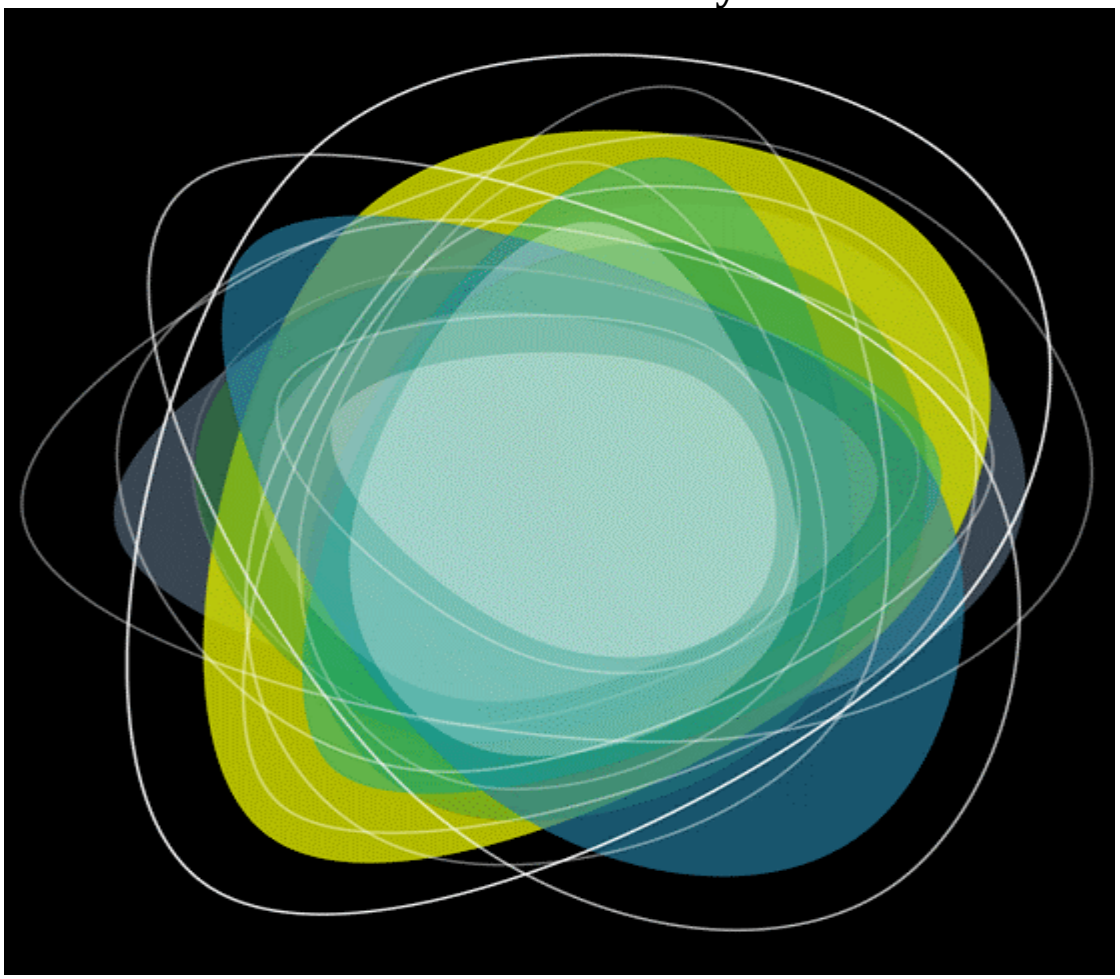
The role of genre-based community music: report of a pilot evaluation of two community orchestras.



UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER
CENTRE FOR ARTS AS WELLBEING

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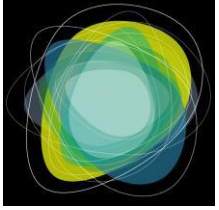

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORCHESTRAS IN PROMOTING WELLBEING A PILOT STUDY.

Kit Tapson, Norma Daykin and David Walters.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evaluation sought to explore wellbeing impacts and sustainability issues surrounding delivery of inclusive, instrumentally based community music projects. A qualitative exploration of two adult community orchestras, both of which seek to engage disadvantaged and culturally diverse communities within their respective UK cities, was undertaken in 2016. Favourable ethical opinion for the study was received from the University of Winchester Ethics Committee.

Data are drawn from semi-structured interviews (10) with music directors, project managers and musicians. These were undertaken by a researcher and lasted between
30-60 minutes. In addition, the researcher observed one rehearsal and one performance by each ensemble, conducting informal conversations with audience members before and after each performance. To ensure confidentiality, the focus of observations was upon the orchestra as an entity rather than on the actions of any individual. Personal data and other identifiers were not recorded, and neither orchestra is identified by name in reports.

Thematic analysis identified several key themes, below.

1. Membership and recruitment.

Ensembles need to retain members while maintaining a flow of new members who reflect the project's target communities. The ensembles were observed to address these challenges in several ways, including:

- Providing regular educational workshops to develop the skills of existing members and attract new ones.
- Ensuring that people in leadership roles are well connected with local community organisations such as schools, music organisations, charities and informal networks.
- Undertaking effective marketing, including use of social media and word of mouth information sharing.
- Involving local people in organisational development.
- Commissioning new musical works from local composers.
- Engendering a sense of membership and ownership among existing members.

2. Musical management challenges

Musical management challenges include maintaining a balance of instruments, involving musicians with a wide range of skills and experience (since neither ensemble uses auditions), ensuring that rehearsals are effective, and managing performance challenges. The ensembles were observed to respond by:

- Using waiting lists for certain instruments and offering alternative activities such as sub-groups and workshops.
- Fostering peer support during rehearsals and performances.
- Employing a flexible approach to orchestration, with parts scored for different levels of ability.
- Reminding members of the importance of listening – to each other and to the MD.
- Adaptating to a variety of performance situations and venues, some of which are not able to fully accommodate the ensembles' technical requirements.

3. Organisation and funding.

These were on-going concerns, particularly given the commitment of both ensembles to low-cost membership policies. Key points are:

- Both orchestras need external funding to be fully sustainable.
- Funding is sought from a variety of sources, including grants and performance fees.
- Funding allows both ensembles to engage a small number of professional musicians as presenters and performers, boosting members' confidence and ensuring high quality performances.
- Charging a professional fee for ensemble performances. This can make a statement about the ensemble's worth and the value of live music generally; it also demonstrates sensitivity towards the local music economy, which is potentially undermined by the availability of free or subsidised music.

4. Equality and diversity issues

These were seen to be addressed by:

- Engaging musicians from different backgrounds, including those that do not read music.
- Providing activities that level potential hierarchies, for example, drawing on

members' formal and informal knowledge.

- Involving a range of members in decision making.
- Information sharing using a variety of media, including word of mouth.
- Acknowledging the contribution and value of musical genres outside of those perceived to be mainstream.
- Engaging music mentors and workshop leaders from diverse backgrounds.
- Holding rehearsals and performances in areas of the city where there is a relative lack of investment in arts and culture.

Conclusions

Being a member of a community orchestra can provide positive social experiences as well as creative engagement, fun and a sense of achievement. Community ensembles can respond to local needs by creating music opportunities that are relevant to their communities and are not addressed in mainstream provision. They can also play a valuable role in supporting the local creative economy, providing opportunities, and nurturing both amateur and professional musicians through all stages of their development. Ensembles also face many challenges including organizational, financial and musical issues. Musical directors in such groups need to demonstrate sensitivity, patience, good communication, understanding and commitment to the ensemble's values and purpose, as well as high level musical skills. MDs need to be supported by committed officers and members who understand the ensemble's aims, challenges and requirements. While ensembles may have a variety of organisational and management structures, a specific danger in relatively young organisations is an over- reliance on MDs or founders to fulfil a wide range of organisational and management roles. Sustainability requires a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities as well as a commitment by the group as a whole to organisational development.

As well as contributing to the musical development of members, well-run community ensembles can contribute to personal wellbeing and can enrich the culture of the localities and cities in which they are based.

Orchestras evaluation report

The aim of the current evaluation was to explore the wellbeing impacts and the sustainability issues surrounding delivery of an inclusive community music project in order to support the development of an externally funded research study.

In recent years, academic research has raised awareness as to the potential of the arts to positively influence health and wellbeing (Blacking, 1995; Carr et al., 2013; Clift et al., 2009; Daykin et al., 2013,

2016; Fritz et al., 2009). Amongst artistic interventions, engagement with music is gathering credence as a way to support a variety of clinical and non-clinical populations, including people with psychiatric disorders (Carr et al., 2013), autism (Molnar-Szakacs & Heaton, 2012), dementia (McDermott et al., 2014), and learning disabilities or long-term conditions, including cardiovascular disease (Hanser, 2014. See also Daykin, 2013, Daykin and Bunt, 2012; De Nora, 2000, 2003). Music is likewise considered by many to be a medium which can transgress the barriers of language, culture or behaviour and therefore able to promote non-verbal connectedness that enables communication and cooperation (Blacking, 1995; Fritz et al., 2009; Jindal-Snape et al., 2014).

Included under the umbrella of music are community orchestras, where rapidly changing demographics have prompted orchestras to consider musical programmes with universal appeal and to benefit all populations. Thus motivated to increase access and opportunity to all in the community, orchestras are initiating a connective practice that reaches out to an ever more diverse populace as well as the previously underserved members of society (Kahn, 2014). Kahn (2014) suggests that community orchestras have the potential to contribute to the collective vitality and health of populations through sharing the joy of orchestral music, a belief underscoring the current evaluation, to assess the effect of involvement with a community orchestra upon their wellbeing.

Specifically, the questions informing the evaluation were:

Impact

- What are the experiences and perspectives of those engaged with ensemble playing?
- How do these link with health and wellbeing agendas?

