

FINDING YOUR VOICE

EXAMPLES OF HOW WORKING WITH MUSIC
CREATORS AND MUSICIANS CAN ANIMATE
MUSEUMS AND THEIR COLLECTIONS

Michael Betteridge – composer

MDN Forum

Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle

Thurs 26 Feb 2026



A LITTLE ABOUT ME...





Musician – instrumentalist or singer in any genre who may **perform** original music they have created, or been part of creating, or they may just perform music created by other people



Music creator – an individual who solely, or with others, **creates** elements (or all) of the music. This term is used by certain funders and is a genre-fluid term applied to both composers of classical music and those working in more ‘popular’ and other genres.



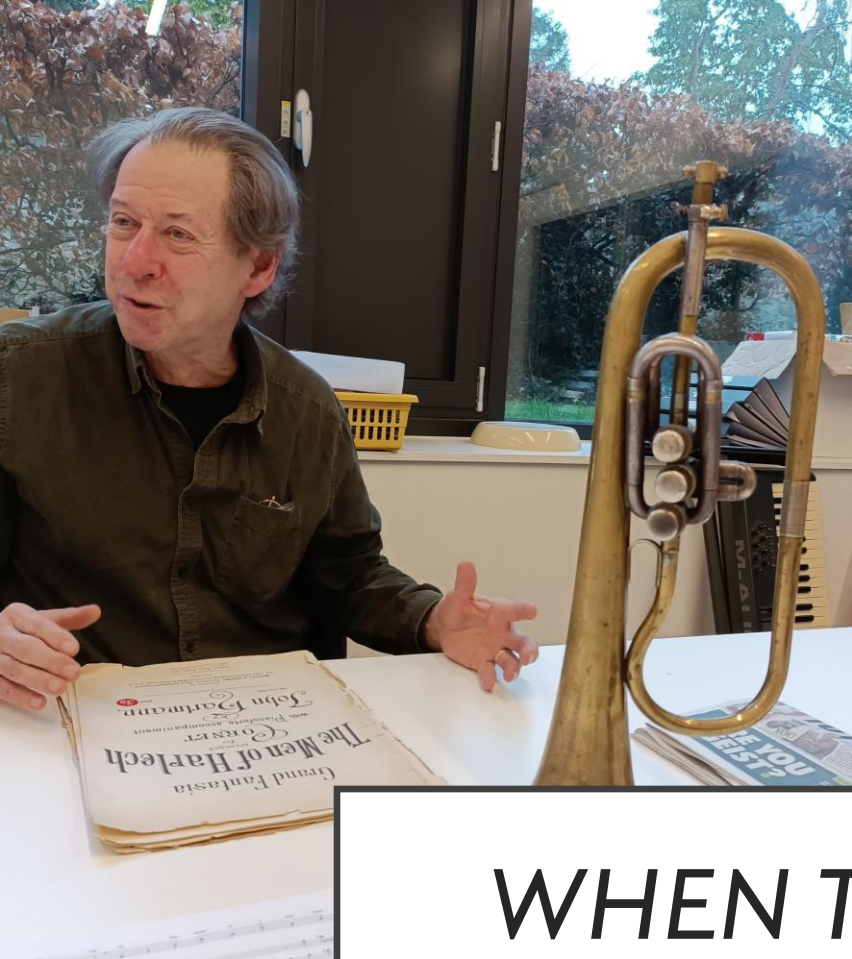
Composer – a music creator who, most often, will create classical music.

MUSICIAN VS. COMPOSER VS. MUSIC CREATOR (DEFINITIONS)

SOME OF THE MUSEUM AND HERITAGE PROJECTS I'VE WORKED ON

- ***The Underground Suite*** with the Cobweb Orchestra with performances at:
 - Victoria Tunnels, Newcastle; York Cold War Bunker; Honister Slate Mine, nr. Keswick; Cleveland Ironstone Mining Museum
- Songwriting facilitator at Manchester Jewish Museum
- ***Beer, Biscuits & Bulbs*** – an orchestral piece for Aldworth Philharmonic Orchestra using oral history recordings from Reading Museum





WHEN THE BRAZEN BANDS SHALL PLAY

WHEN
THE
BRAZEN
BANDS
SHALL
PLAY





IMPACTS
AND
OUTCOMES

- **Community engagement**
 - Working closely with the Dundee Instrumental Band
 - c.60 young people in two local primary schools engaged in two composition workshops with students from University of St Andrew's
- **Partnerships**
 - New partnership developed with University of St Andrew's Music department (who organised the second performance of the work)
- **Publicity**
 - Articles in *The Herald* and other specialist outlets.
 - Positive celebration of Dundee's history
- **Funding**
 - Funded by IWM's NOW 14-18 Legacy Fund
- **Using the collection**
 - Instruments were reconditioned for the project
 - Film is now featured as part of the ship's collection



THE SUNDAY BOYS AT THE WHITAKER, ROSSENDALE

- The Sunday Boys is an open access low voiced LGBTQ+ choir based in the city of Manchester
- We celebrate the diversity of LGBTQ+ experiences through commissioning a range of music creators (and other artists)
- We look to challenge preconceived notions of what community choral singing can be.
- This often involves performing in ‘non-traditional spaces’, presenting work that is not ‘concert’ or ‘gig’ based, and partnering with a range of non-arts organisations.

BENEATH
THE
BLINDFOLD
MINI-DOC





IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES

- **New audiences**
 - 33% of audience had not visited The Whitaker before
 - 72% of audience had not attended a Sunday Boys event before
- **LGBTQ+ cultural/musical offer in rural area**
- **Research and development opportunity**
- **Relationship/partnership building**
 - The choir returned in Dec. 2025 to present a similar immersive event with increased audiences (and no external funding – previously supported by Arts Council England)



OPERA NORTH YOUTH
CHORUS AND HOLOCAUST
CENTRE NORTH

- ***Standing Together*** was commissioned by Leeds City Council for Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2020
- The result was a 30-minute musical work featuring new music and lyrics devised by the young people, as well as existing music pertinent to the occasion
- Holocaust Centre North provided key support across the project including facilitating a visit to the centre for the young people to give them the information they might need to start devising a creative response.
- The young people also visited the Czech Republic, in particular the Theresienstadt ghetto, for further research and a deeper understanding.

OPERA
NORTH
YOUTH
CHORUS
PERFORM
WIEGALA





IMPACTS
AND
OUTCOMES

- **Greater knowledge and understanding of the experiences of the Holocaust**
 - For both young people involved in co-creating the work, and audiences experiencing the work in Leeds and Gateshead
- **Using history and collections as a starting point/stimulus for co-created work with communities/participants**
 - Aspects of the curation of the collection impacted the narrative and shape of the final work



WHY WORK WITH MUSIC CREATORS?

- Music can animate an event and/or a particular space
- Music can be created as a response to an item in your collection or even feature instruments (or other items) from your collection
- Music allows for participation at many different access points:
 - Lyric-creation
 - Melody creation
 - Performing (esp. choirs)
- Provide reflections of a particular lived experience on your collection and/or ways of working/presentation, ie looking through your collection and/or spaces through a LGBTQ+ lens
- Reach new and different audiences
- Income generation, either through ticket sales and/or funding for specific projects (PRSF for example)
- Develop new partnerships
- Develop new ways of working

CONTACT AND LINKS

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