

SPOTLIGHT ON...

LIZ LANE

COMPOSER LIZ LANE ENJOYS INVOLVEMENT WITH A CHARITY CALLED OPEN UP MUSIC, WHICH AIMS TO INCREASE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF ORCHESTRAS TO YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES.

BRITISH BANDSMAN EDITOR MARK GOOD FINDS OUT MORE ABOUT HER LINKS WITH THE ORGANISATION AND ASKS THE COMPOSER ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF LIFE IN LOCKDOWN ON HER CREATIVE PRACTICE.

Tell me about how you became involved with Open Up Music.

LL: I was at a concert given in aid of Clarence Adoo, who told me about an event the next evening given by three new school orchestras at Bristol Beacon foyer (then Colston Hall) with which Open Up Music had been working. It was the first ever concert and I was blown away by the way in which the orchestras re-interpreted pre-existing music, and the combination of traditional instruments and technology.

I had recently joined the University of the West of England (Computer Science and Creative Technology Department) as a senior lecturer and was allocated some research time. As my role was in music technology, I thought this was an ideal opportunity to find out more and collaborate with Open Up Music. I shadowed Barry Farrimond (CEO) and Doug Bott (musical director) at several schools over the next few months. I was then able to re-work a brass band piece, *Silver Rose*, for the first performance of Open Up Music's South West Open Youth Orchestra, the UK's first disabled-led regional orchestra for young musicians. The musicians performed with Lydbrook Band, University of the West of England Singers (a choir of around 120), Barry Farrimond (narrator), conducted by Ian Holmes at Bristol Cathedral.

My research time also enabled me to co-facilitate the performance with Ian, who was then director of the centre for performing arts at UWE, and to work with Doug to create sounds for instruments like the Clarion and Linnstrument, which blended with the brass band. This first performance of SWOYO was featured on BBC's *The One Show*.

I continued my involvement as composer in association for a couple of years and am now honoured to be a trustee.



Lydbrook Band, conducted by Ian Holmes, performing *Silver Rose*.

How does the organisation assist young people living with disabilities?

LL: Open Up Music's mission is to make orchestras accessible to young disabled people. Founded in 2007, it is unique among SEN/D arts organisations in its sharply defined and clearly articulated focus on orchestras. The organisation has two strategically connected programmes of work. One is Open Orchestras, which supports music education hubs, arts organisations and schools to create orchestras that are accessible to young disabled people.

The other is the National Open Youth Orchestra, empowering some of the UK's most talented young disabled musicians to fulfil their musical potential.

What can bands do to become more switched on to the matter of

widening access to those living with disabilities?

LL: I would encourage bands to take a look at the really useful EDI page on the Brass Bands England website: www.bbe.org.uk/what-we-do/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-ed
I'm contributing to a BBE round table event on the matter, which is taking place online.

The past few months have been strange for everyone, with the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions. How have you found this period and how has it changed your creative practice?

LL: Like many, it has been very challenging at times and my heart goes out to all those who have been so adversely affected. Creatively, I've had to think differently, not least writing music for online performance – and I miss live music, of course. I've actually been incredibly busy with lots of writing projects which I'm grateful for – and I'm very glad to have Zoom!

Tell me about some of the projects in which you have been involved over the past few months.

LL: These have included miniature songs with soprano Belinda Evans as part of the Bluebird Collective. We wanted to bring some joy and happiness at this time. We collaborated with Tom Hutchinson and animator Gary Andrews to create *Darkest Night* (words by Andy Rashleigh), which received more than 9,000 views on social media.

River of Time with Lydbrook Band has also been a special project, co-created with perceptions of time during lockdown from the band. Audio was put together by Lukas Greiwe and animation by Gary Andrews, with poem and narration by Rhys Trimble. I've also finally got my YouTube channel up and running. Tonight



Liz Lane's *Rivers of Time* included animations and narration.

(Thursday) at 6pm is the premiere of *Family Band* (including kitchen percussion), commissioned by NYMAZ in association with BBE.

As a composer, do you feel the events of the past few months have influenced your creative output, and may continue to do so?

LL: Like many composers it has been more challenging without the highs and lows of everyday interaction and events. I've had to find a different way to approach writing - getting out on my bike is often good or going to the seaside. There's something about the wildness of the sea and beach! I'm very busy with academic work too, so working with the students is often inspiring. One of my lockdown projects was to teach myself video editing and I'm also



Composer Liz Lane has undertaken various lockdown music projects.

learning Italian.

What have you made of the way bands (and other musical ensembles) have rapidly embraced technology to retain – and even increase – engagement with their members and their audiences?

LL: I think it's fantastic, a totally new way of working and great to be able to create music in this way during these times. It's potentially opening up the music to new audiences all over the world by the power of technology.

I think the skills learned could complement live performance in the future and I've loved embracing the technology. I don't think it could ever overshadow the power and thrill of live music making, though.

To what extent do you feel the events of the past few months might change the way bands engage with their audiences, even once the pandemic becomes part of history?

LL: It's hard to tell at the moment but I think there's huge potential to harness the new (worldwide) audiences found from online performances. Perhaps also a time to take stock and reset for the future when it is possible to rehearse and perform?

How are the coming weeks and months shaping up?

LL: I've got some exciting projects coming up - including a new commission for Hepworth Band to celebrate the life and work of sculptor, Barbara Hepworth. Overall though, of course, I can't wait until we can all get together and play live music again.