Process

- What are the key components and challenges of inclusive practi ce

- How are issues of inclusion managed across, skills, abilities and cultural backgrounds?
- What are the particular skills required for leading and managing an inclusive ensemble within an amateur setting?
- How do inclusive community ensembles sustain, fund themselves and renew their members and leadership?
- What significant project management and process challenges affect the orchestras?
- What are the similarities, differences and commonalities across the two settings?
- Are there generalizable components of successful music projects that could be transferred to other settings?

The research approach involved a qualitative, inductive exploration of two adult community orchestras, The Bristol Reggae Orchestra and the Notebenders Orchestra, both known for engaging musicians from diverse backgrounds. The scoping study involved an element of reflective practice (Finlay & Gough, 2003; Finlay, 2008), the Principal Investigator being the Music Director of the Bristol Reggae Orchestra, an award winning community music project recognised for its inclusive approach and its engagement with disadvantaged communities including refugees. Formation of the Notebenders was inspired by the legendary jazz musician, Andy Hamilton and in 2006, management was taken over by a prominent musician and Musical Director (MD). Like the reggae Orchestra, the band now comprises approximately 25 members of all ages, ethnicities and abilities. Both orchestras represent disadvantaged and culturally diverse communities of their cities.

The study was prompted by observations of and interviews with orchestra participants including; MDs, project managers, musicians, funders and other stakeholders, whereby representing a wide range of backgrounds. The intention was to undertake an exploratory pilot study that would inform the design of a larger research project to consider the health and wellbeing impacts of participatory music making as well as process issues such as sustainability, challenges faced by inclusive community music projects, what is needed to overcome these, and commonalities and differences across the two settings.

Prior to the study onset, favourable ethical opinion was received from the University of Winchester ethics committee. Five participants were then contacted by email and telephone from the Reggae orchestra. These included; the MD, Project Manager, two musicians and the Director of Funding. Five participants were likewise contacted from the Notebenders; the MD, Project Manager, two musicians and a Lead organiser and Project Manager for community groups and Jazz. Following consent, these participants took part in semi-structured interviews lasting between 30-60 minutes. In addition, a researcher attended one rehearsal and one performance of each of the Bristol Reggae

Orchestra and Notebenders Orchestra. To minimise sensitivity the focus of attention was upon the orchestra as an entity rather than on individual behaviour, meaning personal data and identifiers were not recorded. The observer sought to capture a rich description of issues and challenges of inclusive practice. In particular, the actions of the MDs from both orchestras, were observed in order to understand leadership challenges and practice. The researcher also conducted informal conversations with members of the audience before and after the performances by the two orchestras. These data were supported by documentary evidence gathered from online sources but also telephone and face-to-face conversations with various stakeholders from both orchestras as to the demographic make-up of the orchestras and their framework of practice.

The interview data were audio recorded and supporting field notes taken as data. Transcripts from the data were read through twice before initial themes were highlighted by the researcher. On a third reading, these initial themes were then amalgamated into sub-ordinate themes, thought to broadly represent the participant's narratives. Finally, following a fourth reading of the data, these subordinate themes were then refined into superordinate themes considered by the researcher as embodying the essence of the overarching topics. This process of thematic analysis is a recognised methodology for reducing and categorising qualitative data (Braun & Clarke 2006).

Finally, the data were manually entered into tables listing the subordinate theme, excerpts from the text highlighting, and in support of each theme, an interpretation of the content and the superordinate theme into which this narrative fell. A copy of this process can be found in the table attached as appendix 1 at the end of this report.

As can be seen from table 1, the process of thematic analysis gave rise to eleven superordinate themes.

Subordinate themes	**Superordinate themes**
• Personal connections • Starting point • Reasons for joining	Involvement with the orchestra
• Recruitment, attrition and retention • Membership; core members and subgroups	

Venues, funding and audience Establishing equality through empowerment and ownership Working as a team Orchestra values Orchestra set-up Orchestra's goals	Orchestra's framework
Orchestra's values, set-up and goals	Orchestra's identity
Workshop structure and its effect Workshop challenges	Workshops and mentoring
A two way exchange Fairness and equality Exchanging knowledge Empathy towards the musical genre	Balancing the different levels of expertise
Balancing different abilities Maintaining a persona that compliments the orchestra's ethos whilst retaining control	Main challenges
Openness and accessibility Shared decision-making Authenticity and commitment to equality and diversity	Inclusivity and nonjudgementalism
Sensitivity and understanding Patience and good communication Commitment	MD's skills
Filling the breach Diversity issues Authenticity and commitment Careful negotiations	Leadership
Overcoming anxiety The influence of engagement Perceptions of wellbeing Raising awareness	Wellbeing
Positive and negative experiences Maintaining community values Sustainable governance and frameworks On-going commitment and enthusiasm	Members experiences and visions for the future

Table 1 - showing how the subordinate themes were gathered to form overriding superordinate themes representative of the central assumptions and key values

Background information about the Reggae Orchestra

Documentary evidence about the Reggae Orchestra showed that with all members present, numbers would peak at forty, but that these were "quite evenly balanced between male and females". Members derived from different communities in [the city] and included no one less than 18 years of age.

With no auditions required, newcomers to the orchestra were sent an application pack in which they stipulated which instrument they played, their ability, and whether or not they could read music. If space was available in the instrumentation they could then come along to rehearsals. For those musicians with lower levels of expertise, support was offered by existing members and also the MD who took those struggling aside for extra help. In addition, the musicians sometimes met outside of the Reggae Orchestra to practice together. The musicians are offered regular workshops for performance skills, funded by the Peoples' Health Trust.

As with many community ventures, realising sufficient funds can be problematic. For the Reggae Orchestra, external funding had been provided by an assortment of councils and charities. Internally, and where possible, costs were met through subsidies of £3 per rehearsal although this was based on means. Main costs incurred by the Reggae Orchestra were room hire (£19 per hour), payment for mentors, travel costs and a salary for the MD, which, by her own admission, she did not always claim.

Back ground information about The Notebenders

Documentary evidence about the Notebenders showed that at capacity, members number approximately 35, these members evenly represented by males and females. Members derive from different cultures and include a compliment of young people (starting at 11 years of age) the policy being to nurture young talent. Rehearsals take place weekly and the orchestra has a monthly residency at the local concert hall and occasionally receive requests to play additional gigs that can result in two to three performances per month.

Whilst no auditions are required, new members are required to spend a minimum period learning the scores and demonstrating a commitment to the Andy Hamilton Trust before they are ready for publicly performing with the Band, which can be anywhere from 6 weeks to 3-months.

As with the Reggae Orchestra, realising sufficient funds can be problematic, with subsidies set at £7 but with fees discounted for the unwaged and students. Principal outgoings include travel expenses, room hire, instrument insurance, payment for mentors and a salary for the MD. The band raises its own funds (through events such as a swimathon) and is also supported through grant funding.

The Notebenders have a dedicated Board of eight directors to strategically position where the band is going and to make the right decisions that secure and protect not only the vision of the band but also the future of the band. Representatives of the Board include a financier, a representative for the singers and younger members amongst others, their motive being to represent all voices of the orchestra.

Findings

The first superordinate theme*,* ***involvement with the orchestra*****,** encompassed three subordinate themes; *personal connections, starting point and reasons for joining,* describing the primary attraction to join the orchestra and the influence of personal connections.

For the Reggae orchestra, their inception did not follow traditional protocol but began when a local community member approached the current project manager with an unusual proposition:

“I was approached by somebody from the local community that I used to see from time to time. He was Jamaican British, who was very into reggae…one day he said, I think you need a reggae orchestra. What are you going to do about it?”

Whilst acknowledging the unusualness of this approach, it did mean that the orchestra’s inception was driven directly by the community according to need. In fact, it was the sparky originality of the Reggae orchestra that audience members commented upon as one of its main attractions.

Unlike the Reggae Orchestra, the MD from the Notebenders had a more traditional recruitment to the Orchestra.

“I did a Jazz degree at the Conservatoire, then I came out of that and worked for a couple of music organisations and did some teaching and playing myself and then gradually got into promotion, project management and programming”

The conservatoire nurtures and supports classical and jazz musicians through jazz degrees, classical degrees and composition degrees, their training including placements with local bands and orchestras with the intention of providing diverse experience and exposure to community music outlets. This work is supported by a programming events manager with many connections to the local music scene.

“I work as a Jazzlines – programming events…my role is to programme and commission lots of different jazz activity within the city.”

From her narrative, the project manager of the Reggae Orchestra also indicated how her extensive network of colleagues, advanced formation of the Reggae Orchestra, these contacts used to identify a suitable musical director (MD).

“The person I was working with [name removed] knew [the prospective MD]”.

According to the project manager, one of the main attractions of this prospective MD was their experience of working with community bands from deprived populations, a prerequisite as far as the project manager was concerned given that the area where the orchestra was to be based was disadvantaged. These qualities were enhanced by an amenable disposition and considerable musical skills

“[The prospective musical director] is a musician [who] has done a lot of work in the community and has led bands, has led music groups and is also – has an MA in musical arranging”.

The data suggested that in order to establish local community orchestras, particularly in disadvantaged areas, it is advantageous to be well connected, as this can afford essential support for the orchestra members.

“We’ve got a very close connection with people from [a local charity]…some of our members might have not been able to come for reasons related to their status in the country. They [MD/project manager] seem to have an ear to the ground about what else is going on for people who might be part of the orchestra”

Having been approached the MD agreed to undertake a six week trial period with the orchestra, realising that,

"…[A]ctually, [they had] grown up with reggae all [their] life…it isn't the exclusive prerogative of one cultural group".

Interestingly, there were examples from the findings to suggest that the MD's generous perception of reggae as a shared perquisite were not echoed amongst the participants. In fact there were instances where the black culture of the orchestra seemed to humble some members, an attitude at odds with the otherwise accepting ethos.

