



Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education

Episode 3: Tools for Teachers Transcript

[Intro music]

Yusef Sacoor: Welcome! You are listening to 'Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education', Music Mark's brand new podcast, where we spotlight wide-ranging experiences and perspectives from across the music education sector. We'll look at the big challenges to those working in music with young people and celebrate and share inspiring projects and stories from across the nation and beyond. So turn off your amp, put down the bow, pull down your mixers, and grab a cup of tea, as we bring our guests together to tackle music education's biggest questions, most inspiring projects and musical journeys of those involved. Thank you.

And thanks to Able Orchestra, who provided the intro, outro, and transition music for this episode.

Emma Cragg: Welcome to Episode 3 of Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education! I'm Emma, one of your hosts for today's episode, alongside my colleague Yusef. We're joined by Jenetta Hurst, the Creative Educator, James Manwaring from the Music Teacher's Association, and our own Abi Marrison, schools manager at Music Mark to dive into 'Tools for Teachers'. We chatted about some of the challenges facing classroom music teachers and changes in the profession, heard inspiring stories about the rewards of educating young people, and you'll get some practical tips to take away with you. We hope you enjoy!

Yusef Sacoor: Hello and welcome everyone. I'm going to kick things off by asking you all to introduce yourselves, our three guests for today. And I'm going to start with, as they say in football stadiums, one of our own, Abi Marrison. Would you like to explain a bit about yourself?

Abi Marrison: I am one of Yusef's colleagues at Music Mark. I am the School's Manager. My pronouns are she/her, and I came to this role from starting off teaching in primary school. I was a primary school teacher for 10 years, and then I worked for one of the Arts Council's bridge organisations in the intersection between cultural organisations and education, and from that came to know some fantastic music organisations. So, I might refer back to some of that in some of my answers today.

Yusef Sacoor: That's fabulous, thank you. And we've got two other guests today. So James, would you like to introduce yourself and give a bit of context on why you're here?

James Manwaring: Hi, my name's James, great to be here. I'm a Director of Music for a small-ish multi-academy trust in Windsor, which I'm sure you've heard of because we've got a castle and all the royals and all that kind of stuff. And I've worked there for my whole career, but I've gone from just running music in one school to developing my role across several schools, which

is really exciting. I'm also president-elect of Music Teachers Association, which is a national association of music teachers, kind of as is the title. And that's a voluntary role, but a really rewarding one. Just kind of working with teachers, looking at teacher support, as well as advocacy for music teachers across the country and organising our annual conference and CPD and all of that kind of stuff. So yeah, great to be here and hopefully I can share something from my career of teaching music.

Yusef Sacoor: That's wonderful. We have a president in our midst! And last but not least, Jen, would you like to introduce yourself?

Jenetta Hurst: Hi everyone, so I'm Jenetta Hurst and I am a music teacher and a leader of music and a school leader of 19 years. I've worked in various settings over that time, starting out in the West Midlands and being down in London since 2012 and I've worked in all sorts of sectors, the independent sector, public sector, I've worked in multi-academy trusts, local authority, community schools, all sorts. I also love staff development. So one of my most recent roles was as a professional learning lead across my school and my consultancy, The Creative Educator is in its fifth year and is such a fun part of my work, I get to work with the subject associations and work with all sorts of exciting music organisations across the UK supporting with evaluations and research and training teachers and new student teachers as well. And I'm a trustee at Lewisham Music.

Emma Cragg: Amazing. It's so good to have all of you here. I think we're going to have some really interesting discussions and seems like you will have lots of really valuable experience to share, so it's going to be great! To kick things off, obviously, the title of this episode is 'Tools for Teachers', so we really want to give teachers some kind of practical advice and tips for supporting them in what they're doing every day and helping managing their workload and their wellbeing and all of those kinds of things. But before we really get into those tips and the practical advice, I think it would be really good to set the scene of what's going on in music education and particularly for classroom teachers. So if we could start by maybe discussing some of the challenges that are currently facing classroom music teachers, what maybe some of those look like and what's going on at the moment?

James Manwaring: I think there are various pressures, I guess it depends on where you're teaching, how long you've been teaching, how supportive your school is, all of those kind of things. So, everyone's different in terms of where those pressures are, and sometimes there can be pressures on you that some people don't think there would be. So for example, you could work in a private school and everyone assumes that everyone's got loads of cash and it's really easy, so I think that there's just varying pressures around things. But I think probably the key ones for me is keeping music alive and happening in schools, firstly, inside the classroom and outside of the classroom, keeping it relevant through sometimes not having much money and funding. And then keeping it going in light of changes in further education and seeing music schools being shut down and recently there's been stuff happening around Cardiff University and so keeping music as a subject which students feel they want to take and you know where it's going to go. So yeah, so there's some of the pressures as well as just teaching in general is hard and it has become harder, and music teachers in particular have quite a lot of pressures on their time and they're particularly around certain times of the year, and so actually we sometimes get a bit of a double whammy. It doesn't stop it being a great job though.

Abi Marrison: It's really important that a school has the vision and the desire to prioritise music and really advocate for what music does in the lives of children and young people. I'd also add

to that, that although most of our listeners probably have some music specialism, I won't take that for granted, that an awful lot of the pressure will come from trying to support non-music subject specialists; how to do that quickly when you've got your own time and try and convey all of the expertise that you hold yourself as a music teacher to a non-specialist to say, "now you go and deliver the same way that I would deliver it". And there's this huge pressure around making sure that you've got supporting resources for non-specialist teachers so that they actually feel confident enough to give it a go and make sure that young people are getting that decent diet.

