

Exploring Music Making

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Exploring Music Making - short report version

1. Introduction and methodology

It was agreed that my (time- and resource-limited) work would focus on the broad mapping of various musical genres - namely, jazz, brass, trad/folk, selected world music, non-classical choirs and drumming groups. In order to do this, I began by developing a broad picture of each sector, setting out the context for each genre, indicating its major resources and networks, the culture operating in that sector (including how leisure-time music making works), and the crossover with Making Music's current membership.

To undertake this initial research, I spoke to a number of consultees within each genre and took their recommendations for further consultees and available reading resources (research, articles, blogs), as appropriate.

2. Jazz

2.1 Context

Following the closure of Jazz Services in the UK in 2015, and the subsequent formation of Jazz UK (now folded), the void left by its absence has been filled by a number of organisations, some of which have a UK-wide remit, and others with a national or regional scope. It is still an interesting time for jazz, with many organisations in the process of redefining themselves against this shifting context of available resources and changing networks.

2.2 Culture

Like many other genres, jazz operates in the UK across all levels (i.e. pro, semi-pro and amateur) with the support of a handful of key individuals, who are passionate and often working closely with each other - it's a very small world. Key concerns currently are:

- Gaps left by the closure of Jazz Services - notably, how volunteer promoters are supported, how data is collected and shared, touring, lobbying on education, self-knowledge about gaps and issues (partly being resolved by JPN and Jazz From Scotland and other regional initiatives).
- Venues knowledge is particularly sparse, reflecting the fact that many core jazz venues are informal venues. Equally, how do the promoters of events in these informal venues get support and network with each other?
- Big bands appear to have much crossover with classical ensembles in terms of how they run themselves and MM could support this sector effectively.

2.3 Membership crossover

Some existing members, like Dr Jazz and the Cheshire Cats, have come through the wind band route, where Making Music is already well represented. Of Making

Music's 3377 members (July 2018), there are currently 73 MM members whose main repertoire or focus is jazz, big band or swing, or 2% of the total members. Of those jazz-focused members, 54 (74%) are ensembles, mostly big bands, and 18 (25%) are promoters.

3. Brass band music

3.1 Context

There are currently 1,234 brass bands in the UK according to ibewbrass.wordpress.com (Internet Bandsman's Everything Within - a history and reference site for banding), of which 981 are in England, 93 in Scotland, 87 in Wales, 41 in Northern Ireland and 8 in the islands. Much of the brass band scene focuses on competition, taking significant input from both regional and national organisations. The banding world's rightful claims about its strengths in building communities, offering music education and a staged, progressive pathway to participating in bands at all levels are perhaps not as much of a focus as they should be. There are national organisations for brass bands in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, where the scene is much smaller, but no equivalent in Wales. There are 8 National Brass Band Championships (NBBC) regional committees in the UK - N.B. these are not the same as regional associations - and the committees' role is as the qualifying route for the NBBC and for competition grading. In addition, there are 35 regional associations across the UK (according to IBEW), such as Yorkshire & Humberside Brass Band Association.

3.2 Membership crossover

There are 36 brass bands and 3 brass band associations in membership, or just over 1% of the current membership. This compares to the c.800 bands across the UK mentioned by Iwan (of which 600 are English - 200 in BBE membership). This is a huge potential growth area, and a strong working relationship with the new team at Brass Bands England - coupled with taking up 4barsrest's offer to promote MM to its readers - would be a good start.

4. Folk and traditional music

4.1 Context

This genre is wide-ranging and the terminology covers a broad range of activity. One of the difficulties in identifying the groups and evaluating their needs is simply nomenclature: many groups may play this repertoire but do not identify themselves as 'trad' or 'folk' - for example, some choirs may be working in this area but do not consider themselves to be folk groups. Equally, people use terms like 'acoustic' to distance themselves from 'folk', which is considered relatively toxic. There is a large adult learning sector and although there are some professional musicians and promoters, the vast majority are leisure-time practitioners.