"One of the things that [the MD] did which I thought was really successful was to recruit some of the older musicians who were linked to Black Roots…because they were involved, the project had credibility, and that was really important…I'm just a white person who's come into Bristol and, you know, I haven't lived here all my life and I'm not a musician, so why should they trust me or think what I'm going to do is any good? But having people like them there was really important"

The Notebender's MD expressed the challenges of diversity somewhat differently, as with a ready source of musicians graduating from the local Conservatoire and keen to establish themselves in local bands and orchestras, there was a risk that the diverse cultures of the city would not be equally represented.

"A lot of musicians coming out of the Conservatoires are a certain ethnicity and from a certain background, so quite often white, middle-class kids come through that, but we want to make sure we're working with as broad a range as possible. So our talent development work, which is based and targeted around [city] musicians, works with a lot of young people around the [disadvantaged] constituency which is where The Notebenders are based and that's a much more diverse group of people"

The MD from the Reggae Orchestra was aware that the multi-cultural make-up of the area attracted many from overseas and that such diversity contributed to their assorted membership.

"I think we attract people who […] are quite adventurous or quite worldly, so actually they will not just see [the city] as their base".

This transient population inevitably effected member retention, as despite a core and longstanding group of musicians, there were also musicians whose stay with the Reggae Orchestra was brief because of their temporary residency in the area. To this end, retention was encouraged by providing various workshops, often led by renowned musicians, an attraction that slowed attrition.

"We've had quite a lot of workshops...gives people more of a motivation to keep coming".

The second superordinate theme, ***the orchestras' framework,*** described subordinate themes about how the orchestras ran and their core values.

A consistent finding was the effectiveness of networking and local knowledge in achieving outcomes. In the subordinate theme *recruitment*, the project manager's connections and local knowledge seemed central to successfully attracting new members to the Reggae Orchestra.

"I designed some posters…it was mainly word of mouth. My main ports of call were the pubs and the bookies. Because you could recruit a lot of people through those venues. But also, the school gates, at the children's centre, through other colleagues who had their own networks"

Keen to uphold the community spirit representative of the orchestra, the MD and project manager explained that they actively engaged with this population to ensure that the locals were represented,

"[…] we particularly welcome people from [the city]. We ask everybody who shows any interest what instrument they play and to what level they think they play and whether they read music or not".

As with other elements of their orchestra, the Notebenders had an established route to recruitment, reaching out to the disadvantaged community, and ensuring continuity through regular liaison with local schools and young people.

"There's a couple of flagship projects – each year we do lots of different projects that fill into that…where about 300 children from [the neglected district] come and practice and perform a newly commissioned piece each year…they work with a composer and our tutors throughout the year and then they showcase it [their talents] in [the concert hall]…then they're introduced to our Jazzlines ensembles and so…they do those every fortnight. Then we have a summer school…it's free to all [city] residents and again we try and target [the neglected district] as well as the rest of the city…we encourage people to stick with us for years".

According to the MD recruitment targeted children at a young age, with the intention of enlisting future members.

"Key stage 2, so they're about 4 or 5…[through] the [City] Music Service".

The Reggae Orchestra's MD was aware, that despite their desire for inclusivity some boundary setting was necessary to ensure, that the members were not over represented by one instrument,

"[…] you can't have 20 guitarists and 20 drummers; you can only have one…sometimes we tell people, "Well, it's great that you play saxophone, but you need to wait because we've already got enough saxophones […]."

Such censoring caused some consternation for the MD who worried that being stern contradicted the accepting values she both believed in and practised, a topic developed later in the report.

Like the Reggae Orchestra, the Notebenders likewise had to impose boundaries regarding the instruments, and the researcher noted a prevalence of alto saxophones. Nonetheless, when joined by a saxophonist during the observed rehearsal, this newcomer was welcomed and a space made amongst the existing musicians, possibly perpetuating the value of acceptance above that of boundary setting.

When interviewed, the musicians were quick to recognise the authenticity of the MDs. In the subordinate theme *membership,* they attributed both an element of stability and continuity to a core group of musicians who had been members of the orchestras since their inception.

"I think it works because of [the MD], but also because there's a kind of core group of people who have been coming since the orchestra started, so you've got some kind of root players who will always be there and will be kind of enthusiastic…it wouldn't work if everybody was quite transient".

According to one musician, these core players also supported fellow members unobtrusively, suggesting that they play a key role in providing consistency and in grounding the orchestra.

"Core people in the orchestra might offer support [to other members who need it] without you kind of realising it".

As the MD from the Notebenders added,

"…we stream – well. Not stream, but I have two groups…so they [the musicians] meet up every two weeks and we get an understanding of what level they are, and then they break of into groups applicable to the level that they're on…also, peer to peer – playing within an ensemble together…it encourages confidence between them".

Such inter-orchestra support was recorded in the field notes, where camaraderie was evident through the praise given to soloists, the exchange of information that may prove helpful and the general bonhomie. Whilst the MDs were in no way demonstrative about the values they felt to underpin the orchestra, these were modelled through friendliness and amenability and possibly communicated to the musicians this way.

The MD's narrative suggested that any inconsistency in attendance at the Reggae Orchestra often occurred with performances looming when more musicians were motivated to come to rehearsals.

"Say that we've got a big performance then people will come maybe for that chunk of time and then they'll put more energy into the orchestra".

The MD from the Notebenders concurred, adding that membership was unpredictable at these times, with numbers swelling before performances and shrinking afterwards such that attendance at rehearsals was capricious.

A problem shared by the two orchestras in this respect was that when numbers increased, so too did talking, especially, as the researcher observed, the moment the MD's were distracted by individual musicians. Some members attempted to quieten the chatter by asking others to stop talking, however, during the observation sessions, the researcher noted that such attempts were generally ineffectual.

"Sometimes other people support [the MD] by asking people to stop talking"

The project manager of the Reggae orchestra explained that their response had been to write, "a series of notes about how to get the best out of an orchestra rehearsal, about listening, about performing together, and not performing on your own".

The importance of listening according to the project manager was that without unity, there may be a lack of understanding and cohesion.

In the subordinate theme; ***venues, funding and audience,*** the importance of the setting in which performances took place and the audience this then attracted was highlighted. For the Notebenders, performances were normally hosted at the city's concert hall, an imposing building with double rotating doors onto a large foyer, from whence the performance area could then be accessed. With the entrance to the concert hall situated in a courtyard removed from the main street, the researcher observed that entering the building signified intention. In fact, the majority of the audience members who were interviewed stated that they were devoted followers of the Notebenders.

Interestingly one of the musicians was of the opinion that loyalty to the orchestra consisted of more than its members but extended to include the venue as well, a consideration that places emphasis upon the MD's choice of setting.

"The audience can be loyal to that venue rather than to the music itself…that's why it's important for us to use different venues because we're trying to develop our audience across the programme…so if we have a more funk-based thing, then we do get a different audience."

Despite the MD of the Reggae Orchestra's claim that their "core audience is people who are linked to different members of the orchestra" the interviews and observations from their event suggested that, with the entrance to their concert hall, located in a main thoroughfare, many passers-by had joined the audience upon hearing music.

Moreover, the formality of the venue and the time of the Notebender's performance (13.30 on a Saturday) also appeared to play a part in the audience's response to the music. For instance, the observer noted that since the concert hall was seated, there was little opportunity to dance to the Notebender's music, a fact acknowledged by one of the musicians.

"Anything that's outside, obviously, is more fluid…but the gigs inside would be seated…it's more of a kind of formal concert space".

Comparably, the less formal atmosphere at the Reggae Orchestra's venue, with people lining the stairs and balustrades, contributed to the festive air. This may well have been enhanced by the audience demographic, with the Notebender's audience comprised primarily of the retired and families,

"…it's more parents and stuff…it is a more retired audience that come at the 5 O'clock performance to hear the professional bands [at the venue in the centre of the city]".

Comparably, the Reggae Orchestra's performance was held on a Friday evening, in an area surrounded by bars, seemingly attracting a younger audience. With very little seating at this venue however, a drawback according to the audience was that they could neither see, nor hear the Reggae Orchestra whereas, audience members at the Notebender's performance extolled the venue for providing excellent views and acoustics.

A recognised tactic for energising the audience was the ability of the soloists "at working the crowd". Here, the Notebenders exercised a different approach to the Reggae Orchestra, since they often introduced their songs with an informative summary as to the historical or musical roots. Comparatively, soloists from the Reggae Orchestra danced across the stage clapping and encouraging the audience to join in. Such diverse methods elicited different effects. According to the audience members, the Notebenders generated an appreciation of the musical content, whereas the researcher observed how the more energised approach applied by soloists at the Reggae Orchestra's performance animated the crowd.

As with many community arts ventures funding for both orchestras was an on-going concern, particularly given their policies regarding subsidies. The MD for the Reggae Orchestra was keen to point out that charging for their performances was not solely about generating money but also a values-based decision about the orchestra's worth, her comments suggesting that where they perform is also iconic of their ethos regarding fairness.

"…we're not going to do that [helping people to value music] by showing people that music is cheap or free…so we won't go and perform in somebody's back garden, or in a marquee on grass with nowhere to put the heavy instruments".

Apart from their own fundraising applications which had succeeded in raising money from the Arts Council, the Lottery, the Turnaround Foundation, the Health Lottery and local charities, the Reggae Orchestra had been successful in securing a two year bid from The People's Health Trust. Whilst these monies made a significant contribution towards forming and maintaining the orchestra, they came with responsibilities, as the Trust's learning and evaluation officer explained.

"…they [the Reggae Orchestra] will have some monitoring points. There'll be six, 12, 18, and 24 months monitoring points every six months for those two years. They'll also have an allocated grants officer who will support them and also prompt them to do monitoring… then there's a monitoring report…we've done a case study with them as well because we thought it was an interesting project".

The goal for the People's Health Trust was to ensure that "ownership is really effectively transferred to the people who are benefitting from that project".

