



Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education

Episode 6: Youth Voice Transcript

[Intro music]

Yusef Sacoor: Hello! You're listening to 'Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education', a Music Mark podcast where we discuss inspiring projects, hot topics, and key challenges circulating around music-based work with young people. And if you're enjoying the intro, outro and transition music for this episode, make a note that it's from Able Orchestra, a youth ensemble and musical project allowing music-making on equal terms, specifically supporting those who are neurodivergent and people with disabilities.

Hey all, it's episode 7, and we're talking environmental sustainability. Off the back of the publication of UCL's Music Mark commissioned report on environmental sustainability practices in music education, we're joined by the report's co-author, as well as two guests from organisations making huge strides in advocating for, discussing, and delivering greener futures in response to the climate crisis. Would you like to introduce yourselves?

Ruth Roberts: Hello, everybody. My name is Ruth Roberts. My pronouns are she/her. My role is Senior Leader of Operations and I'm based at Kent Music here in Ashford. So my background is in primary education, I've been with Kent Music for three years, but before that was a primary teacher and then head teacher, always focusing on music as my strong spot. So, yes, good to be here.

Ross Purves: Hello, everyone. I'm Ross Purves and I'm Associate Professor of Music Education at the UCL Institute of Education. I'm also an Associate Fellow of UCL's Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability Education. And my day-to-day job is to teach and be a tutor on our PGCE Music Secondary School Music Teacher Education Programme. So I'm still very much involved with visiting schools and that side of education, which I really love.

I also teach on a Master's programme in music education and supervise PhDs in this area as well. And in recent years, I've become ever more focused on teaching, writing, researching, presenting on a range of topics relating to climate change and

sustainability issues, both within music education and more widely in teachers professional development. And I am also involved in the UCL Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability and have recently worked across the PGCE programme at the IOE on supporting sustainability initiatives with all of our student teachers across all subject areas.

Yusef Sacoor: Thank you very much, Ross. And finally, and without further ado, Hannah, would you like to give a bit of context on yourself?

Hannah Mears-Young: Hello, I'm Hannah - they/she - and I work for the English Folk Dance and Song Society. I am the Programme Manager for the National Youth Folk Ensemble. My background is primarily in project management and youth voice and pastoral care elements within larger projects.

Yusef Sacoor: Thank you very much, guys. So, great context there on what you guys have been up to. I'm going to go straight in and ask potentially a question that will prick your ears up as people who care about the climate and the climate crisis. Some people across music education might think that the climate crisis isn't really relevant to their day-to-day work, to what they're doing. So why do you think that the two are related? And why should people recognise that they have a part to play in all of this in their professional life?

Ruth Roberts: Well, the climate crisis affects everybody. So it's something that whatever your role you need to consider. And us in Kent Music, we are a charity, we're not connected to our local authority, not that makes any particular difference. But as a creative organisation, an organisation that seeks to promote benefit to society, so using music to enhance lives, we're not out to make money, we're here to make people's lives better. We see that our role is more than just providing music lessons and giving children an opportunity to perform together, we've got something a bit deeper to say. We've worked on developing our set of values as an organisation, and as part of that process the value of awareness came out quite strongly, because we felt that we wanted to promote the idea that all of the people that we work with, whether it's our employees, our customers, our students, our schools, are encouraged to think about the impact of their actions to make ethical informed choices. And we feel that as a creative organisation that we've got a role to play in modelling that practice both practically and in the education we provide. So that is really quite core to everything we see ourselves doing.

Yusef Sacoor: So as a sort of central aspect of your role as well, have you thought about that in every decision?

Ruth Roberts: Yeah, our five core values, which include other ones are creativity, joy and inclusion and things like that. So, we use them to lead everything we do so that they're at the heading of all of our meeting agendas and we remind ourselves and we

reflect on how we're including those, incorporating those into everything we do within the organisation. So when we come to do practical things like making purchases of instruments, we're thinking, okay, are we aware of where this product has come from? Is it going to last more than a year? It's going to be disposed of? How are we going to dispose of it? So all of those choices are made with that awareness. So that's how it manifests itself in our day-to-day lives here.

Yusef Sacoer: That's fabulous. Ross, how does that feed into the work that you've been doing in this area recently? Does it feel - do you feel like there's a current barrier around this? And why do you think it's so important that these, that people realise their role in the climate crisis in music education?

Ross Purves: Well, there are barriers and I'm sure we'll get on to talk about those in more detail. But, you know, I think there's no dispute that music educators and music education is deeply embedded in the society around us. And we have to have a functioning ecosystem for our society. And without a functioning ecosystem, we can't have music or music education. So we all have a role here. And of course, music has a unique power, and we all know this as musicians and people interested in music. Music has a unique power to engage and inspire and communicate, particularly complex ideas about things like climate and sustainability, and these can be emotionally resonant with people. So, and we also know, of course, that young people are extremely concerned about this area and therefore music and us as music educators, we can help them to express and process these issues and indeed act on these concerns.

So I think we've got a very wide range of responsibilities as music educators and we can't just step away from those. You will know that there are various high profile pop musicians, for instance, Billie Eilish, Massive Attack, Coldplay, who have been very, very vocal and undertaken some quite interesting actions in this area. We can't leave it to them. We've got to take responsibility here as well and play our part.