4.2 Culture

A sector with a stronger emphasis on individuals, rather than ensembles, the trad/folk genre is well-supported in Scotland, with a range of impressive organisations well set-up to engage with young and new musicians, as well as developing older musicians. UK-wide, folk promoters, including festivals, would seem an obvious place for Making Music to start engaging with the sector, including raising profile for Making Music at AFO (Association of Festival Organisers).

4.3 Membership crossover

It is difficult to identify folk groups within MM membership, but 62 groups identify themselves as playing folk/trad as their main repertoire, including choirs. This would account for 2% of the membership, although some of the choirs list a broad variety of repertoire, including folk, so the figure may be lower. Folk 21 has 66 affiliated members, as a comparison.

4.4 Match of offer

Voluntary **folk promoters** would require the same kind of approach as other voluntary promoters. At the moment, **folk festivals** are also a potentially strong group to support, as other networks cannot compete with Making Music's insurance offer. The question of whether Making Music can effectively support groups who undertake **outdoor** work raised itself as an issue when I was talking to Tenterden Folk Festival, who mentioned some training sessions on road closures as an example of the practical support they have previously found helpful. Relevant case studies would also help to attract both of these groups.

5. South Asian music

5.1 Context

The exploration of South Asian music began by attempting to look at world music as a whole - we agreed that this was too huge a field to be attempted as part of the scope of this tranche of work. Even limiting the scope to South Asian music is still huge, with some evident differences in culture and approach in North Indian and South Indian music, for example, and further differences in folk music from the Punjab.

5.2 Culture

My feedback seems to show that the best way into this sector may be through drumming groups, perhaps focusing on dhol bands, although finding those that operate financially in the same way that Making Music full members do (i.e. making a financial contribution to the running of the organisation) may be hard, as many of these groups exist to play at functions, rather like ceilidh bands. More conversations would also be helpful as this is a relatively broad area of music, and my work so far has just scratched the surface.

5.3 Membership crossover

Currently, there are only 4 groups in membership whose work is based on Asian music. A potential next step would be to talk to those members about what they get out of their membership, and to explore how Making Music could better support this type of music-making.

