



# MUSIC MANIFESTO FOR SCOTLAND



[www.wemakemusicscotland.org](http://www.wemakemusicscotland.org)



"Access to music should be a fundamental part of Scottish education. Musical study requires focus and skill, but offers lifelong artistic, emotional, social, and intellectual rewards. Active engagement with music benefits people at every stage of life, enhancing young children's language, literacy, coordination, and spatial reasoning, while also boosting self-esteem, aspiration, and perseverance across other areas of learning"

**- Sir James MacMillan**



# Introduction

The best way to pass on creativity is through music. And Scotland is a great musical nation, a melting pot of styles and traditions, with its biggest city Glasgow a designated UNESCO City of Music.

Over the past five years we have been embedding free instrumental tuition across Scotland's schools. This has seen an increase of 24,391 young people participating on instrumental tuition since 2020/21, reaching 65,985 learners in 2023/24.<sup>1</sup> There has been a noticeable sustained increase in participation in areas of high deprivation, with over 22% of pupils receiving music lessons in schools from the 20% most deprived communities. To continue this trend, it is important that music education is strengthened in communities, with diverse, visible and secure provision- that works over the lifecycle of all learners.

Music is vital to the economy and the well-being of our country. The music industries in Scotland directly contribute around £195 million to the Scottish economy, with music tourism contributing an additional £500 million<sup>2</sup>. At the last count, the music industries employed over 10,000 FTE music professionals,<sup>3</sup> with the majority being freelance, and many feeding back and working in education. In addition, there are around 1,000 GTCS registered classroom

music teachers and around 650 local authority instrumental instructors.

Recent MEPG research has found there to be compelling qualitative evidence on the impact of music education on the mental health and wellbeing of young people, their engagement and relationship with education, and the enrichment of broader life experiences.

Scotland is a forward-looking, forward-thinking nation, the first country in the UK to directly incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into domestic law. This gives every young Scot the legal right to engage in cultural and artistic activities (Article 31). Music has a positive impact on our young people, our communities and Scotland on the world stage.

<sup>1</sup> [Improvement Service Report](#)

<sup>2</sup> [UK Music](#)

<sup>3</sup> [SMIA](#)



# The Vital Contribution of Music in Education

Multiple research studies undertaken internationally show the multi-dimensional value of music specifically and performing arts education more generally in improving well-being and social inclusion, strengthening literacy, numeracy, memory, and attention; building creativity, teamwork, discipline, resilience, and confidence and developing exactly the transferable skills employers identify as essential for a 21st-century workforce. Again, recent MEPG research confirms this impact.

*"Students who engage in music learning perform better academically, contribute to their communities, form positive relationships, continue their education into university, earn more through their lives and age better, physically & cognitively."*

*Dr Anita Collins*

*Neuro-musical Specialist, University of Melbourne*

Music and performing arts education embed creativity from an early age, like all the best forms of education, it opens people's minds to what's possible for us as a society and individuals within it, not closing minds to limit opportunities. We believe that embracing the great power within Scotland's arts and culture within schools for the benefit of our young people will centralise the importance of creativity and have a significant impact on the well-being of individuals as well as positive socio-economic impact.

To restrict or devalue music specifically (and other performing arts more generally) in education is to limit opportunity, stifle creativity, and fail in the duty to provide a broad, inclusive, innovative and forward-looking education that truly prepares young people for the challenges of the 21st century.



# A National Blueprint For Music

Following the pandemic, we saw widening social and attainment gaps that has brought multiple challenges and inequities. Our success in removing fees for instrumental music lessons and broadening the possibilities and reach of music education following the last Scottish Elections has gone some way towards providing creative solutions to these problems. However, we need to ensure the continuation of this ground-breaking work in a way that is achievable, affordable and maintained. It requires Government to commit to:

**A Scotland where all young people regardless of their background can be involved in music and progress through excellent teaching and appropriate pathways.**

**A Scotland that is a globally recognised creative place where the arts can flourish and are enabled to inspire, enrich and transform the lives of people and communities**

**A Scotland that provides a programme of skills development for everyone involved in music education delivered in partnership with MEPG Partners including Scotland's world-class conservatoire, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Harnessing assets and resources already available across the nation.**



# Making it Happen

A commitment to a music educational environment for children and young people in Scotland which is world-leading in terms of availability, equality, equity and excellence in both school and community settings.