A point of unity for both orchestras was their commitment to and enactment of equality and diversity, a subject reflected in the subordinate theme, *establishing equality through empowerment and ownership.* For the Reggae Orchestra's MD, such values were conceptualised by her from inception, where a quiz was used to level potential hierarchies and empower the less proficient musicians, but also making a statement about the underlying values of the orchestra.

"…we did a reggae quiz…guess the baseline CD….there were some people in the community, like the kind of people with a strong connection to Jamaica and the Caribbean, who absolutely wiped the floor with everyone else, and it was really brilliant because they were all the non-music readers. So if you'd gone in and you'd said, "This is all about reading the score", those people would have been lower in the pecking order from the beginning. So it was a fun quiz but it kind of established who was who in the group. It was quite levelling and it was sort of saying this is what we're about to a degree".

According to the project manager, it was balancing the varying levels of expertise that called upon the MDs sensitive negotiation and musical skills the most, whereby perpetuating the ethos of equality.

"…even if they're [the musicians] at a fairly basic level that doesn't exclude them, because [the MD] can write music arrangements that are simple, that link into more complex arrangements...as an ensemble, the music's for everyone; it's not just for an individual".

From the Notebender's prespective, many of their musicians had migrated from the Conservatoire and therefore possessed an advanced knowledge of the musical technicalities; however, there was recognition that others did not possess the same level of expertise.

"Most of the people behind us here [the venue] playing now are graduates from the conservatoire…they share that technical thing and they can read music well and everything else. Now for the people who haven't had the access to us [the conservatoire] this is a new game…being in the right place at the right time and that then becomes a much bigger challenge".

According to their project manager, this difference in aptitude could lead to some challenging in-house politics.

"Sometimes, an ego or individual's ego starts to rise to the surface about what they would rather like to do, how the music could be shaped towards accentuating them".

The superordinate theme, ***the orchestra's Identity*** was represented by one subordinate theme, *the orchestras' values, set-up and goals.*

A recognised and fundamental requirement according to both the Notebender's and the Reggae Orchestra's MDs was that "[y]ou [the musicians] have to be interested in music". This requirement was countered by the recognition that members joining the orchestras should,

“also to be quite relaxed about what’s going to happen, because it will be quite fluid. The session might change, or somebody might want to do something a bit different, and I think for some people, that’s not what they’re looking for”.

A united goal for the MDs was in “giving different people a voice and sort of sharing that and making it really inclusive”. This attitude was evident through the researcher’s observations, where both MDs passed decision-making as to how particular songs could be improved, to the musicians, where their contributions seemingly enhanced a sense of ownership. The interviewees voiced how a feeling of equality was perpetuated through the genre of the music where, for the Notebenders, the values of inclusion and respect had been inculcated through the roots of jazz, by their founder, Andy Hamilton, a pioneer for disadvantaged communities.

“Andy Hamilton’s vision was to have a big band and a big band of musicians that comprise, if you like, people that were reflective of his diaspora [inclusion and acceptance]. He was Jamaican and coming here he found that the access in areas of music were denied to him. So the band has been set up along the ideals to allow people who would not normally access the arts”

Equally, a profound respect for the authenticity of reggae had also communicated itself to the Reggae Orchestra.

“[Reggae] is about giving different people a voice and sort of sharing that and making it really inclusive.”

Unlike the Reggae Orchestra, the Notebenders considered themselves to fall more into the category of band. This definition may well have influenced their repertoire, which contained a selection of well-known songs such as Moon River, adapted to compliment the jazz rhythm.

“A lot of the music is written by conductors….more arrangements other than pieces. It’s trying to maybe write them with something in mind, like a certain groove or a rhythm or a certain way of playing that you think would be quite challenging for them.”

Conversely, the Reggae Orchestra were clear that they were “not a band”.

“…you hear lots of bands which have ‘orchestra’ in their name, but they tend to be a small group of people, and certainly with reggae, the most important ones are the drums, the bass guitars, the keyboards and the singer. Whereas we have the full orchestra complement, so you had your string section…horn section…percussion and so on.”

The combination of ‘reggae’ and ‘orchestra’, created considerable interest amongst the audience who, when asked, said that one of the attractions had been in seeing how the marriage between these two, seemingly unlikely groupings, had been achieved. Whether because of the diverse array of instruments or cultures, the Reggae Orchestra’s repertoire included music from around the world.

There were commonalities between the two orchestras however, one of which was the range of expertise of the musicians.

“There are lots of people who learnt to play music through the school system, maybe white, middle class, who have carried on playing music and now they belong to a variety of bands or orchestras or whatever. And there are a lot of people who have never learnt to read music, have never learnt formally, but they know their reggae…”

Finding creative ways to combine and manage these various levels of accomplishment represented an on-going challenge, as the MD from the Notebenders observed,

“You don’t really know the different levels and abilities…Initially I was trying to figure out what kind of level to actually start talking about things because if it’s all over their head…it’s not going to help them.”

This topic is developed further in the superordinate theme, *Getting the Balance Right.*

The orchestras were also both motivated by shared values; primarily inclusivity and respect, important principles in disadvantaged neighbourhoods according to the Reggae Orchestra’s MD.

“[…] there’s a couple of principles that are important to me. One is that we are inclusive, and we include everyone; we don’t audition. But some of the people who we connect with who are established reggae artists in their community have a relatively high status within their community. So they might not be famous, but they are famous in the reggae community in [the city] and there’s something about respecting that, and having a level of professionalism that respects their status. So it’s not about a free for all, and just, if you can’t play your scales, that’s fine; there’s got to be respect for the composers”.

Such sentiments were echoed by the Notebenders, in fact they were ardently upheld, an attitude that linked directly to the legacy of Andy Hamilton as previously iterated, for whom, inclusivity and respect had been his bi-words.

A stumbling block for the Notebenders regarding inclusivity however was a radical disparity between the wealthy district of the city and the more disadvantaged that cultivated a legacy of fear.

“We’re based in [a small borough] which is one of the four wards of a [large city] that has volatility, crime rates and all that kind of thing…even though it’s but a stone’s throw from here [the palatial district of the city], where a lot of success and wealth is on this side of the road, there isn’t the same on the other side and that generates a perception of fear. Some people might not want to come to rehearsal and they’re thinking, well maybe, but that’s a really rough area. Oh we’re not going down there.”

With Andy Hamilton such a legendary figure for the Notebenders, the researcher noted how the members seemed defined by his inheritance and reputation, raising the question as to how the culture of an orchestra is shaped and whether this is shared by all of its members.

“…it’s a great emotional thing for me to be able to play in his band, we still think it’s his band, and in his old slot. [The family] wanted us to take his slot over when he died which is, again, quite an honour for us”

Equally, in the case of the Reggae Orchestra, the MD modelled compassion and non-judgmentalism and it may well be that such ethics set a benchmark for the musicians. Certainly, the sharing of values seemed to affect the unity experienced by the musicians in both orchestras, helping to overcome any barriers about diversity, as voiced by one member,

“When we get together we work all as one unit. We might not always play like one unit, but together, we all seem to gel; even though we’re all from different backgrounds”.

This view was shared by the Notebenders whose mantra was, “we reach out to everybody in the community. Everybody’s welcome; everybody, no matter who”.

Both orchestras conceptualised the togetherness they felt in terms of ‘family’, a hint perhaps as to the close bond between them.

“I play the guitar and I’ve been with the orchestra ever since it first began…It’s like a community. It’s like a little family actually”.

Whether such moral sentiments originated with the orchestra or within the community is difficult to speculate but the researcher did note that there seemed little divide, as the orchestras’ investment in their communities was spoken about inseparably from their investment in their membership.

The superordinate theme ***workshops and mentoring*** included two subordinate groupings; *workshop structure and its effect* and, *workshop challenges.* The first category referred to how the workshops functioned and the impact of these upon the musicians and the second, to the potential difficulties that introducing an external mentor to the orchestras may have.

The Notebenders ran regular workshops for their musicians, providing a varied programme that initiated musicians to the intricacies of jazz

“…we have excellent tutors…they have a programme of repertoire that they teach the participants. They have oral studies…they do listening as well…you have to be fairly structured to memorise not only the melody but also the harmonic structure of jazz pieces.”

The project manager recognised that the essence of the workshop relationship was in cultivating respect, an essential platform for the exchange of knowledge.

“It’s all built on relationships and mutual respect and understanding what the music’s about and having integrity and knowing about the music.”

For the Reggae Orchestra, the workshops were funded by the grant awarded them by the People’s Health Trust, as part of their professional development.

The project manager explained how, “The type of workshop leaders […] had varied from local musicians to national or international musicians. [The training] could be for a particular group within the orchestra or for the whole orchestra in terms of learning about performing”

Given the varying levels of expertise amongst the musicians, the workshop leaders first liaised with the project manager and the MD from the Reggae Orchestra to devise how each session could be run so as to incorporate the differing levels of expertise amongst the musicians.

The Notebender’s MD sometimes responded to the issue of differing abilities by running ad hoc workshops. Hearing a phrase or rhythm that the less accomplished struggled to grasp, he would stop the rehearsal and spend the entire session on developing a few notes.

“Sometimes I make a decision, ‘let’s not play any music from our [scores] today’. Do a workshop or something. I think I found that quite rewarding just teaching something, normal off the top of my head…yes, it’s nice when you can see them realise, “Oh, this is really useful; I could use this, I could practice this”.

Whilst the majority of the members from both orchestras spoke very positively about the effect of the workshops upon their development, it was the difficulty of effectively amalgamating the various proficiencies that the musicians recognised as a challenge.

“…workshop leaders haven’t necessarily understood the difference in standard and experience of individuals. So either they’ve set the workshop at a level that’s too high or too low, rather than being inclusive of different types of standards and experience that people have”.

For the musicians, the repercussions of such mismatch were in shaking their confidence.

“You think, ‘Oh, I’m no good’. Where the ones that had been really inclusive of everybody’s different ability there was an overpowering feeling of ‘This has been a great workshop, and we want more…’.