Hannah Mears-Young: Absolutely, completely agree on everything that both Ross and Ruth have said. And just to elaborate on the fact that our young people care about it, and I think that is a huge part of our action at least is being able to show our young people that this is something that we are listening to them about and we are taking incredibly seriously. You know, not only does it impact our output, but it impacts their entire lives. A lot of them are super, super anxious about it. And it's a lot about being able to make them feel like they're being heard, but it's not an empty listening, it has action within that. And I think because, so we have a venue that we run daily as well, and so a lot of that is about being able to be leaders within the sector as well. Folk music is fairly small, but along with the wider music education sector for being able to be some of those people that are making that change and showing what needs to be done or what can be done. Just having those conversations to keep that ball rolling is something that is super important and super relevant in everything that we're doing, you

know, from, you know, how we're getting to this gig over here and to how we distribute our tickets and things like that.

Yusef Sacoor: That's amazing. So you mentioned the work that you're doing with young people and I was wondering, how your sustainability practices work and how they impact the way that you're working with the young people and then by proxy, how they impact the young people that you are working with.

Hannah Mears-Young: So a lot of it is about communication with our young people. It's making them understand why we're putting things in place to make more sustainable choices and also to create a larger and withstanding sustainable practice. I think a lot of what young people sometimes find frustrating about action that doesn't continue is they're like, 'Well, you've done this now and why does it not keep going?'. And so I think a lot of it for us, or at least from the young people that we've spoken to in continuing our sustainability practices about them being like, this needs to be here forever, sort of thing, or at least it needs to develop and evolve. So it's things like travel within residencies. We're fairly small, there's only 22 of our young people, so it gives us a lot more options in what we're able to do. So we'll go get a train to a gig rather than getting a bus and small things like that. And even though it creates slight more inconvenience for them and there's more energy and effort required in that, there is then that understanding of we're doing this for direct action within our sustainability practices. So it's lots about communication and conversation, also bringing them along in the journey because nine times out of ten, they have a hundred better things than I could ever think or say. And so that's how we are continuing on those conversations by bringing youth voice into the front of it.

Yusef Sacoor: That's really interesting, and for you, Ruth, is it the same, is youth voice integral to this work?

Ruth Roberts: Yes, absolutely. My role is as Operations Lead with the organisation, so I don't work directly with young people. But my colleagues are very proactive in making sure that we listen to our students, listen to what they want to do. We have a half term project that runs over course of four or five days. And as part of that, the young people create a piece of music, they come along, play with whatever instruments they're learning, and so they choose the theme and they then develop that. So there is an opportunity there, I think we've had one recently, which is on an environmental theme. And that is a very powerful way for young people to take control and to really express their thoughts and to, not for the adults to make any assumptions about what should be taught or where this discussion should go, but for the youth, young people to take that direction themselves. So yes, it's very important.

Yusef Sacoor: That's really interesting. And I suppose picking up on another thing that Hannah mentioned, for you in Kent about potentially extra work, maybe extra cost, I was

wondering how the sustainability practices impact your work in Kent, and people might fear that there's extra work or extra cost involved and it's not worthwhile, et cetera, et cetera. And I wonder if you've got any sort of narratives to counter that idea.

Ruth Roberts: Yeah, sure. We have quite a challenge because we're a big, we're a large geographical area. We don't have a particularly strong public transport network. And so one of our big challenges is thinking about transport of teachers to venues and students driving or being driven by their parents to venues. So we do what we can, when we're timetabling teachers, we make sure that we're not asking them to travel too far from their home. We're trying to make sure that we're grouping schools that they might visit all together and were in similar location. With our music centres, these are venues like typical schools that we hire for evening courses, we have tried to persuade parents not to sit in their cars with engines idling. We have made sure that we've got waiting rooms and we encourage them to come in and wait inside with some more comfortable environments and of course they can switch their engines off. So there are practices like that that we're trying to promote. But yes, we can't expect everybody to get on a bike and cycle 30 miles to go to a music centre, we've just got to be practical and to reduce emissions perhaps rather than completely eliminate them.

Yusef Sacoor: Has it changed the way you approach financing as an organisation, maybe where you're banking, kind of thing, which has become a much bigger conversation over the last few years, I'm getting nods of head here. So Hannah, maybe I'll come back to you and then come to Ruth again.

Hannah Mears-Young: This is a conversation that my line manager, Rachel, is really keen to continue with our wider board and with powers that be as it were. But as, again, as a small organisation, it's always, and with many organisations, it's really difficult to be able to have those continued conversations, especially with people like funders and things like that. So I know that we've discussed in groups before about funding projects where you're not allowed to buy pre-owned instruments, you can't refurb your instruments, you have to buy new. And so it's about continuing to have those conversations as a National Youth Music Organisation, about being, keeping that pressure on, as it were. So in terms, I don't think I can speak on behalf of EFDSS about what our finances look like currently, but I know that there are conversations that are happening and same with the young people as well. There are other questions that they are asking us about where these things are coming from.

Yusef Sacoor: It's really interesting that your young people are asking those questions as well, really tuned in. And yeah, sorry, Ruth.

Ruth Roberts: Yes, thanks. Yeah, this is something that we've got into in quite some depth and something I talked about at the Music Mark conference last year. It was one of our members of staff who recommended an organisation called Mother Tree, which is

something I could recommend to everybody. And what they do is they come and provide an audit of your finances, they're a green finance company. And they will have a look and see, they'll measure the emissions related to where you bank. So for example, we were with a banking provider who did not have the best ethical policy and who were investing in fossil fuel companies. And so, Mother Tree trawled the market for us and came up with a recommendation to move to another bank, to the Cooperative Bank, which had a much more strong, much stronger policy, so they don't invest in fossil fuel companies. And so we're in the process of switching and that will reduce our emissions as an organisation quite significantly without really any impact on us and we don't have to change our behaviour too much. So that was a kind of hidden benefit from doing that.