Jenetta Hurst: I would add that one of the sessions I delivered in the recent past for Music Mark was on advocacy, it might have been our most recent session. Just making sure, as James was saying, that music stays in its rightful place, that it stays a part of the curriculum diet for all young people. I think as part of advocacy, something that maybe is less often spoken about is staffing. And I think that there are many challenges for teachers who are employed, but it's more of a challenge for the schools that can't find a music specialist teacher. And as Abi spoke to in primaries, particularly when you've got generalist primary teachers, people feeling lack of confidence, sometimes if they don't feel like they have all of the tools to deliver the music.

But I think one of things we spoke about in the advocacy session was all of those things that you can do to make sure that staff are feeling supported, to make sure that they feel valued and make sure that they don't lose sight of their passions, that they can be at their absolute best for the young people. In addition, I think, unfortunately, we all know we've had the cost of living crisis and with the funding challenges that James spoke about, I think one of the things is we're seeing so many schools having to move to charging 100 % of the cost of instrumental lessons and therefore it's becoming more and more elitist, which has been something that access to music, should I say, is becoming more elitist. There is still great work going on up and down the country. Lots of children are getting access to music and that's fantastic. But I think where you're getting to a situation where you can only engage with it if you can pay for it, that is a real shame and something that we don't want to see rolled out far and wide. We want to make sure that everybody can access an instrumental lesson if they'd like to.

Yusef Sacoor: Yeah, you can feel from what you guys are saying, this idea of an attack on all fronts in a lot of ways, and there's clearly a lot that teachers are having to face in this environment. I mean, talked a lot about funding and staffing, and obviously, we've just put out a report, Music Mark's just put out a report recently with Demos about the £161 million shortfall in music education funding. I was just wondering, if you guys see funding as the root, and what you see as something tangible for people who are school leaders or working with schools as organisations, are the tangible ways of addressing that without maybe the advocacy at a national level that organisations like Music Mark might be doing?

James Manwaring: I mean, I think funding is obviously crucial. You know, we need, we need money in order to do things. But I do think that sometimes that whole kind of narrative can slightly get in the way of actually doing things that we can do. And I guess I kind of, within a school, you've always got to look at all of the departments and everybody. And you wonder if our counterparts in other subject areas are also talking about funding all the time, and it probably is the case everywhere. But it can get to the point where you think, "What can I do with what I have and how can I keep music going?" Because I think it would be very easy to, if we take a head teacher as a kind of example, if everyone's knocking on the door of the head saying, "We need this, we need this, we need this", they can only do so much. And so I think that funding is kind of a multifaceted thing. We can always want more. And I think there are ways of getting funds in, which will have regional differences, I guess, and grants and that kind of stuff. I just think it's

important that we also focus on the things that actually don't cost any money in schools. And as long as we're doing those and they're healthy and happening, actually, then the funding may come in if you see what I mean.

Whereas if you see a school where you've maybe got teachers not bothering to run a choir, which is completely free, getting kids singing, and not bothering to do things that they can and then wanting something, I think you've got to kind of put in the groundwork as well, rather than just saying, "I can't teach music without some extra funds", because probably it's the same for quite a lot of people. Which it will vary wherever you are, because everyone's going to have different stuff. I just, for me personally, I know that I don't often get a budget as such, but I have to bring money in and that's a whole other conversation probably.

Abi Marrison: I certainly agree that one of the things you lose with funding is expertise and being able to either work with really inspiring artists or musicians or really enrich the offer. And, you know, when I was singing, the school were part of, you know, we had Sing Up, I know Sing Up still exists now, but I think that the funding was very different for it. You know, we're going back 15, 20 years now. But I will do a little plug for a resource that is free and freely available that James knows about because he works with me on this. It's a website called candomusic.org and it is a collaboration of the three subject associations for music, so Music Mark, Music Teachers Association, and the Independent Society of Musicians. And what we try to do between the three organisations is make sure that there are resources available free on that website for all teachers so that they can get the most out of stuff that's available on the internet and without having to spend so much time searching between the different subject associations, different memberships they might have, different websites. Hopefully, by building on what we already have in existence which was relaunched in February last year, we can just keep populating that with really good quality stuff and support teachers to have that even when funding as you say James is really tight.

Jenetta Hurst: I would add that by keeping in secondary schools, by keeping Key Stage 4 music courses on the curriculum, no matter if the numbers are small, if there's a way to do it, I think that just builds the collegiality for music and keeps the life of music at the heart of the school. So I think it's really important to keep Key Stage 4 music courses running amidst the challenges of the EBacc, but of course at the panel discussion last week on the back of Music Mark's report the MP did say that there are some exciting things coming up in terms of announcements from the government refocusing arts in schools and so I hope that on the back that we get a revised energy and focus on keeping the Key Stage 4 music on the programme. Of course, with good outcomes at Key Stage 4 comes funding. So that has always been from year one of teaching for me. The root of my vision is to make sure that those children are accessing music and engaging with it and enjoying it. And ultimately, then they're doing really, really well in their Key Stage 4 outcomes. It all comes with funding, so it's a no-brainer.

In addition, just sticking with my theme of staff wellbeing, I think when staff feel good, staff are going to give back. And so that discretionary effort of people saying, "Look, I am willing to run a choir during my lunchtime, I am willing to wait there to take these children into the city to a musical, to a concert, and bring them back at 11 o'clock and be back at work at eight o'clock tomorrow morning." It's a two-way transactional thing. You will get that from staff and staff also need to feel really good and valued and feel great about what they're doing and feel that that's appreciated. And you can't have a great music department without those things going on. So it's really important to think about how we're motivating staff. And finally, youth voice, I think is really important because we need to make sure that we're meeting the needs of the

communities that we're serving. So if we're thinking about what do these students want, and we're not only making those decisions for them, but we're also asking them what they want, I think that will help us to keep music where it needs to be and keep everything ticking over and happening despite those funding challenges that we have.