6. Non-classical singing and drumming groups

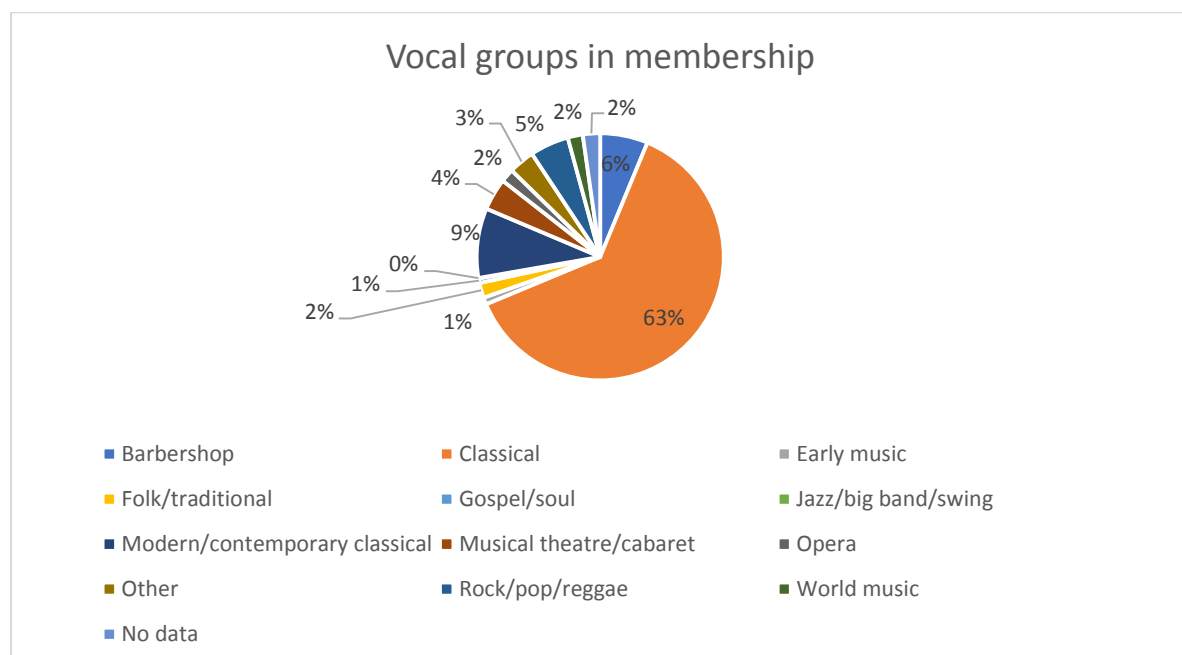
6.1 Context

Moving away from specific genres, and partially driven by the fact that some of the original genres we tried to cover were huge (i.e. world music), we agreed to try to look at two of the key areas of music-making in which leisure-time musicians might engage, particularly those working in non-notation. Making Music already has a strong **singing** membership and my hypothesis was that it would not take a lot to encourage other types of singing group that this network is truly for them. These conversations were just the tip of the iceberg - there is a vast range of non-classical singing work taking place and Making Music could be a natural partner for this sector, although there is already support in place for certain types of group through Natural Voice Network and others.

In terms of **drumming groups**, this is a vast area, including a range of musics, from steel pan to samba, carnival to marching bands, dhol bands (above) to Japanese drummers. Finding strategic organisations who support this sector was hard, so my research has ended up mostly at member/group level.

6.2 Membership crossover

Of the 1,986 **vocal groups** in Making Music membership, this is the breakdown by genre:



Currently, 59 **drumming groups** (1.7% of total membership) are Making Music members, and they range from samba to steel pan groups.

6.3 Match of offer

For the non-classical **singing groups**, it appears to be a relatively straightforward proposition for Making Music to position itself as the go-to support network. Making Music already has resources, services and projects to support non-classical singing groups. Raising Making Music's profile at relevant events (such as the Street Choirs Festival) may help.

More work needs to be done on **drumming groups** to find out what their motivations and issues are and what support they need - as noted above, the fact that many of them work outside means that they may need different types of advice and support related to this, and additional support in selling themselves to potential bookers for weddings and events.

7. Developing Making Music's offer

As the first step in seeing what Making Music can do to better support a broader range of music-makers working across these different artforms, we organised a staff session to discuss the key issues around three areas: **connections and projects, resources and services and communication and presentation.**

In terms of priorities for **partnership development**, brass, jazz and folk emerging as the strongest areas for development (including partnership with JPN, EFDSS and Trac). **Project** development ideas included reviewing **Philip and Dorothy Green Young Artists** and **Adopt a Composer**, which were felt to be classically-skewed, and encouraging greater diversity through **Selected Artists**. Others included developing better **online resources** and more diverse **musical resources** to reflect a more diverse repertoire; developing **Make Music Day** under Making Music's banner; devising **additional projects in consultation** with new genres; **promoter** projects including young people programming events, and tours.

Suggested **member services** included **website and social media audits, venue and storage support**, support for **outdoor performances/festival** (e.g. licensing), support for **groups in selling themselves to promoters** (including partnerships with appropriate networks/websites etc.), increased support for **promoters**, including indoor/outdoor and across genres, and perhaps a tour service, changing the language of **info & advice session**, and increased awareness of the benefits of **insurance**.

In terms of improving the way Making Music communicates with and presents itself externally, this was the feedback on the **website**: more **musically diverse photos** and **language check** (e.g. performance rather than concert); different areas for **different genres and membership types**; full **Welsh language version**; improved **streamlining and usability**. On **social media**, more **visual information** was suggested, alongside **language** checks and reference to a **variety** of activities and genres. Similar concerns about language and visuals applied to **publications**. **PR** needed to go to a **broader range** of print and media, outside of classical music, and to build the brand and engage people through **stories and projects**.