So I think awareness of finance choices, both personal and as an organisation. So, the other area is pension investments and we as a company, we haven't taken the plunge of saying that we're moving all of our pensions, but we're educating our staff to let them know where they can choose to modify the funds that their pensions are going into. And even if they want to take their pension out of the organisation's funds, give them advice about how to talk to a pension advisor and find more ethical choices. So again, it's something that most of us didn't have a clue about it year or so ago, just realising that this actually has a huge impact. So yeah, that's been a big one.

We've had a little bit of resistance from some of our more traditional members on the board, particularly in things like looking at investments when we've said, 'Okay, we've got a legacy that's come from a benefactor, perhaps, we want to invest that to then use the interest for providing bursaries. Do we get the best interest rate by going with the most ethical company? We might not necessarily, but is that offset by the benefit that we will get from knowing that we're not financing polluting companies?'. So again, having that conversation with trustees who will say, 'Well, we're a charity, our first job is to do the best for the people to learn music.' And so, actually encouraging more established members of the board to think bit more widely and say, 'Yes, but this is the right thing to do. And we've got to balance the overall costs and benefits to the organisation and to everybody involved.' So that's been some of the interesting conversations we've had recently.

Yusef Sacoor: No, it's really interesting and it's really great how sometimes seemingly small administrative steps can make a big difference and actually some of the harder steps seem to either engage other areas that are super important like youth voice or sort of expanding the knowledge of your board.

Listeners might be wondering why they haven't heard from Ross for a while and it's because Ross has been doing some slightly exciting work in this area with Music Mark. So as part of our TINAR campaign, This Is Not A Rehearsal, we teamed up with UCL to research current sustainability practices across the UK music education sector. You've

led on this research, so I was wondering if you could give a bit of an overview of the findings of the report and maybe some of your personal insights or highlights from it.

Ross Purves: Thank you, Yusef. Well, it's interesting to hear what Hannah and Ruth were saying there because some of the things that were noted already came through loud and clear in our research findings, actually. So we'll talk about those in a moment, perhaps. But yes, we've undertaken this very large piece of work which was aimed at assessing environmental sustainability practices across UK music services, hubs and partner organisations. It was a very broad ranging study with five phases of field work, from some initial desk based research right through to a very large national across the UK survey, online survey and interviews and so on. We had about 150 people provide their input overall, including people at all sectors and all areas of, all levels of organisations. And we covered quite a range of issues, including some that we've already heard of: policy and policy development, teaching and learning activities, transport matters, logistics and operations, and of course, collaborations and youth involvement. And we've already talked quite a lot about youth involvement.

So amongst the key findings, and we can talk about this in various ways, but a good proportion of services and hubs now around the country have got sustainability policies in place. But of course there are policies and policies. Some of them are taking kind of reasonably pre-prepared template versions that they've got and they've just applied them to local circumstances and we understand why because there's a need for policies, particularly in England with Arts Council requirements now. But then there are others, other organisations who have really made policy development something that is much more about ownership and bringing in various stakeholders, particularly Youth Voice. There's a great example in Merton, for instance, where they have, their policy development in this area was led by their youth council, who then had to present it to their board and before it was ratified and developed and so on. So some lovely examples there.

Teaching and learning though was probably the area where we've seen most activity. We're talking about, not only simple things like themed concerts, themed composition commissions or repertoire, but also work around recycled instruments, site-specific work taking place in particular areas of outstanding natural beauty or certain ecological areas which reflects what's going on there, work done in natural history museums that responds to exhibits there and so on. So, a wide range of work that's intended to integrate creative music making and performance with some of these issues in quite a sophisticated way rather than it just being a kind of you know, sing a song about the sea. It's, in the best practice we've seen, there's an awful lot of really well thought through work.

Operational changes, we've picked up on the things you'd expect. Reduction of paper usage where possible, which is obviously difficult because we use a lot of paper in our

area, sheet music and so on. Things like recycling policies, not only, of course, of recycling office materials, but also things like instruments and electronics as well. And people looking for creative ways of repurposing equipment, passing on instruments that can't be repaired anymore to kind of up-cyclers and making art installations or lamps or tables and other interesting things. And alongside that, we've heard about some quite interesting work on much more proactive maintenance and repair regimes for instrumental stocks. We know that music services and hubs have enormous collections of instruments and it's difficult to keep track. So we've heard of great examples, such as in Hounslow where they have a very, very advanced barcoding and tracking regime where they can check, monitor where all their instruments are and manage it and check the condition, and they do most of their repairs in-house. They've developed their own skills in-house.

Travel is another big area which has already been touched on by our colleagues here. And we know that we use a lot of travel. We have a lot of travel for peripatetic lessons. We also have lots of travel where children and families have to get to venues for rehearsals and performances. And, you know, this is going to be one of the toughest problems we face in the sector to try and improve this, because some of that travel is just inevitable, especially when you're dealing with very large, diverse rural areas. And, you know, particularly if we're keen to try and incorporate equity and accessibility, you know, how far you prepared to go for to support the learning of one or two students in a school. We had a comment that actually when there were more children learning in the past, some journeys that are now, you know, pretty environmentally unsustainable would have been more sustainable because there would have been more kids in each school to learn. So, you know, it would have been it would have been a more worthwhile trip in that, in that sense. But it's a balancing act. And of course, a lot of people raised issues to us like, you know, you can reorganise your travel rotors so that you can create more time effective and energy effective routes for peripatetic staff. But that in sometimes means, in some cases, that means disrupting relationships that teachers have had with schools for many, many years or many decades, perhaps. And, you know, we are, we do work in an interpersonal area where those working relationships we have with schools and school teachers and the young people we serve, they're key. So disrupting that has got to be, you know, very sensitively done.