Yusef Sacoor: And I suppose that feeds perfectly into your point about inclusivity and engagement. It's interesting, youth voices become a lot more prevalent in discussions that we've had in music education, but we're also talking about how you mentioned earlier, music's becoming more elitist. And I was just wondering what you think's changed in music education, and I suppose this is a question to the wider group in the sense that we're having those conversations more, but maybe it feels like there's also a problem in terms of people accessing the education at the same time.

James Manwaring: It's an interesting one, isn't it? Because as a parent, I look at what my kids have access to, how much things cost, and then I look at how much music costs and the time. And I just wonder whether we've kind of created a bit of a problem in the sense that, and again, all of this is so nuanced and so difficult because everything does come down to funding. You know, if schools, if having a football team, for example, is easier and maybe cheaper, I shouldn't say easier because I wouldn't want to run a football team... But, you know, being able to just get a load of kids involved in something is potentially easier and therefore slightly cheaper/ You know, my son plays football. He doesn't have one to one football lessons every week that I have to pay, obviously, extra for. So there's kind of that side of me that just thinks, are we sometimes, you know, obsessing so much with one aspect of it, rather than looking at the whole thing. I mean, my principle has always been how can I get as many kids involved in something as possible. That's in the classroom, whether it be GCSE or A-Level, or even just Key Stage 3, you know, actually, how can I make sure that the 260 students that I teach in Year 9, for example, actually access what I'm doing. And if I just focus solely on keyboard skills, for example, which I wouldn't ever do, that potentially might marginalise some of them. So I think we, as music education created this problem. But similarly, also we know that having additional lessons with visiting music teachers is crucial for that development of that one-to-one time.

But I find that for me, once students see the benefit of picking up an instrument, playing it, being involved, they then might want to pursue that in the same way that when someone starts playing a sport, they might want to pursue membership to a gym or they might want to do something extra along the side of it. I hope that's kind of coming across, but I just think of it from a parental point of view. As music teachers, we can't be surprised that if we say to parents, "Hey, they're going to learn an instrument, it's going to cost this much to buy it, it's going to cost this much a term to learn it", that is a barrier. We need to look at that, I think, because that is potentially what's making it elitist. It's just really expensive to do. And I guess that's been happening over several years now.

In the face of that, unless somebody's going to suddenly give me tonnes of money, how can I still ensure that I can get instruments into kids' hands, get them playing, get them just accessing it as much as possible?

Jenetta Hurst: I will add that in terms of the question being what has changed over time, I don't think it's all bad news. I think we know there are some challenges, but there are actually lots of fantastic things happening. I'm in a privileged position to get to speak to lots of teachers of music, at all stages of their career, and people who are training as teachers of music and people who are early career teachers, particularly. I think there is a lot of good stuff happening. I'm

always really keen to make sure people hear that message because it can sound like we're always talking about solving problems, whereas actually let's celebrate some of the great things that are happening. One of the things that's so nice since, in fact, the first National Plan in 2011 is all of the hard work of the learning and participation departments attached to orchestras in the country. And those departments have some fantastic programmes, and that means that you can get children of every background, of every age, working with an orchestra. You can have an instrumentalist going into a school, running workshops, groups of people going in and playing to the children, children and their families going to concerts. So doing that work to build audiences and to give people experiences they wouldn't otherwise have had. So I think that is a really positive change.

Another thing that is very positive is the hard work that teachers have been doing on curriculum development. Again, we talk about the fact that there's always space for improvement and things that we could do better and things that we can go back and rework. But I also think let's just take a breath and pause and recognise how much hard work has been going on. And people are actively trying to make their curriculum more diverse, to think about every child in the room, to think about talking about cultures that aren't necessarily represented in their school, and to think about those cultures that are represented in their school that maybe need a bit more of a platform and to be heard about more, and the other thing is whole class instrumental teaching. So that's another positive change for the primary schools because so many more children have access to an instrument for maybe a term or even a year or even more than one year. So that is really, really positive. And the final thing I'd talk about is equipment and music technology, so that's something that has changed. Music is up there with science, it's up there with food technology, those practical subjects, PE, they're some of the most expensive subjects to run in a school. Music is one of those. We need really great technology. And I think it's a double-edged sword because we need 21st century learners. We need to think about their employability and we need to make sure that they understand how to function in this world that we're currently living in, which in mine and James's lifetime has changed completely. We've gone from no internet- I had no internet, there was no internet when I first started secondary school! To kind of everything's on email, we're holding this webinar now online, and so, you know, things have changed a lot and we need to make sure that the children have those digital skills, including with music.

However, one of the challenges of that, with all the gifts of the internet and the gifts of technology, if you've got a bunch of expensive equipment that your headteachers forked out for, which they should do, they should support the department, and then it's left in bad repair, the children aren't going to respect it. So it's so important to make sure that equipment is looked after, that regular repairs are done, and that if something isn't working, take it off the table, take it out of the room, put it away. Don't just let them sit there and keep breaking the keys off the keyboard, you know. We've got to make sure that our rooms are well-resourced and that we have those challenging conversations about maybe the additionally required funding just to do the small annual tweaks to keep everything looking and sounding as it should.

Abi Marrison: In addition, things that have changed certainly since I was in the classroom, the Model Music Curriculum didn't exist. And I know it's not statutory, but as a non-specialist musician myself, I think having some guidance document that's been really well thought out, really thoroughly looked into is helpful. I think that the more and more schools are having really great opportunities and where there are those leaders who look out and beyond into their communities and really do give great opportunities to children and young people. And you know, one that comes to mind from last week, I know that there have a group of children who went to

the O2 to take part in Young Voices, and I know that that can be really special. And what that does is it makes us realise that the equity is so uneven. And I think it's been mentioned today a number of times, but just the thing that's changed, I think, is that there are those schools who will go, "No, I'll prioritise funding, I'll make sure this happens". And there are others who feel that they can't or feel restrained in some way to do that. And that's where we get this really uneven picture of provision, because there'll be those who go, "No, I'm going to safeguard this, I'm going to make this happen for my children". And there are others who go, "Well, it's not a priority, it's not the top of my list at the moment".