Next steps: there was consensus that there needed to be more **dialogue** with target genres, to ensure that we work through the things that would help them. Changing **visuals and language** was also seen as a priority, as was developing appropriate **case studies**. A campaign about the importance of **insurance** and protecting your group was suggested, as was developing further **partnerships**, including attending events of other networks and genres.

8. Recommendations & next steps

Resources and projects

- Review existing **projects** and see where they can be adapted, extended or joined by new projects, developed in consultation with different genres.
- Develop the offer for **amateur promoters** (in liaison with them) that specifically targets them, regardless of genre. Their issues are broadly extremely similar to self-promoting groups and they are a relatively silent and under-supported but crucial piece of the live music making jigsaw. The different genres have a variety of support mechanisms in place for these promoters, and some network amongst themselves (e.g. Norvol in jazz, Folk 21 in folk) but a joined-up cross-genre approach could be extremely successful.
- Consider developing additional resources for groups **marketing themselves** for functions and events - this would help support a range of non-classical groups including dhol drummers, brass bands, ceilidh bands etc., as well as those classical members who already work in this way.
- Differentiate events and support for **organisations at different levels** - be more explicit in MM's role in supporting organisations throughout their whole developmental journey, even when they are a very well established voluntary group, and that MM is relevant and important at all stages.
- Consider forming **genre panels** to help test and develop ideas, and to help monitor the roll-out of projects, communications etc. These panels might also represent other binaries - e.g. indoor/outdoor events, notated/oral tradition groups.

Partnerships

- Consider developing additional **strategic partnerships** to build links with different genres: JPN and Norvol for jazz, BBE and 4barsrest for brass, Folk 21 and further work with EFDSS for folk
- Develop a target list of **national events** at which Making Music should be represented, to raise awareness across a range of genres and member types. Some examples are mentioned above - e.g. JPN conference for jazz, AFO and/or BAFA conference for festivals or Eisteddfod for Wales, the Great North Big Band Jazz Festival in Sunderland, etc..

Communications and language

- Review and share guidelines on **language and imagery** to ensure that MM communications reflect a more diverse organisation and ***do not exclude different genres***.
- Think about the **key messages** Making Music uses to ensure that they ***don't exclude promoters*** - a broader message about the benefits of experiencing live music (as opposed to participation) may be perceived as more welcoming to promoters, whose primary concern is about outputs and excellence rather than process and participation.
- Develop or promote a series of **case studies** - ideally across a range of genres - to show how membership has benefited a variety of types of member. A strong ***emphasis on the very practical benefits*** is likely to be the most influential, based on my conversations.

Further development

- Undertake further consultation with specific music makers to see what additional **services and benefits** could help them - this might include information sharing on **venues**, e.g..
- As well as considering the different cultural expectations, issues and needs of music makers from different genres, Making Music needs to think about how much it can support music makers working in different ways from its current membership profile. For example, music makers or promoters whose work is primarily **outside or in public spaces**.

As we discussed at the outset of the project, this is a challenging and potentially long developmental journey for Making Music, so it will be necessary to be both patient and pragmatic in agreeing the sensible next steps.

It will be important for Making Music to ensure that all its communications about Exploring Music Making are clear that this is an additive process, not reductive - the organisation will be building on its existing membership and strengths to grow, without alienating current members or detracting from its existing offer.

In identifying specific target groups - such as voluntary promoters working in a range of genres, brass bands and big bands - and working more closely with them to develop Making Music's offer, this should in turn help change perceptions, internally and externally, about the organisation.

This iterative process should, in turn, make it easier for Making Music to start reaching out to other genres who are currently less likely targets, and to build confidence in potential members that Making Music can truly speak for the whole leisure-time music making sector.