So there has been some work done there on things like carpooling, working with electric vehicles, offering schemes to help people buy electric vehicles, having access to fleets of electric vehicles as part of a local authority, if your service is part of a local authority. But we're really at the very beginning of that. There have been some interesting developments with digital provision, and situations where some music services have taken stocks of resources out to a series of schools and then the kids have got access to those materials locally, but the tuition for that is done online. So this has worked particularly well in Leicestershire with a DJ project where they've taken, they've shipped

out lots and lots of record decks to schools and then the actual tuition has been done online and then also supported by then the local teachers who've been trained up to offer the scheme locally as well. So it's a kind of a cascading scheme.

And I think other areas we picked up on are collaboration. So very few of the initiatives we picked up on in this research were mounted by single organisations, single music hubs or services. They were almost in every case, they involve collaboration with other organisations, whether they be specific organisations working in environmental areas or other musical organisations or industry partners as well. So I think finding your collaborators, sharing the load, seems to be a key way forward for us. And there's definitely a strong appetite for more professional development, for sharing resources and practical guidance right across the sector. So I think people, they've highlighted a lot of challenges and we can talk further about challenges if you like, but there's also a desire to overcome some of those.

Yusef Sacoor: Yeah, definitely, and we'll definitely go on to that desire to change. But yes, going to start with the challenges, start with a negative, build onto it with a positive. So you obviously mentioned partnerships as one of the things that can be beneficial, but I was wondering from your study, what you see as sort of the primary challenge? Is it a financial barrier? Is it a cultural one? Is it a lack of knowledge? Where does it seem to mostly be coming in terms of making these steps?

Ross Purves: So it is all of those and they intersect in different ways. So funding was constantly raised, but I think that's obviously a problem across our sector in general. You know, some services had managed to ring fence budgets for this or had managed to find funding from creative sources, from grants and so on. But I think probably the, even more than funding, was the capacity of time that staff had at all levels of organisations to just be able to step back and think, 'Hang on, can we do this in another way? Or what are the pinch points here? How do we solve that?' We know we are overworked in this sector. We work very hard and we stretch ourselves very thinly with the resources and the staffing that we have. And so, there was a sense that it just, it's not often possible to take a step back and just reflect on, on what possibilities there are.

And another major challenge, of course, is that many people working in our sector, and this relates to both the funding and the capacity, are freelance and peripatetic. And of course, this means that they're often paid for particular roles and then doing things like additional training or meetings to discuss things, that it's very difficult to get people together and have that broader organisational wide level discussion because people are so busy doing the jobs. So for all those reasons. And that's a particular problem with travel as well, of course, you know, that you can't really mandate to people how they get to jobs if you're not paying them or facilitating them to get to those jobs. So, I think capacity alongside travel, sorry, alongside funding was important.

And then as well, another significant issue which came out of your questions you were asking Hannah and Ruth earlier relating to banking are the fact that many organisations in our sector, they have quite limited ability to leave a change within the infrastructures of which they're a part. Because for instance, you may be part of a local authority, in which case things like, who your energy provider is, who you bank with, they're well outside your hands, you can't actually get to that. Or you may rent your buildings, you may not actually own any physical buildings. So, your ability to actually change things like improve the lighting, the insulation, the heating, are limited because you don't have any levers on that, that sort of control, right? So that also came through quite clearly that people would like to do more. They know they've got building estate in not great condition. They know they would like to do more for, you know, changing an energy provider, but they just, they just don't have the access to those kinds of decisions. So that is another big barrier alongside the funding capacity really.

Yusef Sacoor: I suppose, Ruth, starting with you, do those challenges resonate with you?

Ruth Roberts: Yeah, absolutely. We're in the fortunate position that we do have control over what energy provider we use, because we're not tied to a local authority. We've just moved to a new building two and a half years ago, and we're in the process of purchasing it from the local authority. So very shortly, we will be able to do things like put solar panels on and fit our electric vehicle charger. So we're very excited about that. But yes, there are such limitations with capacity. We don't have anybody, you know, it sits as part of my role, that's, to looking at sustainability, but it's not really written into anybody's job description to be the champion for sustainability. And we are very stretched in what we're trying to do in the day job. So trying to push that and make sure that it is kept on the top of the agenda, literally, and everything we do is a challenge.

Part of the other challenge for our organisation is that we are so widespread. We have a central office here in Ashford, but our teachers work across Kent and now Medway. We're the hub lead organisation for Kent and Medway. And we have about 80 teachers, some of whom just work very occasionally for Kent Music, and so we don't see them very often. So trying to provide that staff development and awareness and just having the space to have the discussion with everybody is really quite difficult. So, you know, we have done, I've led carbon literacy training for the head office staff, but beyond that, we only see the whole body of teachers once a year in one September inset day and we've got to cover safeguarding, health and safety, everything else. So trying to find that time and opportunities to communicate the message is one of our challenges that we're trying to find ways around.

Yusef Sacoor: Definitely can see that that's a massive problem. And for you, Hannah, is it the same? Is there a way that you managed to make time and space for these discussions?