[Transition music]

Emma Cragg: From some of the things that we've chatted about, I feel like it almost sounds like there's two parallel things going on at once. One being a greater focus on providing more opportunities to young people, more opportunities out there, like Jen, you were saying with the orchestras providing more outreach and Abi talking about the Model Music Curriculum and the National Plan creating more focus on providing music education. But then at the same time a shift in rhetoric where maybe music is less prioritised. For example, James talking about Cardiff University, and I mean, so many other examples we could talk about where these kind of two things are happening at once. And I was just wondering, what does that look like for teachers on the ground? What is the effect that that's having on them in terms of practical, day-to-day teaching, what's changing because of those things happening?

James Manwaring: I brought up the Cardiff University thing, obviously, I think that that is an issue in some respects. You know, if people are seeing that in the headlines, then are they going to study music? And I guess maybe. But I think that it's our job as music teachers to, well, and just educators in general, to help guide students on their pathways because, I had options evening just last week, and a parent and a student said, "Well, you know, if I'm going to take" (this is just for GCSE music), "what career am I going to go into?" and I said to them, "Have you asked that in any other subject tonight?" I said to them, I said, "Do music because it's great. Do you enjoy my lessons? Do you think I'm funny? Do you like being in the music room? Do you know", I asked them just a few questions. And I think that we just find sometimes in music education, we get it wrong. We should have music in schools because it's great and it teaches so many skills and there's so many interconnected dimensions to it and there's so many links across the school as well as just everything that it brings. If we didn't have a music curriculum, we wouldn't have the extra stuff. So I guess maybe it's having an impact where parents and guardians are asking those questions. Maybe students are thinking really carefully about what they take, but it's this problem we're creating in society where children of the age of 14 wondering what career they're going to go into based on their options, and actually what we want to teach them is to be well-rounded, to get a broad curriculum and that's really where we need government support. And I know that all of our organisations represented here would advocate for that thing of having this broad curriculum to give young people an opportunity to study something for the goodness of studying it and enjoy it. So yeah, that's what I think. We mustn't take away the importance of having music at university, and that is just crazy that it's being cut, but we need to also remember that some students will take music and never study beyond GCSE. And that's okay, because otherwise, you know, we may not have many taking it if we only take the ones that are going to go on to do A-level music and beyond.

Abi Marrison: Everyone in the room was nodding quite vigorously when you just said that James, and all I wanted to say was yeah well done for saying that back absolutely couldn't agree more.

Jenetta Hurst: To speak to the question of what is happening for teachers, you know, day to day in classrooms, I just think that it's about decision making. I think that teachers in 2025 have to be able to make really, really great decisions about how they choose to use their time, where they commit their time, whether that is in an extracurricular capacity, whether that's, you know, as I said, taking students out to events, whether that is decision making about what they're going to offer on the curriculum, whether that's thinking about how they're going to use that curriculum time that's available to them. In some schools, there are schools that are not meeting that recommended hour a week from the National Plan. There are schools that are doing that and above, but there are schools that are not able to offer that. So teachers are having to make really, really careful decisions.

Whilst also you've got that bit in the background as James mentioned of like having a slight pressure to be funny, to be entertaining, to make it, you know, super engaging because there's music. And then also teach the theory and ensure that students are learning skills in a spiral kind of manner throughout Key Stage 3. Picking up from Key Stage 2 and not letting them go backwards back to where C on the keyboard and what's a triad, but actually always pushing them on. So I really truly believe that teachers are having to just do a lot of really careful decision making.

James Manwaring: Yeah, I agree with that. One thing I think I've certainly been thinking about is the impact of things. Because when you've been teaching, as long as we have, there'll be things that we have done for years that we assume are just brilliant. And actually, are they still brilliant? Do they still work? And whether that be in a classroom setting or in an extracurricular capacity, you know, sometimes if you're, I guess my first thing is always how can I get as many young people involved in something and that's what I want to put my time to. And then you get those pressures, "why don't you start this group or you've got some great clarinets, why don't you start a clarinet group, why don't you do this?" It's like, there's never ending number of little ensembles I could do if I had a never-ending amount of time, but like how can I make sure that everyone's involved? And I guess that that's where we need to always look like you just said Jen, look at our students, look at our situation. And so if you're listening to this, it's really important. And I always say this whenever I speak to music teachers - think about your students, your situation. That includes your own problems, your own challenges, because you need to work out what's right for your students. So if you haven't got the funding, what are you going to do? Are you going to curl up in a ball and just not do anything, or are you going to do something about it? There's advice, there's support out there. And so I think that that's a key thing, actually. Look at your students, your situation, your context, because it's all going to be very different. And you'll have lots of people judging that.

So people could hear that I work in Windsor and assume that there's loads of money and every student is just amazing, and, you know, it's all royal and all lovely and posh and all that kind of stuff. It's not, it's just a comprehensive school and it's got whole range of students and we face the same challenges. And that's the same in a private school, where everyone could think, "oh well, the students work really hard because they're all paying for it". And let's just not about that. So look at your own situation, I guess, and see what you can do to ensure that you're meeting the needs of your students with whatever you've got in front of them. And that will be rewarding for you as well, because they'll enjoy it and you know, you get something back from it.

