges support for creative industries, aiming for 1m new jobs by 2030**

<https://musiceducation.global/uk-government-pledges-support-for-creative-industries-aiming-for-1m-new-jobs-by-2030/>

**New business accelerator from Help Musicians**

<https://musiceducation.global/new-business-accelerator-from-help-musicians/>

**London conservatoire awarded £900k for Extended Reality (XR) research**

<https://musiceducation.global/london-conservatoire-awarded-900k-for-extended-reality-xr-research/>

**Prioritise creative education in UK schools – report**

<https://musiceducation.global/prioritise-creative-education-in-uk-schools-report/>

**Multi-million-pound legacy for UK conservatoire and opera company**

<https://musiceducation.global/multi-million-pound-legacy-for-uk-conservatoire-and-opera-company/>

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## Music Education Council

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