Hannah Mears-Young: No, exactly the same as Ruth. So we have our main base, which is at Cecil Sharp House, which is a listed building, which already brings a whole bunch of complications in with that. So obviously, you know, we've updated our waste management system, updated the lights, we're a plastic free venue and all these things, but some things just take that little bit longer to get through and have a whole bunch of red tape around them just purely by how long it has existed as a building. But the programme that I run is national, so we are based all over the UK. And so we are very much tied to the venues that we are able to access, both monetarily and physically. And so sometimes we don't have any, a lot of the time, sorry, we don't have any say in what that building is able to do. So we try to do the smaller things like food waste and things like that. And you know, the way that we travel to and from venues, very much like Ruth, a lot of people that we work with are freelance staff. We don't see them, we only see them on project. We'll do a pre-project meeting, but a lot of that is covered with what's happening in the project, you know, safeguarding, anything that we need to do around that. And so a lot of it is trying to, again, as Ruth and Ross have said, but about capacity, it's a lot about you just doing it in your individual day-to-day. It's, you know, it's the not sending everything in a big email, it's doing being able to send them to a place where they can find a centralised system. So smaller changes and explaining why those smaller changes are happening to do that, but definitely all those challenges very much inherent. Is inherent the right word? Maybe not. In every day and it's just trying to find ways around that is easier said than done.

Yusef Sacoer: I suppose what you're talking about is essentially making the time and space within your own head to make these decisions and to make these actions. And I was just wondering how you guys managed to do it, because as Ross alluded to, so many of us feel like there are only so many hours in the day and we're just trying to keep our heads above water. So I was wondering how you make time to prioritise thinking about the climate in your work?

Ross Purves: Well, I can start on that, if you like, and just say that, you know, I mean, like many people who are active and concerned about all of these issues, I started with that feeling several years ago of climate anxiety, of worry, of uncertainty about the future and feeling of powerlessness. And that wasn't a good place to be. And I, you know, for a long time, I regretted, 'Why have I gone into music? All the things I could have done, I could be working on nuclear fusion and actually getting a problem, you know, solving these issues!' And then, of course, I realised that the most powerful thing that I had was the things that I was already doing. You know, I was my own biggest, my own biggest asset in this area. And I was already active in teacher education and I was already active in research and I was working in a big university where I had access to experts and facilities and things. I thought, right, I've just got to use this. I've got to, I've got to find ways of using all of this. And so gradually, I suppose what I've done is just build it more and more into my everyday work. And obviously I've pursued a research agenda in this,

but I'm also teaching. I teach all of this stuff on our PGCE courses and, you know, I'm writing about it. And so it's just gradually over time, you evolve into your daily role, more of these things, but you have to start small. And Yusef, you're absolutely right, you've got to start by making that space in your own head and making these tiny small commitments. And it is surprising how quickly things do build up and your example will help others to come along with you and, and so on. I mean, you know, Ruth mentioned solar panels earlier and I must find the source of this statistic because I quote it a lot but there's something like, if you, if someone in the street has solar panels on their house, other people in that street are 60% more likely to also then get those solar panels, yeah? Something like that because they've seen someone else has done it and their house hasn't collapsed! Or whatever, and they think, 'Well maybe I'll do that as well'. So it's just that those little, you know, sometimes just doing something yourself will lead to this kind of nudge theory and other people will start to pick up. So I think, I think that's what I would say is, you've got to start, you've got to use yourself as an asset and think about the things you can make, you can change in your role and then, and then it will start to snowball.

Hannah Mears-Young: And on that as well, I think that learning from other people, I think that I feel very fortunate to have got to be a part of the Music Mark steering group for This Is Not A Rehearsal. I feel very fortunate to be in a sector in which these are conversations that are happening on a daily basis and they are, they're entrenched in the work that everyone, that lots of people are doing. And so I think a lot of that is, not leaning on, but like looking to other people for, you know, help and support and for advice. And that is, we're very fortunate to have those resources and those people that were able to reach out to do that.

Ruth Roberts: It's so much easier if you're not trying to do it all by yourself. Having, we've got a little environment group of staff, volunteers who are interested and having regular meetings where I can update everybody on what's happening with Music Mark, but also they can come up with ideas and suggestions and we can share it because trying to be the lone voice in the wilderness is really hard. Especially if you're trying to persuade people who haven't really considered the situation and having different, just supporting each other. So it becomes the thing to do. We always do it like this. We don't buy plastic milk bottles, we buy recyclable cartons. So, things like that. And it just becomes part of the culture of the organisation if you've got a core of people leading it and leading by example. And it makes it so much easier when you're, you're criticised and attacked, which is inevitable if you're going to say something that might be difficult to hear for some people.

Ross Purves: That also came through loud and clear in the research findings, that people, inevitably this has become in some cases about individual passions and individuals trying to make a difference, and we never want to ignore that. We always

want to celebrate those passionate individuals. But there was also a strong view that the only way that these ideas and concepts will become embedded into our everyday practice is if we take it, we work it on organisational level. And we build teams to look at these issues and look after these things and rather than just have individuals because it won't change the culture and that person who has been tasked with it or has taken it on themselves, either they will be limited in what they can do, they will leave and then you lose all that expertise, or they will get burnt out and they won't be able to do it anymore because the emotional load of this is also quite significant. So, what came out of the research is a very important need to ensure that this is a, everyone buys in, or at the very least you have a steering group, you have a group that take these ideas forward and you fight those battles together.

Yusef Sacoer: Thank you so much, guys, and we'll build on the idea of turning these small efforts that you're making on an individual level onto what you guys are currently doing on an organisational level to be more sustainable. So going back to you, Ross, what projects and work have you seen in your research that you're really impressed or inspired with nationally and which you think could be a basis for other organisations in music education across the nation?

Ross Purves: Well, one of the really great things to come out of this work was there's just so much out there already. We were really, really excited and impressed with all that we saw. I can't possibly tell you about all of them we've picked up in the report. We've got quite a lot of vignettes in the report where we've asked organisations to provide little case studies of what they're doing and why. And I do encourage listeners to check those out. But I mean, just to bring out a few.