Generally, the workshops were evaluated with enthusiasm and appreciated for their positive influence by the orchestra members, bringing greater perspective of the music genres as well.

“It’s [workshops] really helped me to kind of understand different styles of reggae. I think that the impact of having outside musicians is that they might be someone that people know…I think it’s that different perspective”.

Such need to connect to the music resonated with the majority of musicians, especially those from the Reggae Orchestra where it seemed to represent a connection with, and a celebration of, their cultural roots, to the point where neglecting their musical lineage may trigger disengagement.

“Any time you’ve got someone external coming in, especially with our lot, if you don’t have an obvious understanding of reggae, then there may be some people who disengage”.

For the Notebedners, appreciation of their workshops was centred on the learning derived from the experience

“It’s the pleasure of passing on some of that knowledge to people that otherwise wouldn’t have access to it because of maybe, their situation”

Such reasoning chimed with those from the Reggae Orchestra for whom a satisfying outcome was the exchange of knowledge resulting from the mentorship of professional musicians.

“That’s when we learn…I find those very interesting because that’s where I get to learn from people who are much, much – in the know, and who’ve done it – or are doing it and have got the experience. That’s very, very good”.

There was also recognition from both MDs as to the sustainable benefits of exchanging knowledge, where the learning from workshops lasted for several weeks, this being particularly helpful with encroaching performances.

“…when we’re doing a performance, he’ll (professional musician) come, and he’ll help get ready for the performance, and then this has a lasting effect because in another six weeks people will see him again…we always try and make sure there’s a legacy”.

Within their narrative, the MDs also reflected about the effect of workshops upon fairness and equality, thinking it most impartial if the music mentors were recruited from afield to avoid conflicting loyalties.

“I’ve always tried to make sure the music mentors aren’t local, so they’re not necessarily people who are living next door and playing in semi-professional gigs with some of the orchestra members who might do that…if you want really good musicians to come and do something, and they’re going to add a lot of value, you’ve got to pay them…”Oh, I’ll just do it as a volunteer”,. But it wouldn’t really be fair on me, and it’s not sustainable, because no one else would do it.”

Whilst the MDs recognised that there were musicians within their orchestras sufficiently talented to deliver workshops, they considered that paying these members may cause inequality if the other members perceived this act as favouritism or privilege. Whereas, both orchestras utilised the voluntary talents of their musicians to either mentor certain instrumental sections or to run in-house support sessions. Such principles reinforced the researcher’s observations as to the inter-orchestra

support offered by the members, also providing an example of how, by preventing one musician from rising above another, equality was maintained, and the ethos of the orchestras with it.

Under the umbrella of the superordinate theme ***main challenges,*** sat the subordinate themes of *balancing different abilities*, and *maintaining a persona that compliments the orchestra's ethos whilst retaining control.* For both MDs, the data suggested that these two issues posed on-going challenges requiring sensitivity and careful negotiating to overcome.

For the Reggae Orchestra's MD, maintaining the orchestra's ethos linked directly to the workshops where she and the project manager avoided choosing mentors "who've got big egos and are just there for their own performance. They've all got to be team players…"

The MD described the relationship with the workshop mentors as "a two way exchange", a model of learning that provided symbiotic benefits, rather than sole gain. This model of learning was communicated by the MD to the orchestra members by ensuring that all of the musicians were included by, for example, composing single chord scores for those unable to play more complicated arrangements. For those unable to read music, another tactic involved recording a track to CD so that people could learn by ear.

"…People who couldn't read music, they could hear a track on a CD and they would learn by ear…it's not like playing in a band, where everybody listens to – well, you still have to listen to each other, of course, but there are set patterns".

In her field notes, the researcher commented that "the orchestra functions democratically. Instilling stricter boundaries necessitates being more dictatorial however without puncturing fragile egos. Balancing this requires real skill as [the MD] has already established themself as a diplomat".

However, there were times, as for example when the musicians talked over the MD during rehearsals, when a more authoritative stance was needed. According to the MD, the launch of their first CD proved particularly challenging as the recording process was exacting and organisation tested.

" […] when we got to do the CD, I had to change from being this very nice community musician, encouraging everybody, to being slightly sergeant majorish…but it was incredibly stressful to have to manage it all. I just had to be really diplomatic and I had to find strategies for every player…I didn't want anyone to record and then it not be used".

The MD was of the opinion that "there's something about the artistic process which is quite challenging, because it can't be controlled and it can't be committed, and it's important that it's not abusive and not detrimental to people, and it's like a really hard balance".

Such sentiments resonated with those of the funders, the People's Health Trust, whose concern "with collective control, [meant they] would want there to be a lot of involvement from everybody in the project".

Similarly, the MD from the Notebenders also struggled to balance the differing abilities however, he was not shy of authority. His approach was firm but fair, honestly telling those less able when and where mistakes had been made.

"I was in a youth jazz orchestra and the guy that runs that said when he goes in and teaches even school aged children, he's really strict with them and they respond well, that was his advice really, just there's no point softening it. If it's not quite good, say so…otherwise, things don't really improve".

His direct stance was noted in the researcher's field notes, "As an amateur musician, I hear when the orchestra musicians struggle with certain phrases. The MD is quick to step in, telling some of the musicians that they have got the timing wrong. In helping them correct the timing however, he is patient and calm, going over it until the musicians are able to play the phrase more confidently".

Interestingly, the musicians did not appear to resent the MD's direct comments about their faults. On the contrary, they expressed their thanks at the help he had offered. However, when interviewed, the MD voiced how when initially assuming the position of MD, he had been daunted both by the average age of the musicians and also their experience.

"Well, initially probably I didn't have much experience standing in front of lots of musicians…Because the majority of the band are older than me,…even though…I've done a degree, I found that initially – yes, try not to talk to everyone the same…I quickly realised that that's not a problem at all. They're all very friendly and they expect their conductor to obviously tell them what's right and what's wrong".

In the superordinate theme, ***inclusivity and non-judgmentalism,*** there were three subordinate themes; *openness and accessibility, shared decision making and, authenticity and commitment to equality and diversity*.

For both the Reggae orchestra and the Notebenders the diverse culture of their members was testimony to their commitment to diversity,

"…you've got Somali people, refugees, Polish, European, so the music of the orchestra has to reflect that shift".

According to the Reggae Orchestra's MD, to ensure that these different cultures were equally represented, she used a global repertoire. Whether this response was a magnet for newcomers to the city, or vice versa, is hard to say but, as the MD observed, "[t]he orchestra [was] a bit of a focal point for people when they move[d] to the city".

This provided a social forum, where information about other musical groups and events were exchanged, generating an extended musical community that triggered inclusivity and opportunities.

"I notice more and more people inviting each other to social events …or, I'm in such and such a band. Do you want to come along and play with us?" It's even become something where they can earn money…they have met people they would never normally meet".

The MDs from both orchestras recognised the differing levels of expertise amongst musicians and responded by modifying existing scores to ensure that all could take part on an equal footing.

"…some people are really quite good on their instruments, some people are clearly just learning. So then I developed the scores with that in mind. But I've always been very clear that we are a community music project".

Musicians from the two orchestras spoke warmly of the opportunity such flexibility provided, and how this attitude perpetuated an ethos of acceptance and non-judgmentalism. Observing the Notebenders for example, when the MD spotted musicians struggling with a phrase, he spent time with them, offering support and encouragement, and I noticed that the rest of the orchestra waited patiently during this time.

Whilst neither orchestra had a formal policy about disability, when I enquired during interviews, the respondents seemed bemused, as if to question whether those with disabilities were not included

and welcomed was something they had never considered. They provided examples of where they had automatically responded to those musicians with health problems or disability.

“There was one person from the community who had some health problems, and wasn’t able actually to play his musical instrument because of his health problems. [The MD] came to us as a group to suggest that maybe we got some help for him”.

From observing the orchestras I had noticed that when a musician with long-term health problems from the Notebenders arrived for rehearsal, with neither fuss nor discussion, a comfortable seat was brought forward, and a space cleared to ensure sufficient space for this musician. It may well be that the bemusement voiced by participants resulted from an ingrained acceptance and equality; traits observed on numerous other occasions.

Such principles were not confined to the orchestra setting but extended to include the communities of both orchestras. In fact, the MDs modelled philanthropic qualities.

“I don’t think we should be an ad hoc group, because I think what we’re doing benefits the whole of [the city], and there’s an inequality there that needs to be addressed. The people in the orchestra pay their taxes, but they don’t go to [expensive venues]…They don’t participate in a lot of the cultural activities that go on, they don’t play in the orchestras and they don’t sing in the choirs. There’s something about exclusion and racism, isn’t there; there’s a legacy there”.

Such humanitarianism was not confined to the MDs but appeared to be shared by the musicians likewise.

“There are lots of different cultures; but then, you see, that’s a good thing. It’s a god thing because it’s a mix…When you mix different cultures you always come out with something beautiful”.

Such principles of fairness and caring also extended to paying the weekly subs, where the researcher noted in her field notes that, not only were the subsidies set according to means, but that these were discreetly placed in a container such that the amount paid by each musician was not evident. For one musician, this attitude was synonymous with inclusivity.

“I like the fact that we, at the moment are inclusive at a level where you pay what you can to be part of it”.

The superordinate theme, the ***Musical Director’s skills*** was represented by three subordinate groupings; *sensitivity and understanding, patience and good communication and, commitment.* Such personal qualities surfaced frequently throughout the research as key attributes required to manage the orchestras.

For both MDs, there was acceptance that their aspirations for the orchestras could not always be realised against expectation.

“You got to be careful not to treat it [the orchestra as the main focus for the musicians] like that and have too much of a maybe, ambition for how it should sound. So it’s always going to be slightly less than a professional band…”

Rather than causing frustration for the MDs, they recognised that this imbalance required careful treatment such that the ego of the musicians was not deflated, a main incentive being to ensure that the orchestras authentically characterised their community of origin.