Abi Marrison: And it's also just to know as well, you're not on your own. I think at quite a few different events that we run and we attend, I meet different music teachers who say, "I'm in a department of one" or "I'm the sole responsible person for music throughout my primary school". When you talk to these people, they say, "I just feel quite isolated". And actually, there's so many different networks to be part of. There's so many different ways that you can connect with others and hear the same messages and hear the different challenges or the same challenges that you're all facing. I don't have anything additional to share because I'm not currently on the ground in one specific school, but I certainly think that the power of networking with other teachers is really, really fantastic.

James Manwaring: Yeah, I was just gonna say that is what Music Teachers Association and I know, Music Mark as well. That's what we're all about, kind of connecting with teachers, and sometimes like networking can become it's become a bit of a buzzword that people can neglect to realise how powerful it is. Actually, you know, I went to the Music Expo in London a few weeks ago, and Abi sorry we didn't manage to catch up. But there's so many people there and actually those little conversations that you have with people are really valuable and really important when you've had that networking connection in real life, and I know that with music teachers, MTA, we have a conference every year and we want to connect people and one thing I'll do is if someone gets in touch with me and I can help them I will but if I can't I'll know somebody who can hopefully and I'll be able to connect them. And I think that's really important with the one person department, which I've spoken about at conferences. That's really tough. Most music teachers will be working on their own or they'll think they are, but they're not. We're all in this together. And it's important that we help to connect people. So if you are a music teacher and you are working on your own, then please send me an email and I will try and connect you, or join MTA and help grow that network.

Emma Cragg: Thank you so much. That's really helpful. Thank you all for sharing these things. And if anyone is out there thinking, I'm facing this, I'm going through this, it's a place for them to see that they're not going through that alone. And of course, we'll leave a list of resources and links in the show notes for this episode as well. So everything that we talk about they'll be able to find.

So having spoken about some of these challenges, we also want to make sure that this is a positive space to talk about some of the great things going on, and I know Jen, you've already started touching on some of those things. But we think it'd be really nice if perhaps each of you would share an inspiring story or a positive story that you have about some of the work that you've done as a classroom music teacher.

Jenetta Hurst: I don't mind just jumping in and saying that for me partnership has been at the heart of what I've been offering throughout my career and I think that having strong partners that work side by side with your department, whether that's via accessing support through your music hub, or whether just going out and knocking on doors, which is what I like to do, and find the best people in the local community and get them to come in and support what I'm doing is absolutely critical. So, the question posed is about what I do in the classroom as a classroom music teacher, but I think that what I do is link that to wider projects that we can then offer. So plant the seeds in the classroom, whether that's through, you know, a project on the blues, or whether that's a music technology project, or whether that's talking about instruments of the orchestra. In all three of those cases, actually, I can say that tackling all three of those topics and then working side by side with a really good partner has allowed my students to then have lunchtime workshops, which leads to project work after school, which leads to some sort of co-

creation process, all linking back to what we were studying in the classroom. It leads to getting out into the community and performing in some of the most fantastic venues. It leads to students starting to realise that they've got a real interest, a real keen interest. And I've had students go on to win fantastic competitions, I had somebody come back to me recently who's going to be helping with a presentation I'm doing next week with some training to tell me that he was at Guildhall now. I haven't heard from him or seen him for, my gosh, over 10 years. Just dropped me an email. He's at Guildhall studying now. Students that have had charting songs.

And I feel like those huge successes, which make me feel incredibly proud, but more than proud, just so happy for those young people because they're actually going, I think, you know, students should surpass the teacher. They're going far further than I've been. I'm very proud of all the things that I've done and I've achieved a great deal. And I love education and that's why I do what I do. But for those young people, through really great partnerships, which has then allowed them access to conservatoires, allowed them access to orchestras, professional orchestras. I didn't have that when I was in school. I had a lot of opportunity to play, but not sitting side by side with a professional orchestra.

And I think it all goes back to that careful planning of 'what am I delivering in the curriculum?' and making sure, something I always like to say, this will be the last thing that I say on this, just to let others talk as well. Where I haven't felt like the expert, I am the music expert in the sense that I'm trained to a high standard, but I'm not an expert in jazz because I did a classical route. So where I'm not the expert, I have to be willing to go and ask questions, and I have to be willing to go and get that support and close the gap in my knowledge to give the students the access through me in the classroom, and then through direct work with those partners. Give them access to the knowledge that they need and the best possible tuition to really create pathways for them. Not everyone, as James said, not everyone's going to go on and be a performing musician, a composer, a conductor, but some of them will. So yeah, all starts with the planning in the classroom.

Abi Marrison: I think what is really important then is your role in the classroom and for the teacher listeners that we have is as a broker as well. It's not just trying to have all the expertise yourself, but it's brokering those relationships with others who might have expertise. And when I did work for an Arts Council organisation, my role was supporting schools who were working on Arts Council's quality mark, which is called Arts Mark. And what really struck me when you were just speaking, Jen, is two of the criteria to achieve an Arts Mark Award. One is partnerships, one is equality, diversity and inclusion, and the Arts Council's quality principles also include authenticity. And there's something about working with partners where you cannot be an expert in absolutely every area of music, every musical instrument, every genre. But actually by working with others, you can bring in real authenticity and that's where children are inspired and that's where teachers are inspired actually, because I've seen it happen. I've seen, young people take part in operas who thought they never would and actually compose their own operas. I've seen young people using djembe drums in the centre of Ipswich. Lots of different really inspiring things and that comes from working with others and seeking out good quality partnerships, and that comes from the role of the broker teacher making that happen.

James Manwaring: I'm glad we've got onto positives because it is a great job, isn't it? I mean, I just absolutely love my job. Not always. I don't love meetings and I don't love putting data in and all that stuff, especially when I'm always the last one to do it. But, you know, it is an amazing job. And I guess I'd start by saying, like, I think it's really important for music teachers out there to do a little kind of survey of, how bad is it? Because sometimes in life you know, life can be tough

and teaching can be tough. But sometimes we can get into that rut and especially with the wellbeing agenda I think it's important that we stop sometimes ago actually what are we doing? And I know that with the National Plan and recently I know that MTA have got a lovely summary document I can get you the link to actually look at some key things that you've got going on in your school because actually there will be lots of positives.

