

MUSIC. THEATRE. WALES.

**Strategic Equalities Plan
August 2021**

13.9.21

At Music Theatre Wales (MTW) we are committed to achieving greater equality as an organisation and as an employer, and we aim to ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment as a consequence of having a protected characteristic. We believe that this is a matter of social justice and human rights, and that quotas don't help to effect change unless cultures change within organisations. And change needs to happen throughout our organisation – in the work we make and the people who make it; the people we reach; the board of trustees and our staff.

Our mission is to present opera as a dynamic and contemporary artform that addresses the present and does not simply rely on the repertoire and the practices of the past. We want to remove the structural and social barriers that have prevented many artists from working in opera, especially as creators of new work. Our mission going forward is to work with artists who have been ignored or excluded from opera to create work that speaks to contemporary society and which engages a new audience. Our belief is that unless we work with artists who will bring new stories and a different approach to music, theatre and performance, then opera will fail to become the dynamic contemporary form it so clearly has the capacity to be.

This Strategic Equality Plan demonstrates MTW's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and supports the seven well-being goals of the Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Company has a separate Welsh Language Policy which is signed off by the board annually.

Our Plan

Our Board

We currently have ten Trustees, 4 women (one of whom is also Chair) and six men. Two of the men are due to retire at the end of 2021.

We plan to develop the diversity of our Board further, to include greater representation of people from more diverse backgrounds and people with disabilities. We will strive to achieve and maintain gender balance and we aim to ensure that at all times, at least two members of the Board are Welsh speakers.

Action: *We are tasking a board member to take the lead on achieving greater diversity within the Board, covering gender, race, disability, identity and language.*

Action: *To achieve greater diversity, we have been engaging with a wide range of organisations and campaigns which exist to ensure that the arts sector plays a vital role in creating a more equitable society. We need to build on this work.*

Our New Directions programme is bringing us into contact with Black, Asian and ethnic minority artists and we are developing new local and international networks for those artists. We hope this will bring greater interest in our work and engender more support from communities with whom we have had no contact in the past.

Action: *We are developing a regular training pattern for our Board starting with subconscious bias training in December 2021.*

Our workforce

We work with a minimal staff team of three employees (one full-time, two part-time) and two freelancers who lead on the artistic and producing side of our new programmes – New Directions and Future Directions. This makes a central team of five: two male and three female. We have one disabled member of staff, one speaks Welsh, one is Black.

Our next production, *Violet*, by Tom Coult and Alice Birch, has a creative team which includes three women, all of whom come from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Taking advice from an external body, our recent recruitment process for Music Creators for our Future Directions programme has been delivered in a new way with an aim to maximise openness and accessibility to the widest range of artists: An open call using as many social media platforms as possible and engaging with other networks, which clearly indicated that we want to work with people from contrasting musical and cultural backgrounds; an open Webinar which explained the programme and why MTW was running it which included a diverse panel; one-to-one surgeries for potential applicants who wanted to ask further questions to help them frame their application; an initial sifting process and anonymising of applications by a person who is not involved in the interviews. The interview panel of three people included one Welsh speaker and one Black artist.

Action: *We will continue to review the recruitment processes we use to attract new staff. We will continue to connect with external organisations who already employ and work with a diverse workforce, both locally and UK-wide; we will consult with non-white colleagues; we will explore alternative methods of reaching people through a variety of social media platforms, working with organisations who already have established networks with diverse communities.*

Action: *We will refer to the Diversity Recruitment and workforce development toolkit provide by Arts Council England via Clear Assured.*

Action: *Through New Directions we will begin the process of working with composers and fellow creators who are new to the company and new to opera.*

Action: *We will balance the employment of creative teams for our performance work according to their artistic vision and the balance of equalities across our work, including female directors, designers and conductors, black and ethnically diverse artists and disabled creatives.*

Action: *We will continue working with a casting consultant who has a reputation for supporting the casting of diverse singers. Whenever possible we will include at least one non-white person on the auditioning panel.*

Action: *We will recruit backstage staff through established professional networks such as Mandy, and will put increased pressure on the training institutions to support the development of a more diverse stage management and backstage workforce. As we begin to employ more diverse creative teams, we will also work with them to recruit the support teams they need, which will inevitably lead to new and more diverse contacts for MTW.*

Action: *For every production in our Live Performance strand, we aspire to include a minimum of one Welsh speaker. Whenever we are recruiting, we will actively promote the vacancies across Welsh platforms and networks.*

Action: *Core staff are receiving two rounds of training during 2021 in EDI and subconscious bias. Further training will be provided on a regular basis.*

The art we make

In future, our work will not focus exclusively on the development of the artform, but on exploring how new opera and music theatre can engage with a much wider audience. At the centre of this will be a significant change to the artists we work with and the nature of the work we make, and this will be driven by two aims:

- To work with artists from different cultural backgrounds
- To work in Welsh as well as English

Action: *Our work will undergo significant change – in its musical language, the stories we tell, the relevance of the issues our work explores, the way our work is presented and the audience we reach.*

Action: *We will be creating more digital work, enabling many more people to see it, especially those who are unable to attend a live performance. Our digital work will not primarily focus on the capture and relay of live performance; it will become a creative platform in its own right. With New Directions we will create work for entirely new audiences, many of whom may not (yet) attend conventional live work.*

The people we reach

Action: *As we develop the range of professional artists we work with and the audiences we reach out to, we will also run a new programme – Future Directions - which will bring young people into contact with professional artists and support and encourage the creativity of the young people involved. Future Directions will also support the professional artists recruited for each project in that they will benefit in terms of their own skills and aspirations. In turn we hope this will contribute to the future creative direction of MTW.*