“So you have to nurture people to come and perform, to come and share their music, to trust that you’re not going to steal their music…you’ve got to balance people’s expectations and ambitions

with what's achievable. So if we're not careful, we could find it hard to include what you might consider to be our target constituency"

According to the project manager, the MD from the Reggae Orchestra achieved this by committing to the individual needs of the musicians.

"…she puts a lot of energy into responding to what kind of needs there might be in the group".

The researcher wrote in the field notes of the "patience and selflessness this level of commitment demand[ed]", as was exemplified by the example of writing songs for soloists.

"You're doing an arrangement for a singer and it could take weeks to do the arrangement, and then that singer moves on to something else which is great…Because when they're [singer] not doing their song…they do a lot of hanging around and waiting…it must be boring for people."

For the musicians from both orchestras, it was the MDs' authenticity which they found inspirational, such sincerity seeming to evoke genuine affection from them and calling to mind once again, the label of 'family', previously referred to. According to one musician from the Notebenders, their MD was the model of equality since, by offering all of the musicians in the orchestra the opportunity to jam and to contribute their musical opinions, he nurtured inclusivity.

"…[The MD] is trying to make sure that everybody who wants to have a say, and you'll see that in the rehearsal tonight hopefully, is allowed to have a voice. It's [the orchestra] a true cooperative, a true sense of community and working together, where everyone has a voice."

The data suggested that it was the MDs' authenticity which the musicians found inspirational, such sincerity seeming to evoke genuine affection from them and calling to mind once again, the label of 'family', previously referred to.

"[The MD] is very patient. [They are] very good at what [they] do…[They] can communicate with people. [They] can talk to people…[The MD] always been kind to me, and […] always come across very, very sincere…[They] seems to be genuine and that's a good thing…"

The superordinate theme, ***leadership*** was represented by four subordinate categories; *filling the breach, diversity issues, authenticity and commitment and careful negotiations,* bearing similarity with the skills set demonstrated by the MDs.

In their absence, it was essential that each of the two orchestras had contingency plans as to who could replace them to lead rehearsals and performances. For the Notebenders the first port of call was ex-conductors, a preference given their existing knowledge of the members and the set up.

"Normally we go back to ex-conductors…they're the kind of people may be the first call because they know what the band's about. It's quite rare for someone to be asked to run the rehearsal that's never been involved in the band."

In the event of no ex-conductors being available, the orchestra looked to their own resources, calling upon the talents of existing members.

"I think, on some occasions, they've [the orchestra members] actually run it [rehearsal] themselves, sort of nominated one member of the band to run a rehearsal just for one week".

Given the musicians' diverse abilities, different characters, and musical challenges, the MD maintained that drawing upon internal talent was still preferable to recruiting externally as for a new

MD, “it can be quite daunting…when you first turn up and you’ve got to meet everyone and then run the rehearsal.”

Such contingencies were also common to the Reggae Orchestra where filling the breach in the MD’s absence was usually undertaken by members of the orchestra, some of whom had experience as music teachers. Such substitution was viewed positively by their MD who considered that new blood could introduce an alternative interpretation of the score.

“They’d bring something different, a fresh perspective…it might be that they have a particular impression of a piece”

Additionally, the opportunity to lead the orchestra provided musicians with the chance to develop their confidence. According to one musician, the leaders were respected equally, irrespective of whether or not they were professionals.

“…where one of the orchestra members has volunteered, there’s been a positive reception…whether it’s for their own professional music work, or if they’re not professional musicians, it’s giving them confidence of having a new skill or developing a new skill.”

Despite the diverse cultures characterised by the musicians, both MDs were white, highly educated individuals and, according to their self-proclaimed profiles, middle class. In her field notes, the researcher speculated as to how this may impact their leadership, particularly given the communities representative of the two orchestras were disadvantaged and culturally diverse.

From the MDs’ narratives, it appeared that this topic had also been considered as a potential issue, but, as with so many of the other challenges previously discussed, had been resolved according to the acceptance modelled by all of the musicians.

“I thought that when I started this project six years ago that there would be all sorts of conflict and politics about a white woman leading a reggae orchestra…it was all very friendly and people were just really glad that they had the orchestra”

The Notebender’s MD appeared to manage any potential conflict as to his class by actively promoting talent from a broad ethnic background to ensure that the opportunities common to the middle-class did not take precedence.

“A lot of musicians coming out of the Conservatoires are a certain ethnicity and from a certain background, so quite often white, middle-class kids come through that, but we want to make sure we’re working with as broad a range as possible. So our talent development work, which is based and targeted around [city] musicians, works with a lot of young people around the [disadvantaged] constituency which is where The Notebenders are based and that’s a much more diverse group of people”

For the Reggae Orchestra’s MD, such challenges were overcome by being authentic about the relationship shared with the musicians, a stance which sometimes caused some anxiety since balancing both the understanding and authoritarian elements of leadership was not always easy.

“You have to have a real commitment to truth, and you have to be quite strict sometimes with people who are maybe pushing the boundary a bit too much…But that sits with wanting a really high quality product. The two don’t always sit together”.

For both MDs their authenticity was realised through a commitment to participatory leadership, where they frequently modelled a genuine desire for the musicians to be as much part of the decision-making as they themselves were.

When observing the Notebenders, the researcher noted how their MD sought the opinion of the musicians as to how the music could be improved.

"When the MD is unsure about a piece of music he asks the musicians how they think it could be improved. The musicians suggest changing the dynamics playing the chorus quietly the first time round, then loudly the second. In their second attempt at the piece, the MD introduces the changes then feeds back to the musicians how it has improved the piece".

Whilst this tactic usually resulted in inclusivity and ownership, it did not come without its challenges as voiced by the Reggae orchestra's MD.

"What I do for the orchestra is that I don't make decisions, I don't make executive decisions about consulting people, but what I do is, I seize the moment, and I put at risk my own personal connections and my reputation, on behalf of the orchestra".

Such risk highlighted the level of investment on the MDs' behalves, transcending their role as musical directors, tapping into something more personal about their moral investment in the orchestra. This was highlighted by the MD from the Reggae Orchestra for whom a decision had been disputed by the musicians.

"…on this occasion it [the event] resulted in a decision that somebody doesn't like and suddenly people are invoking this idea of democracy and decision making, which doesn't really reflect reality, and it doesn't reflect a creative process, and doesn't reflect my personhood in that role, in terms of it's me doing it. If someone else was doing it, it would be a different set of connections and people but they have to kind of accept that really".

Both MDs realised that careful negotiation was needed to resolve and manage the majority of challenges, a skill they frequently exercised.

Of the Notebender's MD, the researcher recorded how, when several of the musicians struggled to perfect a tricky rhythm, the MD, having first attempted to correct the fault then told the musicians that the missed beats would sound like part of the syncopated jazz tempo. Speaking in private, he added that to persist in attempting to correct the missed beat so close to performance would knock the musician's confidence and this was something he did not want to do.

Under the superordinate theme of ***wellbeing,*** there were four subordinate themes; *overcoming anxiety, the influence of engagement, perceptions of wellbeing and, raising awareness.*

Some members of the orchestras were dogged by mental health issues and found the musical outlet and atmosphere of the orchestra a cathartic setting.

Participant: "I'm still pretty nervous. I think that if the orchestra wasn't the way it was, I wouldn't still be playing at all, so I think it's been as supportive as it could possibly be for me.

Researcher: How does it support you?

Participant: Just by being interested in me…that you are a valued piece of something."

Whilst one participant from the Notebenders suffering from depression, declined interview, she verbally consented for her views to be included, voicing how the warmth extended by fellow

members had reinforced her sense of self-worth and of belonging, implying the orchestra as a community jigsaw where all pieces play an important part in completing the picture.

From the observations, it was evident that all newcomers to both orchestras were welcomed, and a space immediately created amongst the instrumentalists to incorporate them. In her field notes, the researcher wrote how the music was straight away shared, and information communicated as to where in the score they were playing. As one member noted, "I don't think anybody would ever go and not be talked to".

One of the most striking observations was the genuine pleasure, camaraderie and enjoyment that all the members seem to experience from participating in the orchestras. This was evident through the smiling, jocularity and friendships that they seemingly shared, as voiced by one of the musicians,

"You're not criticised. You feel people are there for you and there's a warmth about the orchestra"

The orchestras communicated a contagious energy and feeling of wellbeing, as recorded by the researcher in her field notes,

"Before long, I realised I was tapping my feet and smiling as the orchestra played. It was impossible not to be drawn into the warmth, humour and fun. As I looked around, the audience were clapping, laughing and bursting into spontaneous clapping".

And later,

"When I left the venue, I felt buoyed by a contagious energy and feeling of wellbeing".

Such effects were also observed by the MD from the Reggae Orchestra.

"I [MD] think people really enjoy the friendships…I see people – there's a lot of laughter in the orchestra. There's a lot of applause, a lot of spontaneous encouragement and outbursts of applause if somebody does something well, a lot of commentary of what's going on. I think there's lots of exuberance".

Apart from the positive emotional exchange, the orchestra filled a social niche, as one musician commented,

"If you're somebody, for example on benefits and doesn't get out much, this is a way of meeting people…maybe English isn't your first language and you don't know many people, or you're new to [the city], this is a way of getting to meet new people".

Such motives were closely allied to the principles underscoring the funders, The People's Health Trust, whose "overall purpose as an organisation is to achieve health and equalities and that's why we tend to work in the 30 per cent most disadvantaged neighbourhoods…"

One musician's narrative demonstrated how these values had been realised by her in the setting of the orchestra,

"It [joining the orchestra] made me feel better inside and gave me something to work for…Sometimes you feel a bit down and then you go and rehearse and, by the time you come back, you're happy".

In the final superordinate theme, ***members' experiences and visions for the future***, there were four subordinate themes; *positive and negative experiences, maintaining community values, sustainable governance and frameworks and, on-going commitment and enthusiasm*.