If you have got an ensemble that's a vocal ensemble and an instrumental ensemble, if you have got music happening for an hour a week, if you have got kids getting to experience music, then you're doing a good job. And sometimes we can be looking at the school up the road or we can be looking at what's happening on the telly or whatever, and we can make ourselves think, it's just all doom and gloom. So I think that's really important is look at what you're doing and find some positives because that will fuel you. And, we can talk about toxic positivity, that's kind of a separate issue. Sometimes positivity can be difficult, but let's talk about some of the good stories that are out there because I see all the time music changing young people's lives, literally.

And I think of a student that I worked with who had an eating disorder once and through music managed to overcome that by making new friends and building in confidence. I've worked with students with lots of additional needs that would normally mean that they found large groups difficult to work with, but actually music has gained confidence through that. You mentioned Young Voices. Young Voices is amazing, it's such a great thing. And actually I took a student to that, I don't know how they actually sat through it. It's quite a lot of sitting and waiting and all that stuff, on the coach early, but watching them develop those skills is just brilliant.

I've seen students pick up instruments when people would normally say, "It's too late to learn an instrument", and they've picked up an instrument and they've learned it. And again, I've seen students do that themselves. Whilst I advocate for having visiting music teachers, etcetera, I don't want to suggest that we don't need them, but students can actually learn. I've seen boys, particularly in the boys' school working, boys do sing and they do enjoy it. And so I've kind of seen music changing kids' lives, whether it be socially or to do with their wellbeing or whether it be to do with medical things that they're going through.

All those trials in life and all of us here will have difficulties and music will help students to get through a day because they're looking forward to that rehearsal and looking forward to seeing friends. And it can change their entire social situation as well. Sport could do that as well, being in a team and having those people around you, and music can be that thing. And I think one thing that we have that's so amazing in our schools is that musical ensembles will be, Year 7 to Year 13 or whatever it will be. And so students can come along and find not only a place to belong, but they can find those role models, not just in the practitioner leading that session, but in the other students. I mean, music is just brilliant. And the more we talk about it, the more we go back to "Why on earth would any school in their right mind not have music happening and being taught and being alive in their schools?". And so maybe the more we shout about that to our senior leaders of the actual benefits of music and showing that, the more that they'll support it, it's that, it's the cure for wellbeing. I'm sure of it! Because I'm sure all of us on here have had a hard day and stuck a song on in the car and sung along on the way home and it's made us feel a bit better or been in our own choirs and things. So yeah, music's great.

Yusef Sacoor: And I suppose it's harnessing that belief, and you're totally right. I think everyone here would agree that music does change lives. And that point that both Jen and Abi made about partnering is so powerful.

I can remember a good project working with local rappers in an estate where they were from and that helped many young people into music. But it's also worth mentioning the Top 10 in your alumni, Jen, is quite an achievement! The Top 10 UK hit, that's great, that's amazing! And it will lead quite nicely onto our next question, which is about how you get into such an inspiring career and for people who are either already classroom teachers or are considering a music teaching career. But before I go into that, we're going to have a break.

[Transition music]

Yusef Sacoor: It's great to hear just how inspiring and joyful music education and being a music teacher still is. And it leads nicely on to, well, tips and advice that you can give for classroom teachers, or anyone who's considering a teaching career really. Or it to do with managing workload, behavior, advocating for music as a subject, or even making sure that you're including every voice in that classroom?

Jenetta Hurst: I'm going to jump in with this one. I've got a few thoughts on this and say that firstly, I think it's hugely important that anyone that is a teacher currently, or hoping to become one, and no matter where you are on that journey, that you keep your specialism and you keep specialising in your specialist area. Music is so broad and everybody has something of value to offer. If you're already a classroom teacher of music, you didn't get to this point because you've got no musical ability. So specialise, and if you've got something that feels like a niche, because you're the only one that looks like you that does that, or in fact, there are many of you that do it the other end of the spectrum and you're one of many that does your special thing, your niche is still really valuable and you will be inspiring young people just by your very presence and what you can offer.

Something that I'm thinking about at the moment, we're pulled so many ways. We're expected to be able to deliver so many things in the classroom and to stand with confidence and do that. And I think, that's great because you're always learning as a teacher, but you need to remember that your specialism is really important as well.

The other thing, once you get into a school, if you are thinking about doing it and you're training, and you're part way through your training year and things are tough, or if you're already in the job and you've been doing it for a long time or you're new to it, I think making sure that you're thinking about classroom management and nailing it and never allowing poor behaviour to go unchecked is so important. There's a number of reasons for that. You don't want one child's poor behaviour, or a small group's, to impact everybody else's learning to the point where no one can learn anything because behaviour is a problem. And also you want to set the expectation for what it looks like to learn in your space. So make sure that you think about that. And I have an ebook which is available on my website, you can click on the link. All you need to do is put your email address in and you'll get access to that ebook which is all about specifically providing extracurricular provision, but also covers what behaviour looks like when you're trying to do that, okay? So please go and have a look at that, it's a free download.

The other thing I'd say is to talk to a teacher. So, if you are thinking about becoming a teacher, talk to a teacher. Talk to someone who's already doing it. And they'll give you the full experience, the full picture of what it's really like, the pros and the cons and everything in between. I have a contact form on my website I'm very, very happy for people to just drop me a line and get in touch just to say "This is what I'm thinking about". And I know with Music Teachers Association and all of the subject associations if somebody can't, as James said before, if somebody can't talk to you themselves they will direct you to somebody who does want to and have time and

space and capacity to have that conversation with you, I think it's really important to just hear from a teacher about what it's really like.

