



## **Jersey Music Association Report to the 2021/22 AGM by the Chair, Francis Murton**

The setting up and development of the JMA is an interesting and exciting prospect for Jersey. For a long time it has been felt that music needed a more united and coordinated approach to become a real force for positivity in Jersey.

The JMA's social media platforms have a following of nearly 500 members. The formal membership of the association currently stands at 120, and this number includes the leaders of all but one of the island's music schools, as well as many of the larger instrumental ensembles and musical groups. A conservative estimate of the number of musicians we currently reach is just over 1200.

### **COVID19 PANDEMIC**

The Government's lack of engagement with musicians during the early days of the pandemic was the catalyst for the formation of the Association.

Led by Nicki Kennedy, and supported by Annette Blanchet and Leila Begg, members of the association used their professional expertise to challenge and guide the government advisors to support the re-engagement of music in schools and the wider island. This advice and support was formally acknowledged by the Assistant Medical Officer and the JMA were pleased to play a crucial role in this process and have become well-respected for their knowledge and expertise.

The legacy of this dialogue continues, with specific reference to singing being made in December 2021 when COVID-19 restrictions were re-introduced.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION**

As part of the process of setting up the JMA formally Francis Murton was appointed as the Chair, with Philippa Le Feuvre as the first secretary and Annette Blanchet as the first treasurer. The officers have been supported by a team of 12 committee members for all or part of the year:

William Millow – Jersey Festival Choir

John Bowley – JCG

Leila Begg – Progressive School

Charles Mauleverer – freelance composer

Gitte-Maj Donoghue – Beaulieu and Vocal Trust

Philip Le Claire – Saxophonist and bandsman

David Keenan – Songwriters Society

Nicki Kennedy – singing teacher

Paul Vane – Inside Job

Scott Livingstone – Theatre Workshop

Daniel Sharpe- Songwriters Society

### **ARTS STRATEGY**

During 2021 the Government invited public consultation on a new Draft Arts Strategy. In addition to the many members who offered comments on a personal level, the JMA offered its own paper to support the draft, collated from comments from the committee and from members of the Facebook group.

Following on from the consultation sector specific interest groups, including the JMA, were invited to online meetings arranged by the consultants from Tom Fleming's organisation. The Strategy was approved by the States of Jersey in December 2021 and is welcomed by the JMA. It sets out an ambitious plan to ensure the arts (including music) are an integral part of island life, including support and funding.

Key to the success of the Arts Strategy is the **Jersey Creative Island Partnership**. This comprises working groups of stakeholders to advise and discuss the implementation of the Strategy. The JMA is involved in this Partnership and will continue to ensure that the Island's musical community is represented.

## **MOVING FORWARD**

Over the coming year we are looking to:

- broaden and grow our active membership;
- continue our engagement with Government; and
- support issues that are important to local musicians

Many issues have been raised which the Association would like to look into. Work on some of these have started and will continue during 2022. These include:

- **Entertainment Industry and Fees**
  - There has been a major decline in the number of live music venues, and therefore the opportunity for both amateur and professional musicians to perform.
  - Busking opportunities continue to reduce
  - Musicians are experiencing vastly different rates of pay, and in some cases are being expected to play for free.
- **Music Education**
  - Education is key to ensuring the island's musical culture and the long term success of the Arts Strategy.
  - The removal of universal free music education have really been felt in the recent years.
  - The current system appears to be a lottery, relying on the passion and commitment of individual teachers and schools.
- **2023 Year of the Arts**
  - This was proposed in the Draft Arts Strategy and is something the JMA is supportive of should it go ahead.
  - It is important that music is given fair and equal prominence when planning the year

In addition to these the Association is promoting 2022 as a Year of Song. The concept is to celebrate the power of singing and showcase the incredible depth and breadth of singing talent in the island. Local singers and singing groups from all genres are being encouraged to put on an event as part of the year. As part of the year the Association is also keen to bring singing into interesting venues across the island which might not traditionally be available as performance spaces. The Association hopes this concept might continue, with future years focussing on other genres and ensemble types.

## **CONCLUSION**

During the year the JMA has become a trusted point of reference for musical expertise, as well as providing valuable support to members. The circumstances of 2021 and the needs which led to its creation has meant the Association has a strong choral core, however as we start to address other issues we hope that our membership will broaden too to support our aim which, to conclude, are as follows -

1. To foster communication between all those involved in music in Jersey
2. To be a voice for the musical community in Jersey
3. To engage with Government on all matters related to music in Jersey
4. To support the development of music, musical opportunities and musicians in Jersey
5. To build a positive framework for the future of music in Jersey.