With regards to creative teaching and learning activities, we heard about junk percussion workshops in Portsmouth, climate themed song cycles and performances in Waltham Forest, storytelling and music project for younger children in Portsmouth again, and also an amazing project in Cornwall actually, which is where the music service is involved with planting a new forest, they take their learners and their teachers to help plant the trees. And they also record sounds in this forest and they use it as a basis of samples for compositions, they're you know, they're trying to build really quite clever ways of integrating a natural environment and their work. In the Isle of Wight, the Biosphere Big Sing, which is celebrating local biodiversity through music and carnival.

Then we move on to instrumental repair. I've talked about Hounslow's scheme for repair and servicing. There is of course the national ReTune scheme operated by Normans, which is taking in instruments that are no longer playable and recycling them both to individual materials and also to produce artworks and objects, decorations and ornaments. There's a great scheme in Scotland called We Make Music, which is where they have got donations of instruments and they are putting stocks of instruments in

local libraries and people can go and take out an instrument as they can a book, and then they have various tuition and ensemble opportunities in the libraries as well.

We heard about sustainable logistics schemes such as in Waltham Forest where they use a zero emission courier service to move instruments around. And in Leicestershire, where I've already mentioned they have this scheme where it's a teacher-led model for DJs. So the equipment is sent out, but then all of the provision is done either locally by the teachers who have been trained by the music service staff or done online.

We've talked a lot about youth voice already, and that has been, that was another big thing to come out of the report. And I mentioned Merton's policy in this area, and there were other examples as well. Many, many projects where young people were involved in briefing a composer on the kind of music they wanted to produce in this area or to work, lyric writing or to collaborate with the production of musical materials. And as I said, collaborations was another area where there was lots of innovation here as well. You know, a particular one that springs to mind is in was in Oxford, with the collaboration between the music service there and the Natural History Museum, where they took children from music service learners and school children under the auspices of the music service into the museum. They looked at various exhibits to do with extinct animals and endangered species. They went out, back to school and used those to create pieces. And then they came back and performed those in amongst the exhibits in the museum, which is a beautiful acoustic. So it sounded incredible. So, you know, there's some really quite exceptional work happening. And the best work we saw doesn't feel shoehorned in. Like we said at the beginning, it's naturally cohesive with the purposes of music education, and that's why it was really exciting.

Yusef Sacoor: It's amazing to hear just the breadth of stuff already going on. I think sometimes it's easy, especially because we're so busy that we're to think that we're all in a vacuum, but an incredible amount of stuff going on.

Ross made allusions to the work with youth voice that you've also alluded to in your organisation. And I was wondering what you guys have actually been up to. So maybe a little bit more context on what the society's been doing, what you guys, what your guys' projects are around sustainability, and yeah, what you are doing with the young people around this area?

Hannah Mears-Young: So a lot of our building-based sustainability is kind of within our green policy, and so that is always expanding and ever-growing with the way that we're moving the building. We're currently having some building works done. So I know that there's lots of conversation around that which is really exciting. And then in terms of, we don't have any specific project output because of the way that our, the project, exists and the project has to have specific outputs. We don't have anything that is specifically linked to sustainability, but a lot of it is about having those consistent and positive

conversations around what we are doing and what we can do and asking questions and making sure that they feel heard. A lot of what we've been doing within the National Youth Folk Ensemble Programme is looking at how we can slowly but surely implement changes. Like within our emailing system, so we obviously send out huge amounts of information a lot of time, which I didn't know until very recently was, you know, wasting a lot of water and wasting a lot of, you know, a lot of it, it was producing lots of carbon. So the way in which we have changed our emailing system, the way we're communicating with our young people has changed. Utilising Zoom, trying not to utilise AI, that is something that I'm trying to have more positive conversations with our young people around and kind of making them aware of the environmental impact of AI. Because obviously it's become so much more ingrained in the way that they're learning and interacting with the internet especially. Currently there isn't any one project that I will be able to pinpoint that we are doing. It's more just about trying to make small but systematic changes to ensure the longevity of the project and also the development of it.

Yusef Sacoor: It sounds like what we often refer to when we're talking about art inclusion work at Music Mark in terms of a golden thread in your organisation of sustainability work and making sure it's present in all areas. Is that the same for you in Kent, Ruth?

Ruth Roberts: Yes, definitely. We've had the opportunity to, as I mentioned, we've moved to this new building, which is better insulated than the previous drafty building that we were in. And so just by virtue of moving here, our energy bills have reduced. But since then, we've been able to do things like, we've got a massive warehouse that houses all of our instruments, which needed some kind of heating because it was damaging the instruments in the winter. So we put in an air source heat pump to make sure that we kept the temperature stable. We've switched to greener electricity providers. We have introduced a salary sacrifice electric vehicle scheme. So at the minute we've only got one member of staff who's taken that up, but it's a really good deal because you get very generous tax breaks from the government.

On a more practical level, we try to make sure that stationery that we use is recycled or low carbon. And disposal of items, so Ross mentioned the Normans ReTune scheme, we've taken advantage of that to get rid of our instruments that aren't usable anymore. But also with things like office furniture, we use Freecycle, we use other ways of passing things on to people who might get some use out of them. And with office equipment like computers, we've discovered that Curry's will take old laptops, old any devices and wipe them clean, and even give you a voucher for the pleasure of taking them off your hands, which is really useful. So all of those practical things as well as the financial overhaul that we've had.