James Manwaring: I'll jump in with some tips. I was looking at notes we've made about managing workload and I think that this is something that, the more I talk about I'm saying it to myself because often music teachers work too much and we do too much. And people often say to me "I don't know how you do it", and my response is "No I don't really", and I don't, especially around Christmas time and there's loads going on. One thing I do know is I'm fueled by passion for the job, I do enjoy it, it's what I like doing and that's important. So if you're thinking you might want to be a music teacher, do it because it's great and it's so rewarding and please get in touch with us. But one thing I'm trying to do with all of that work-life balance, well that's different for everyone. There is no balance as such. Some people don't like their work and so when they see you doing stuff all the time they'll be saying "Well what are you doing?" And I think it's important that you find your balance and find what works for you. And you'll know when it's not balanced, because your body has a really good way of telling you that.

Just some of the things I've done in just trying to look after myself, and I'm on a real journey with that. I think we probably all are, trying to work out what's right for us and our mental health and all that kind of stuff. But certainly, getting out for walks and exercising, eating healthily, and I've given up caffeine on the whole. Reading books more, doing things just for me that are kind of selfish sometimes. But also, not putting myself under pressure to try and get that balance at times where you might not. There are going to be times where I'm going to work really hard. The last week of term in December, I work really hard and that's part of my job. So does somebody whose year-end is coming up, who's got some sales targets that they need. So does a doctor when someone comes into surgery, everyone has hard times where they're going to work. So it's just about finding that balance. And, you know, thinking about that for yourself. And then just not putting yourself under pressure to get everything done. You will not get everything done. So stop trying. You know, the day's got to end at some point. And I think sometimes we can just put ourselves under pressure to be perfect in all areas.

And, you know, like Jen was saying, music teachers are pulled in all directions. One minute we're conducting so then the next minute we're fixing some technology, the next minute we're teaching kids, and then we're trying to work out a strategy to get more young people playing the oboe and then we're organising a concert and then we got this happening and then... It's hard, but it's great! What a privilege to have a job that's so multifaceted, because I've got quite a long time left in this job. And so I'm glad it's going to keep me going, keep me engaged. And so, managing workload is different for everyone. Just go easy on yourself is what I'm trying to say. You know, be kind to yourself. And I need that message as much as anybody.

Abi Marrison: Tips from me from the other side! One of the things that I know we do as teachers or you probably will do if you become a teacher is you're really reflective constantly, all the time, always evaluating, and I don't think that we as teachers do it in a way that perhaps cultural organisations and others do, and take a much, much longer view and sit back and go "Okay what impact have I had?". And I think that that's one tip that I just give back to teachers is just to say that you might be able to walk away from a tough day and go, you know, that's okay, because I know that I'm having an impact. You might have had a really joyous lesson and go, "That's given me the reward that I need". But actually, if you look at it on a much grander scale and go, you're part of delivering the musicians of the future, the workforce that whatever career they go into, whether it is music or not actually has that moment of creativity in their life and you enable that by keeping that structure happening in schools. Because if you don't keep coming in with that

passion, then that won't happen in the future. So I think the tip for me is just to be able to sit back and go, you're actually really having a deep impact on the lives of children and young people. So I'm glad that you do what you do.

Yusef Sacoor: Do you think that passion, swinging it back to conversations around inclusion, is the thing that is contagious? And when you have kids that are harder to reach, do you have any tips there, particularly where they might be engaged and interested in music, but not necessarily reacting in that way in the classroom?

James Manwaring: Totally. I think kids are drawn to people. We all are, aren't we? We're all drawn to a passionate person. Like it's just inherent. We're seeking out somebody that we know cares. And I think in caring, you are always looking for wins in everything. Whereas, look, if you're obsessed with having a really, really, really good chamber choir and that's it. Now there's nothing wrong with that, but let's just take that as an example. Then you probably will have that, but you're gonna then block off people that don't wanna do that, I guess is a kind of a simple way putting it. Whereas if you are passionate about reaching everybody, then those people you're trying to reach will see that. They'll see that you're making an effort. They'll see that you're trying. And if you are gonna reach as many young people as possible, you are gonna need that passion at times, because sometimes it can be really difficult.

Having students in a musical, for example, who struggle with social situations, who maybe struggle with some additional need that they have, and you've got to try and manage that... that's hard. You know, if you take a student on a trip that has never been, like some students have never been on a coach, they've never been on a train, plane, ferry, whatever it might be, wherever you go, that can be difficult. And so I think finding that passion comes back to your own, like, why are you doing it? And sometimes you have to remind yourself of that. And I do that all the time, like stopping going, "why am I doing this?" And there's certain things that I'll come back to, whether it be a piece of music or moments in my life that have brought me here, because that kind of passion is important for keeping it going when actually some kids will be, they could go through school and just be completely invisible if it wasn't for your music department. Are they the best musician? Possibly not. Are they playing every note right? Possibly not. You know, I've worked with students for five years who've played an instrument and never got any better, but they've always been in a rehearsal. They've been in every single concert. They've been on every single trip. And that's what it's all about. It is not always about producing this kind of top quality thing.

And I can't really define passion, but I guess it's that thing that you feel when you know that what you're doing is right and excites you, but the actual thing is not exciting. That's probably the worst way of putting it, but it's easy to feel passionate after a massive concert, isn't it? It's easy to feel passionate after some big event. When you feel passionate after a little conversation with a kid who's loving music like, that is when you should really recognise it in those small little moments you go, if that makes me excited, then you know, the sky's the limit kind of thing. I should have thought of a much more eloquent catchphrase, but I can't, but yeah!