Given the limited timeframe of the interviews with the Notebenders, none of the interviewees commented in this category, meaning all data derives from the Reggae Orchestra. CHECK THIS

All of the interviewees voiced that they had positive experiences from their membership of the orchestra. Predominant amongst their emotions were feelings of pride, not just because of their own achievements but for what they may have brought to their community.

“Yes, really proud. Really excited to be part of something and to have perhaps introduced people to something they wouldn’t have thought existed in [the city]”.

The interviewees referred to music as “an international language”, capable of breaking down barriers, whereby benefitting society. For example, one musician recalled how music could remove the audience’s inhibitions.

“…everybody just got up in the audience. They were dancing in the aisle…It was like electricity went across the whole place”.

There were times however when, rather than celebrating a concert, the musicians berated themselves for a poor performance, especially when this did not correspond to the effort expended at rehearsals.

“[When things go wrong] the audience – they understood…but I think we gave ourselves more of a talking to than the audience gave us. We felt worse than the audience because we know what we put in”.

In addition, a downside to the bonds the musicians experienced was that when members left, those remaining must adjust to the space created and the changes that absence occasioned.

“It can be a bit disappointing when a lot of people move on at the same time, so you kind of think you’ve got a whole group of people playing together, and then suddenly, their lives change, or whatever and they – that can feel a bit weird”

For one musician, a concern resulting from the orchestra’s increasing recognition was the temptation to be lured away from the original values that underscored the Reggae Orchestra, towards gentrification.

“I think you can end up being – especially, really excited because you get invites, and then suddenly, you suddenly realise that you’ve become this thing that’s really attractive to a certain audience. It’s about being true to the community I think…So I suppose it would be really good for us to get more gigs and to get festivals or stuff like that, but it’s something about how we can then use that more confidence that we’ve got and make sure that we’re still opening our doors, like locally, in a meaningful way. Otherwise it just becomes like, the selected few who benefit. You sort of become that phenomenon because you’re a diverse orchestra, and people like diverse things in my mind”.

According to the MD, an important consideration for the future therefore, was how the orchestra governed itself. Given the MD’s previous experiences however, self-government may require sensitive handling.

“…we now need to look at how we govern ourselves in a more professional way. It’s [self-government] a challenge in terms of how people feel about that”.

This represented a concern for the MD who was “really burnt out” by the responsibilities of managing the orchestra and envisaged a clear framework for the future with a wider network

accountable for the various duties. The MD also hoped to grow the sense of ownership which characterised the orchestra and was closely aligned to her personal ethos.

“I think it [the orchestra] needs to be on a firmer financial footing. I think it needs a stronger steering group with clearer role descriptions and accountability. It needs better resourcing so that we have more music, mentors and people, so there’s genuine learning and development taking place all the time. I think there needs to be a widening of the skills base so that I’m not the only person who can do the arrangements. And I think it needs to be owned by [the city] in some sort of way”.

As far as the musicians were concerned, they voiced on on-going commitment to the orchestra where they were prepared and willing to travel with the hope of communicating optimism around the world.

“I’d like to be going around playing everywhere…I’d love that…next thing MD says, “Right. Go and get your passport. We’re going to France, we’re going to Germany... I think this is something we could take to people and say, “We can do this as well”. Forget all about the arguments of today man. Come and play some music”

Discussion

This report presents a summary of findings in relation to community orchestras and their effect upon wellbeing. The research reveals insights as to the operational and interactional nuances, and the cultural values involved.

Analysis of the findings in regard to the current evaluation shows evidence of convergence and divergence between the two orchestras. An emerging pattern indicated that The Notebender’s framework functioned according to more formal structures than the Reggae Orchestra. Whilst this seemed to enhance certain elements of orchestral practice, there was likewise evidence to suggest that a less prescribed approach may foster spontaneity. For example, the Reggae Orchestra was conceived in response to a community member’s request, whereby directly reacting to public need, whereas, formation of The Notebenders evolved from the legacy of Andy Hamilton, a notable musician with established ties to jazz and the local community. Whilst jazz seemed inextricably linked to the Notebender’s cultural and historical identity, particularly regarding disadvantage, the data suggested occasions when such devotion stifled the emergence of an independent identity. As Seddon et al., (2013) point out, whilst it is a core responsibility for orchestras to maintain the historical roots of their music, it is of equal importance to develop new musical cultures capable of speaking to evolving communities.

The ad hoc approach of the Reggae Orchestra’s soloists during performance compared to the more structured approach of The Notebender’s provided another example of formal versus less formal orchestral frameworks, also demonstrating the effect of orchestras upon their audience; although, this is seemingly tempered by the location and setting of the venue, as well as the audiences’

demographics. As observed by the researcher, the energised delivery on behalf of the Reggae Orchestra soloists, notably invigorated the audience, whereas, the tempered delivery by soloists from The Notebenders had a more calming effect upon the audience. This finding may provide insight into how the social relevance and underlying values of musical genres are communicated both visually and aurally by soloists during performances. According to Cook (1998) and Small (1998), this is of relevance since "we can best understand music by being in the middle of it" (Cook, 1998, p.80), suggesting that the soloist plays an important role in locating the music in culture and society. Given that musical genres carry specific socio-cultural connotations, the more soulful delivery of the Notebender's soloists may have communicated to the audience the values and traditions associated with jazz, transforming the music to an embodied experience through a visual interpretation.

An important factor that influenced the audience's receptiveness was undoubtedly the venue, where the free flowing, accessible and bar-lined atmosphere of the hall in which the Reggae Orchestra performed had an infectious effect over the audience. The fact that this venue opened directly to a main street created a casual atmosphere where passers-by could drift in and out however, a notable downside was the inability to see or hear the performance if standing at the back of the hall. Comparably, the seated arrangement for The Notebenders facilitated an excellent view, providing much appreciated comfort for retired members of the audience and an ambience of considered appreciation. Given the Project Managers recognition that an audience is as dedicated to a venue as a musical genre, a challenge for MDs is in choosing a setting that compliments both ambience and repertoire.

In terms of their governance structures, The Notebenders are guided by Board members who provide guidance for their members, a system that facilitates the voices of all representatives and offers, according to their Chairperson, a democratic approach to overseeing the orchestra. Comparably, the MD from the Reggae Orchestra spoke of the need to establish a governance framework that enabled coherence and unity in their future as opposed to fragmentation when opposing voices do not align, as exemplified by the excerpts. A study evaluating the In Harmony Liverpool Research Network (Wilson, 2013) concluded that the balance is in respecting the internal and ingrained values of the orchestra whilst aspiring to empower communities, a vision consistent with the Reggae Orchestra's MD whose aim was for the local city to 'own' the orchestra. Additional incentive for governance comes in response to the financial pressures facing both orchestras where the need to secure their future relies upon facilitative and democratic decision-making.

A key finding to emerge from the data was the significance of networking and external contacts both in forming and maintaining the orchestras. This proved particularly relevant in enabling a connection directly with the community in a way that authentically represented their socio-economic realities. For the Notebenders, such networking came in the form of connections with local schools, a musical outlet that helped ensure their sustainability and to nurture musical development through young people. For the Reggae Orchestra, it was the project manager's connections with local charities and musicians that facilitated the engagement of their MD. According to Larson et al., 2005), since individuals are connected through 'small worlds', attempts to understand the linked nature of different networks are essential if local populations are both to contribute to and benefit from their local communities. As Wellman (2001, cited in Clark, 2007)) summarises, "this forms a somewhat evolutionary narrative of shifts in the organisation of social relations from 'face-to-face', to 'place-to- place', to 'person-centred' contacts and relationships" (p.1). An additional benefit from such engagedness was the sociological friendship that the close bond with the community seemed to nurture, realised through the togetherness and support modelled by the musicians both internally and externally. For example, both MDs spoke of how splinter bands had formed in the local community and how newcomers to the cities migrated to the orchestras through these musical outlets.

Whilst neither orchestra struggled to recruit new members to their orchestras, in fact the difficulty was in censoring musicians playing the same instruments, the transient nature of the Reggae Orchestra's geographical location may well have contributed to its more temporary membership. Nonetheless, with both orchestras, a core group of musicians provided a stable trunk around which satellite musicians rotated. These members appeared to act as identity markers offering support, information and a sense of belonging that anchored the orchestras.

For both The Notebenders and the Reggae Orchestra, funding their activities represented an on-going challenge, especially since their ethos of equality defined how submissions were paid. This last however was appreciated by those interviewed as an accession to the values they esteemed. The Reggae Orchestra's MD was clear that paying for, and being paid for the services they provided was an icon of their worth. Given the local community's disadvantaged status, this may also have represented a defining marker for their self-esteem. Whilst the orchestra had worked hard to secure funding from The People's Health Trust, this did not come without commitment or the accountability to uphold the Trust's principles. Such challenges were overcome primarily by the Reggae Orchestra's MD, whose commitment to the Trust's values were embraced as part of her 'personhood' and consistently modelled to the musicians. Such a pledge was also unswervingly upheld by the Notebenders whose dedication to equality and diversity was such, that when asked as

to their policy on disability, they showed surprise that such a question existed given their unspoken acceptance but their attitude was evident through their acts. Another demonstration of their commitment to equality and diversity was realised through the repertoire of the two MDs, the Reggae Orchestra celebrating difference through their global collection and The Notebenders celebrating unity and camaraderie through the roots of traditional jazz. In fact, of all the qualities modelled by the orchestras, it was equality and diversity which shone out in a heart-warming way, morals upheld by Arts Council England as "the most important issues of our age" (Arts Council England, 2016).