We've just commissioned some work from Positive Planet to do a carbon reduction audit, which has been really quite interesting. Frustrating in that we don't have the data to provide, so they had a look at things like our business travel, our transportation of instruments, utilities, procurement. So lots of areas that might generate carbon emissions. And it's surprising how little information we could provide, and so that was a learning curve as in, right, okay, we better start collecting this information. And a lot of it comes down to scope three emissions, which are emissions that are generated by third parties. So for example, your manufacturers of the instruments. And so it's very difficult to pin down exactly how much carbon they would have used in the manufacturing and in the transportation in that supply. And so there are some real challenges in actually pinning down what we're generating, what we're using. And then the next thing is, what do we do about it? So the data is with Positive Planet at the minute. They're going to come back with a plan. And it'll just be very interesting for them to see what we can actually do. Because we think we've thought of everything we can do. But I'm sure there'll be something that they might suggest. But at least we're starting to measure. And just by the process of measuring and noting where the large emissions are, that's something that we can be aware of even if we know there's limited means to do anything about it.

Yusef Sacoor: Being able to measure stuff is so, so useful. But also going on to impact, the things that you've put in place, potentially not statistically based, but what impact have you seen? What has the impact of all of these policies been on the workforce, on the young people working with, on your finances?

Ruth Roberts: Well, with travel, certainly there's more awareness within the staff body of different ways of travelling to the office. We've noticed a huge increase in staff choosing to have hybrid or electric cars. We've got a very dedicated number of people who will travel by public transport every day, even though it's not the easiest way to travel around here. And it just, it used to be almost an embarrassment to say, 'Oh, we've got to think about the environment'. And when I was first getting into this kind of 20, 30 years ago, you were looked on as a bit of an oddity if you said that that's a consideration. But now that it is more, a more accepted, a more expected, almost, topic of conversation, then it just becomes second nature to think, 'Hang on, what about the impact of that?' And so that, just, that slight culture shift in thinking is really important. And yeah, that kind of normalises the conversation around the climate crisis, which I think is very important.

Hannah Mears-Young: Yeah, completely the same as Ruth, like the culture shift in the fact that when we're buying new laptops or new computer parts, it's that, we'll go to Back Market, or we'll go find secondhand, you know, the idea that we then are recycling things like office chairs and making sure that we're looking out for ways in which we can interact with, not interact sorry, that we can purchase things that are going to be more

sustainable in the long run and we're not creating as much of an impact in those purchases is something that's been really positive out of the conversations that have been happening even in the past 18 months that I've been with the company. And I think just the continued conversations and I think also working with there being more of a shift to working with the sector as a whole, I think that's been a really positive outcome of, especially of the Music Mark This Is Not A Rehearsal campaign. Like people seem more interested and more incentivised than ever before, which is really, a really cool and really fun thing to be a part of, to be able to see that shift and the fact that those conversations, and some of them are hard conversations and some of them are uncomfortable conversations, especially when you look at divesting in terms of financial support and things like that, but they're conversations that people are willing to have and so I think the more that has been, the overarching positive impact is the fact that that has become a sector norm rather than it becoming something that, as Ruth said, 'Oh, it's a bit embarrassing to talk about', something that we have to do or have to do as a tick box exercise. It's no longer just a throwaway thing. It's become ingrained within everything we're doing.

Ross Purves: Could I just come in on a couple of those things? Because they draw on things that we picked up in the report as well. Firstly, Hannah talking about email and AI. And I just wanted to pick up on this because I think that the jury is out so far on the extent to which we should all be using paper versus digital, right? And the balance between those, there's this view that we just we stop using anything on paper when everything should be electronic. But actually it may not be as simple as that. If you take into account the energy being used, the construction of devices like iPads and so on, and all of the networking and infrastructure that you need for cloud-based support, you know, it's actually pretty murky, all of that. And actually you might be better off buying paper from a place that's certified for sustainable forest and then recycling afterwards. So again, they're not straightforward, some of these decisions, they do require some careful thinking about because yeah, the digital domain hides an awful lot. We just don't see it. So we don't think about it, as Hannah said! But actually there's a lot out there that we will increasingly hear more about as time goes on and this technology becomes ever more pervasive. And that brings me to my other point, which is about something that Ruth said about not having information or having loads of information and not being sure about what to do. That came across loud and clear in the research as well, about, you know, not having information within organisations to make some of these decisions or having so much and not knowing what to do with it. And Ruth mentioned Positive Planet and we had other organisations mentioned in our work. For instance, another example from Normans, they'd worked with their local business and environmental network. So in Staffordshire, there was Staffordshire Business and Environmental Network. But I suspect there are similar kinds of organisations all over the country. And I think that's a great example of where you could collaborate or partner with an

organisation who specialises in making sense of this kind of data and offers things like carbon literacy training, so that actually some of that you can gain a better purchase on it. Because a lot, again, a lot of this information is there, but how do we interpret it? How do we know it's accurate? How do we use it within our practical day-to-day work? So again, that's somewhere where we can draw on expertise from outside the sector.

Yusef Sacoor: That's amazing. Information overload is such a hard thing to get over. And very conveniently leads us on to our penultimate question, which is around ,when you were potentially starting your journey in this, and Ross as somebody who's done a huge amount of academic research on this as well, where would you point people for a first put of call for resources, organisations? I know a few have already been mentioned... Training, in this area to help you kickstart your sustainability work in music education? So Ross, I'll head straight back to you.