- **Instrumental music tuition that is free at the point of access for children and young people.**
- **Increasing the funding for the Youth Music Initiative to support access to high quality youth music in community settings for those who need it most.**
- **Fair and equitable funding that gets through to every child in Scotland, regardless of their postcode. Consistency and transparency in funding across all local authorities.**
- **Ensuring clear high quality progressive pathways from local authority and community music provision into specialist music education, including Junior Conservatoire routes, ensuring that financial barriers are removed for learners from SIMD 1 and 2 backgrounds.**
- **The delivery of GTCS registration for all instrumental music teachers, solidifying their professional status and parity of esteem with the rest of the teaching profession.**

“Music is the art of all the things we can’t see or touch.  
We need it in our lives”  
- Nicola Benedetti



The Music Education Partnership Group (MEPG) was founded in 2015 and is a network of music-based organisations set up to promote and celebrate the life-long benefits of a music education and to advocate that the transformative potential of music should be experienced by everyone in Scotland.

It is an independent charity with more than 70 members, bringing together diverse music constituencies from the formal, to nonformal and informal, in all sectors

## MEPG Team

**Mae Murray** – Director and Head of Formal Education

**Dr Graeme Smilie** – Head of Research and Programmes

**Jack Nissan** – Head of Non-Formal Education

**Laura Gardiner** – Head of Training and Conferences

**Hannah McCooke** – WMM Instrument Libraries Coordinator

**Lorna Gourlay** – WMM Schools Lead

**Isabel Marwick** – MEPG Administrator

## MEPG Board

**Mr Ian Thomas Mills** – Chair of the Board

**Mrs Julie Carrie**

**Mr William Deighan**

**Dr Lois Fitch**

**Mr David John Francis**

**Ms Laura Gardiner**

**Mr Alan Kerr**

**Mr Ian Mackay**

**Dr Lio Moscardini**

**Mr Jack Nissan**

**Mr Kirk Richardson**

**Ms Jane Thursa Sanderson**

**Mrs Shonagh Stevenson**

**Lord Iain Vallance (of Tummel)**

**Mrs Bridget Whyte** – Advisor to the Board

“Music is a more potent instrument than any other for education because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul”  
- Plato

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## MEPG Partners

Aberdeen Music School  
ABC Creative Music  
Agar Trust  
Associated Board of the Royal  
Schools of Music (ABRSM)  
Association of British Orchestras (AOB)  
Association of Directors of Education  
in Scotland (ADES)  
Beat Buddies Music  
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra  
(SSO)  
Benedetti Foundation  
Children's Classic Concerts  
CoSLA  
Creative Scotland (CS)  
Cumnock Tryst  
Dimensions Curriculum Ltd  
Drake Music Scotland  
Dumfries Music Collective  
Dumfries and Galloway Council  
Dunedin Consort  
Early Years Music Scotland  
Edinburgh College  
Edinburgh City Council  
City of Edinburgh Music School  
Edinburgh Youth Orchestra (EYO)  
Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)  
Education Scotland (CS)  
Fèisean nan Gàidheal  
Fèis Rois  
Fischy Music  
Glasgow Barons  
High Life Highland  
Heads of Instrumental Teachers  
Scotland (HITS)  
Hear My Music  
Independent Society of Musicians  
(ISM)  
Live Music Now (LMN)  
Make/Change Collective  
Making Music  
Music Publishers Association (MPA)  
Music Education Council (MEC)  
Music School of Douglas Academy  
The UK Association for Music

Education – Music Mark  
Musician's Union (MU)  
National Centre of Excellence for  
Traditional Music Plockton  
National Centre for Music (NCM)  
National Parent Forum Scotland  
National Piping Centre  
National Youth Choir of Scotland  
(NYCOS)  
National Youth Orchestra of  
Scotland (NYOS)  
National Youth Pipe Band of  
Scotland (NYPBS)  
Nordoff and Robbins  
Oi Musica  
Red Note Ensemble  
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland  
(RCS)  
Royal Scottish National Orchestra  
(RSNO)  
Scottish Brass Band Association  
(SBBA)  
Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO)  
Scottish Council of Independent  
Schools (SCIS)  
Scottish Ensemble  
Scottish National Jazz Orchestra  
(SNJO)  
Scottish Opera (SO)  
Scottish Parent Teacher Council  
Scottish Pipes and Drums Trust  
(SSPDT)  
Sistema Scotland  
Scottish Schools Orchestra Trust  
(SScOT)  
Software Training Scotland  
Sound Sense  
St Andrew's University Music  
Participation (STAMP)  
St Mary's Music School  
Strathclyde University  
Traditional Music Forum  
Tinderbox Collective  
Trinity College London  
Wallace Collection