There was some inconsistency however as to how the orchestras conceptualised their identity with The Notebenders characterising themselves as a band rather than an orchestra. According to the Reggae orchestra's MD, their profile as an orchestra was defined simply by the range of instruments included in their ensembles however, future research might explore how the identity of a musical group is influenced by its membership or *vice-versa*. From the observations, it was evident that the musical genre significantly contributed to the orchestras' distinctive characters. For instance, the interviewees voiced virtual reverence for reggae as the embodiment of the virtues they most respected in relation to their Caribbean roots. Such admiration played out as respect for the professional musicians who visited as mentors. As with The Notebenders however, there were occasions when such veneration appeared to humble some of the white stakeholders (e.g. the project manager), who were self-effacing about their contribution to this musical legacy. It is interesting to speculate on the emerging effects of equality and political correctness and the impact such assumptions may have upon the social identity of the orchestra. As Frith (1996) writes, "More recently the rise of identity politics has meant new assertions of cultural essentialism, more forceful arguments than ever that, for example, only African-Americans can appreciate African-American music, that there is a basic difference between male and female composition, that the 'globalization' of a local sound is a form of cultural 'genocide'" (p.108). In the future, making sense of such suppositions may call upon the sensitivity and advanced negotiating skills of Musical Directors.

One way in which both MDs ensured unity amongst the musicians was through shared decision- making where encouraging the contribution of the musicians as to musical improvements appeared to nurture ownership. This was evident both through the enthusiastic responses to the MD's requests but also that the musicians integrated their own suggestions into the music more readily than those proposed by the MDs. The notion of inclusivity and respect was ever present amongst all the orchestra stakeholders and this was primarily modelled by the MDs who, in order to ensure that

all abilities could participate, spent much time re-arranging and simplifying scores for those with less expertise. This tactic resonates with the work of Polly Kahn who writes of 'animated democracy', an approach aimed at engaging traditionally underserved populations and where people of all genders, ethnicities and ages are enabled to take part in community orchestras. Innovative participatory models show how music making contributes to community and social wellbeing and judging by the sharing and supportive atmosphere observed of the two orchestras, it would seem this approach is successful.

The data suggested that the workshop relationships were built on mutual respect; in other words, the musicians learned from the mentors but also, *vice versa.* The most consistent praise of the workshops by the interviewees was the opportunity to exchange learning as this had a sustainable impact upon their future performances. Nonetheless, the orchestra members felt that the mentors sometimes failed to include all levels of expertise and that this sometimes resulted in certain members feeling excluded, or denting their self-esteem. A possible solution may be for the MDs to consult with the mentors prior to their sessions and suggest musical scores that would enable all abilities. Alternatively, guidance may come from the findings, where the MD from The Notebenders sometimes abandoned formal plans for rehearsals and introduced instead, his own workshop which focussed on a particular difficulty (such as rhythm) being experienced by the musicians. Not only did this offer support to all levels but also turned a challenge into fun.

The findings revealed that one of the main challenges for the two MDs was in balancing the differing abilities of the musicians. True to the ethos of equality and non-judgmentalism which appeared to underscore both orchestras, the MDs were keen to ensure that competing egos should not surface to create a hierarchy, since both had experienced the challenges such behaviour introduced. Whilst literature acknowledges that any collective can become aware of their internal differences (Sennett, 1976; Baker, 2007) Baker (2007) believes orchestras to have a hierarchical value system that opposes equal and equitable learning, an important consideration, given that such capitalist ideologies contradict the values of the two orchestras and the cultural ideals they support. As previously mentioned, attempts to manage competitive personalities were assuaged by ensuring that music was arranged to ensure each musician's inclusion and also, in the case of the Reggae Orchestra's MD, making sure that each person who had been recorded for their new CD, no matter their ability, was included on the final version.

For the Reggae Orchestra's MD another challenge was in setting boundaries that deferred from her habitual accepting manner, to 'sergeant majorish', despite acknowledging that these were necessary to achieve certain goals and to protect her own wellbeing. Here the two orchestras

diverged as The Notebender's MD, despite initial hesitancy, was not only comfortable with setting boundaries but considered this to be something the musicians expected from him. Speaking to the interviewees on a casual basis, they uniformly praised the MD for his leadership, especially since the limited space in which the orchestra performed set keeping charge as a priority. The need for diverging leadership styles in music is recognised by Carnicer et al (2015), who consider that this cannot be defined according to one type since the various situations that arise, particularly from groups such as orchestras, demand different types of leadership to enhance the welfare and the efficacy of the group. In addition, the data spoke of both MDs as demonstrating a philanthropic attitude towards the musicians they led and the communities to which they belonged, such that theirs was arguably moral leadership, earned by modelling authenticity and commitment, thereby gaining the trust and respect of the orchestra members. Importantly, a key motive to maintaining her tolerant and equitable personality was, for the Reggae orchestra's MD, that these chimed with the central assumptions of the creative process which, despite the fact that it was fluid, was not abusive or detrimental, a philosophy which in the MD's own words, "demanded a real commitment to truth". Such commitment did not go unnoticed since the MD's genuineness was much admired by the musicians from the Reggae Orchestra and appeared to inspire their loyalty. It is possible that the humanitarian attitude of each MD had somehow permeated the musician's consciousness as when asked of their aspirations, interviewees from both orchestras envisaged a world of peace through music. As the findings testify therefore, the key skills of the MDs could be summarised as sensitivity, authenticity, commitment and good communication.

A potential challenge referred to by the MDs on several occasions during the data gathering period was the topic of their white, middle-class status in the diverse setting of the orchestras and the question as to the effect this incongruity may have. Despite their reservations, this issue was never mentioned by the musicians interviewed, possibly since, from the observations, both MDs appeared to have successfully integrated themselves through the obvious acceptance and respect they modelled towards their members. Similarly, a dedication to equality was evident through their celebration of the various cultural roots represented in the two orchestras. For the Reggae Orchestra, this was demonstrated through the world music chosen as their repertoire, where the origins of each member were paid tribute. Equally, for The Notebender's MD, his loyalty was manifest through efforts to engage with different cultural groups resident in the city. Furthermore, acceptance of the potential class divide was bridged by the MDs facilitating participatory leadership. For example, if the MDs were unavailable for a rehearsal, and no other conductors were available to replace them, members of the orchestra were called upon to fill the breach, and their talents

recognised as bringing a fresh perspective to the music as well as providing an opportunity for the musicians to develop their confidence.

From the observations it seemed the musicians were unmistakably having a good time, in a way that overcame social barriers, welcomed inclusion and provided a warm and welcoming space for newcomers, as the field notes testified;

"The people in the band are sociable with each other. They are smiley. When a new person joins the others, a band member stops the orchestra and says, "This is….They've come to observe what we're all about". Everyone turns to [the newcomer] and says hello. The new member smiles and looks pleased. Without further ado, a stand is set up for [them] and [they] join in. They are automatically assumed to play in the concert the next day".

In addition, the musicians showed their support of each other by their obvious enthusiasm for the soloists who, before and after performing, were slapped on the back, cheered and praised. This sense of bonhomie had a contagious effect, as the researcher wrote of the Reggae Orchestra,

"It is impossible to remain unmoved by the orchestra's happiness and energy which reaches to every corner of the room. Before long my foot starts tapping and I hang over the balustrade with other members of the audience, clapping to the beat".

Such feelings of wellbeing were echoed by the audience, and exemplified by the comments of a retired man for whom The Notebenders generated a warm atmosphere that provided a reason for him to get out of the house. Others referred to the orchestra as "supportive, encouraging and like family", referring once again to the sense of kinfolk common to the orchestras, an attitude that research has found to bridge social stigma and challenge public perceptions (Reynolds et al., 2016). As for the orchestra members, many spoke of a sense of self-worth, improved by the warmth offered by fellow musicians and a lack of criticism, where being valued brought a sense of belonging they had hitherto not experienced. An additional benefit referred to by the members and of particular relevance to the disadvantaged neighbourhoods they served, was that the orchestras offered a social niche for people on benefits, stuck at home, and for whom English was not their first language.

The health benefits associated with participating in musical activities are well known (Blacking, 1995; Carr et al., 2013; Clift et al., 2009; Daykin et al., 2013, 2016; Fritz et al., 2009), ranging from the psychological (Carr et al., 2013) to the physical (Hanser, 2014; Daykin, 2013, Daykin and Bunt, 2012; De Nora, 2000). However, these findings suggest that a vulnerable group can self-affirm their sense of worth through their membership of an orchestra and also that orchestras hold the potential to modify the perceptions of the community in relation to marginalised groups. With heightened levels of self-esteem also linked to good health (Bandura, 1997; Kruse, 2012; Taylor et al., 2011; Twenge &

Campbell, 2001), how musicians from community orchestras conceptualise their worth is an important determinant of their wellbeing now, and in the future. Research (Coffman, 2002, 2007; Coffman & Adamek, 1999) identifies that a positive self-concept is partly the result of the personal, musical and social growth promoted through membership of community ensembles. This suggests that community ensembles may provide an important role as a support outlet for socially excluded or marginalised members of the community for whom flagging self-esteem is a recognised problem.

In terms of the orchestras' wellbeing, the Reggae Orchestra's MD was clear that professional governance and a supportive network was needed to sustain them in the future, both since the responsibilities she encountered were sometimes stressful but also to ensure the essence of the creative spirit was preserved. Although articulated slightly differently, this sentiment was echoed by a musician who feared that the orchestra's popularity may cause them to stray from their community roots towards gentrification.

Providing a framework that affords a supportive framework but is also true to the creative arts, is not easy and surfaces throughout this report in many different guises. The Board system adopted by the Notebenders, where the voice of the members was represented, paves the way towards democratic management and may provide a template for generalizable use by other community orchestras.

Conclusion

Whilst community orchestras provide a space where musicians can rehearse and perform musical repertoires they are simultaneously driven by a developing sense of connectivity and responsibility towards their communities. Changing demographics are creating diverse cultural memberships prompting orchestras to consider new programmes that represent their various cultural roots. In this way, they contribute to the dialogue of healthy communities and the wellbeing of local residents. Commitment to such values by MDs enables collaboration and empowerment supporting the notion that there is a reciprocal relationship between the provision of cultural experiences and the wellbeing of society.

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