Ross Purves: Yeah, there's a lot out there already, actually. So unsurprisingly, I'd signpost Music Mark's campaign because our, I mean, obviously they were answering a Music Mark supplied questionnaire. So probably that prejudged the outcome of this question, but most of the people who responded to our questionnaire were well aware of the campaign that Music Mark did. So it has cut through. Also things like Julie's Bicycle is another organisation which offers great resources, things like tick lists, checklists for those of us working in performing arts and creative industries. The UCL Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability Education, where I'm an Associate Fellow, we provide free CPD resources for primary and secondary teachers across all subjects into how to embed sustainability into our practice. And that, again, will apply, there's music, there's music resources coming over the next year for both primary and secondary. But even now, the resources there that are available will be useful. ReTune, we've heard about from Normans, is a great support. And we've also heard about the importance of carbon literacy training, which can be potentially organised locally with organisations that do that. And then there are increasing numbers of books and articles coming out in this area as well. And I shall be very happy to give you a list that you can add to the information on this podcast as well.

Yusef Sacoor: Thank you so much Ross and it should be mentioned that we'll be sharing any links that we can in the transcripts and information for this podcast on the podcast page on our website. So Ruth, I'm going to ask you the same question, any amazing resources that you've used in the past or presently?

Ruth Roberts: Well yes, of course, This Is Not Rehearsal, from Music Mark. It's the go-to place.

Yusef Sacoor: We love a shout out! [Laughing]

Ruth Roberts: [Laughing] Of course I had to mention that. Yes, the two I've mentioned already, Mother Tree for financial resources, and Positive Planet for carbon reduction

planning and for carbon literacy training ,and they're very lovely people. They were at the Music Mark conference in November and they were really lovely. The other website to go to is Make My Money Matter, which focuses on pensions. So that's one to go to if you're interested in finding out how green or how not green your pension provider is. So yeah, those are my three main recommendations.

Yusef Sacoor: Thank you so much Ruth. And finally, Hannah. If you shout out us again people will think that we're paying you!

Hannah Mears-Young: Not sure I have many to add. [Laughing] I mean, This Is Not A Rehearsal, is great. I would recommend if anyone would like to join. I know that we're always looking for new people to come join, both folks in the sector but also if any young people are interested in this sort of thing we are actually specifically looking for young people to come and join that group from September onwards I believe. Julie's Bicycle is someone we've also worked with, big fan, they're fabulous. Also just, if you are curious or don't really know where to start with your journey or don't know what that might look like, I would really recommend having a look at the WWF carbon footprint counter, so you can really see what impact you're having. You know, it's not always going to be the most accurate because, you can't always take into consideration all the exact things you're doing. But I found that a really helpful way, especially in carbon literacy training to start to look at what my impact was both inside and outside of work, and so would recommend that as well.

Yusef Sacoor: Fabulous. And finally, whether in your personal life or as an organisation, what plans do you have in this area in the future? Obviously, Ruth, you've alluded to getting a report back on what steps you might take further. But yeah, what are your future plans to try and be more sustainable?

Ross Purves: Well, I just mentioned the UCL Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability Resources, and that's something that I've got on my desk for the next few months now to work on some resources for secondary teachers. And that again is going to draw on some of the findings from Music Mark and other work that I've done. Really excited about that, because again, that will be free resources for the sector and that will complement the primary music resources that we're currently doing. And then I have a goal to do some more research in the future on how we can empower music teachers in various settings to improve their repair skills and maintenance skills so that they can take more ownership and responsibility of their own materials and keep them going again about, you know, modelling good practice and so on and sharing those skills with their learners.

We've got a new lab we're setting up at UCL, which is going to be a sustainable makerspace, and we hope that that might be a place where we could do some of that work. We could get groups of teachers in and actually give them those skills and then

follow them and see how they're able to use those skills and so on. Because that for me is something that I'd like to see more of. You know, I think we need to rethink musicianship in the 21st century to try and bring in things like repair, maintenance, creative repurposing of equipment, as part of those core skills for musicians. And so that's some of the things that excite me at the minute.

Yusef Sacoor: That's fascinating and people will probably be happy with the financial benefit of repairing rather than buying new as well.

Ross Purves: [Laughing] Let's hope so.

Yusef Sacoor: Yes, so Hannah, how about you?

Hannah Mears-Young: At the moment, kind of looking ahead to the new academic year and looking at how we can, with our, with the National Folk Ensemble how we can interact with, how we can streamline the way in which we order things. So obviously we have used Amazon in the past very much trying to move away from using anything of that ilk or that nature in the way that we would order things like medical, like first aid kit supplies, you know, craft kits, things like that. Also, because we courier things up and down the country, looking at how we can try and use courier services that offset carbon and things like that. So it's just trying to be more mindful about how we interact with vendors that we use and in a way that's hopefully going to be just as efficient time-wise, but also means that we are also hopefully supporting smaller businesses and smaller, more local businesses is hopefully the aim moving into September.

Ruth Roberts: So yeah, so as you mentioned, we're not quite sure what the Positive Planet Carbon Reduction Plan will come up with, but things that we've identified include, if it's possible, replacing our delivery van, which is coming to, at end of its lease next year, replacing it with either a hybrid or an electric vehicle. Our problem is we cover quite a lot of miles during the day and having something that's got the range that will meet our needs... We could always have two vans and keep one charged up while the other goes out, but I think that might be a bit expensive. So that would be an ideal. And yes, once the purchase of our building is completed, then the first thing on the agenda will be solar panels, which because we've got a huge roof area, so that should generate quite a lot of electricity, which would be really exciting.

Yusef Sacoor: Exciting times guys and good to hear all of the amazing work that's being done in this area and the opportunities that are approaching.

[Outro music]

A massive thank you for listening and to Ruth, Ross and Hannah for joining us. We all know how important the subject is, but it's affirming to hear the huge benefits of taking the initiative as music educators on the climate crisis, and that we can individually and organisationally make a difference, often even finding other benefits in the process. As

always, head to musicmark.org.uk/podcast for show notes and transcripts. See you next time!