Abi Marrison: What I just want to respond to that is, what it made me think about when you gave the example of the chamber choir, is actually as a teacher recognising, "Okay, I might not be passionate about opera or I might not know anything about grime, but I am open to really allowing that youth voice happen in my setting so that if I find out that there is an interest somewhere that I will try and facilitate that in some way". I might not say, "Okay, we're going to create a whole new unit on that", but it's just making sure that where there is something that you

could ignite in someone, you're open to that and you will try to make those doors open for that young person.

[Transition music]

Emma Cragg: So having talked about some specific tips and we've already mentioned some specific organisations and resources that teachers can be looking at, are there any other resources or training or other organisations we might not have mentioned that anyone would like to recommend for people to go away and have a look at?

Jenetta Hurst: Definitely got some, and I haven't given the URL for my website which is www.thecreative-educator.com (don't forget the hyphen!) and as I say my ebook is available there for you at the time of listening to this podcast.

I want to mention three other individuals or organisations. So, for anything on anti-racism in music education, inclusive practice, you must look at Nate Holder's work. That's N-A-T-E, Nate Holder's work. I shout Nate out everywhere I go. He's driving change and that is a really important website with a fantastic blog, I have to say. He's got a fantastic blog but also a bunch of really helpful resources and I think a podcast on there as well.

For primary and secondary composing, Listen, Imagine, Compose. So the primary programme is newer, the secondary programme, I was one of the secondary school teachers that was involved with that initial project and it's been going for a really long time. So, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and Birmingham City University collaborate on Listen, Imagine, Compose.

And finally for composing in the secondary school, I Can Compose, Rachel Shapey's organisation, are fantastic. She's got some really wonderful resources.

James Manwaring: Yeah, I'll echo what you said about Nate and his work is fantastic, and I Can Compose, they're brilliant as well. On that thread, there's also Passing Notes Education, I think they're called, he runs excellent webinars, that are affordable, great CPD right up to A-Level. So yeah, Passing Notes is brilliant.

I have a blog, manwaringmusic.blog, which I must admit I've not written on loads in the last year because I only write stuff when I have brain waves of ideas, rather than just regurgitating too much information. But there's loads of stuff on there that you can have look at or just free blogs to read.

Music Teachers Association, we have our own podcast that Patrick Johns creates called Teaching Notes, which is brilliant and has interviews and ideas and resources on there. So that's definitely worth looking at.

Also I've done a lot with Music First and all of the various software and cloud-based stuff that they have and really see the benefits of that. It's so hard just picking out individual things. Some stuff is free and amazing. Some stuff you've got to pay a bit of money for, but it's really worth it.

And just with MTA stuff, we do a conference in May every year, which I mean, I organise it but I'm not on commission or anything! But it's brilliant, it's a great way of connecting teachers. And I know that Music Mark have annual conferences. So just make sure you find one of these things to go along to because the CPD and the networking and the fun and games that go along with that is all worthwhile. So yeah, check out the Can Do Music website as well, which Abi mentioned earlier because that's got access to loads of resources and loads of projects.

And also we've kind of mentioned partnerships. I think it's worth getting in touch with your local theatre, art centre, you wouldn't believe what's out there. I took some students to the English National Opera a couple of weeks ago, and it's just free for them to go and see *The Marriage of Figaro*. They loved it. A few of them had never been to see an opera before, so there's those kind of national things as well. So, get in touch with your local theatre and say, "What have you got on? What could I bring the kids to? What could we do?" I think that's all off the top of my head.

Abi Marrison: That's a lot of great stuff off the top of your head and most of the ones that I was thinking I was going to mention have already been mentioned but I think that's all good! The only other thing I will add for those listening who are classroom teachers currently and have their own teaching practice at the moment, speaking about networks, and I'm just going to echo again what James said, I really do think it's good to get to one of these conferences, whether it's ours in November, whether it's the MTA conference, whether it's the Music and Drama Expo, you find a lot of the same people at a lot of these things and it's really great to hear the different things that are programmed, what's really topical, hear different speakers.

One of the things that we do here at Music Mark is we hold a termly online session with the idea that we just want to create a safe space, a networking space for teachers across the UK. It's called T-Time, we do a theme every term. So we've had a theme on finding the finances for music. We've had a theme on inspection and what that looks like across the different nations. We have had one on neurodiversity and specifically on dyslexia in music. And what happens, the format is we have a one hour session, we have a 10-minute provocation from a guest speaker, usually ask someone to prepare something in advance, and then we give the rest of the time, the 50 minutes for discussion and really talking about your own practice and hearing from others and just finding out you're not alone. What else is going on? What are your responses to what's been shared in the provocation? So, if you are interested in coming there are a limited amount of spaces because it is a closed group for discussion and it is just for classroom teachers, we are very specific about welcoming that audience, but making sure that that's who's in the space. But we'd really like to see a really rich group of teachers there sharing their practice and helping each other, supporting each other in the next T-Time session.

Yusef Sacoor: Amazing, thank you, Abi. And thanks all of you. Worth in passing also mentioning that Music Mark do peer groups, and have an instrumental and vocal teachers peer group. And also our Common Approach resources, which are free resources to support music educators in their teaching practice, lesson plans and that sort of thing in various instruments, including music tech, et cetera, et cetera.

So thank you all for attending and joining us. You've given us some great insights and there's some amazing resources for people to go away with. We'll put all of the links to resources mentioned in the description for this podcast. So look below if you're currently listening to us. And yes, thanks once again to Jen, James and Abi for joining us. Thank you very much, guys!

Emma Cragg: This was such an interesting discussion and provided so much insight into the realities of classroom teaching. We hope you enjoyed listening and have gained some practical takeaways. Thank you again to Jen, James and Abi for joining us for this episode, and we'll see you next time!