



OLYMPIAS

Music
foundation

Olympias Music Foundation

Annual Report 2024-25

THANK YOU FOR A BRILLIANT YEAR

Celebrating 10 years of Olympias



It has been a wonderful year for Olympias Music Foundation as we celebrate a decade of delivering exceptional music education. As you will see in this Annual Report, we are now providing free one-to-one music lessons to 180 children every week during school term time. The charity has had an incredible period of growth from 125 children only last year. Thanks to the support of generous individuals, companies, and UK trusts and foundations we have increased our reach in line with a growing demand for music education in Manchester.

Since Dr Jo Yee Cheung founded Olympias Music Foundation in 2015, we have delivered a staggering 41,185 free one-to-one music lessons to children primarily living in Longsight, and engaged hundreds more through workshops and performances.

This report provides key updates on our projects during the past year – including our flagship programme, Learn to Play, which has seen some incredible successes with 17 students passing exams. We introduced lessons for three non-western instruments, and watched our young musicians take centre stage and grow in confidence at three Olympias concerts. As part of our Recycled Orchestra project, wonderful luthiers and woodwind specialists repaired 100 instruments – a delight for all our children and young people. Our music facilitators worked with 115 pupils as part of our SEND programme, Musical Horizons. And to finish of the year, eight exceptional pupils went on the annual Music and Mountains trip to Snowdonia, where they had music lessons in nature in the morning and pursued outdoor activities in the afternoon.

No doubt you will agree that with thanks to all the charity's supporters and our incredible team, we have had a wonderful year and we cannot wait to share the achievements of our dedicated children and young people over the next 12 months.

We are grateful you are part of our community and I look forward to seeing you at a future Olympias event.

Petra van den Houten
Interim CEO (Maternity Cover)

IMPACT IN 2024-25



 **180**

Children and young people experiencing low income received free weekly music lessons and own an instrument – 55 new participants!

3,775

Free 1:1 instrumental lessons delivered by professional freelance musicians



534



free tickets distributed to Olympias families for concerts at BBC, RNCM, Manchester Baroque, The Bridgewater Hall and Co-op Live

WE HOSTED



- 3** Community concerts
- 7** Ensemble Days
- 9** Collaborations with other orgs
- 1** Community Iftar

115 

Additional children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) enjoyed weekly music workshops

17



Young musicians undertook and passed a formal music examination this year, with 9 Merits and 3 Distinctions

Olympias over a decade...

15

young people accepted onto the RNCM's Pathfinder and Young Artist schemes

200

children and adults attended choirs, orchestras and SEND workshops

20

freelance music teachers are provided with regular employment

50+

community concerts hosted for all to enjoy

608

children and young people have benefitted from our projects since 2015

FEEDBACK FROM OUR YOUNG PEOPLE



- 98%** of children report actively enjoying their instrumental lessons
- 82%** say that music lessons have improved their levels of personal confidence
- 96%** report positive relationships and enjoy working with their teacher
- 91%** say weekly music lessons have a positive impact on their emotions and improve their mental health
- 88%** have experienced new opportunities as a direct result of their music education with Olympias



David performs at the Olympias Summer Concert in July 2025.

David (15) has been learning with Olympias since he was around eight years old, and with thanks to our partnership work, has been accepted onto the Royal Northern College of Music's (RNCM) Pathfinder scheme to explore his musical future even further.

David says, "Before I'd be a lot more reclusive, a lot more reluctant to play. I feel like all the things that we've done in Olympias, like playing publicly, Pathfinders – it's helped me to be myself more and be more confident in public and presenting myself.

"I enjoy each week, you can see the progress you're making and that builds and builds until you can play the whole piece... I felt proud [at orchestra] when I could play out confidently, play all the right notes, you know – be successful in the music."

LEARN TO PLAY



Learn to Play is our flagship programme that provides exceptional free weekly music lessons to children and young people experiencing low income in Manchester. We are delighted to have achieved our goal to increase the number of children and young people to 180 in 2025 – nearly doubling the number in 2022.

Our aim is to remove all barriers so that young people aged 6–18 can enjoy a musical future and the wide-ranging personal and social benefits of learning an instrument. All children receive their own instrument and individual or small group teaching for as long as they wish. We also fund their development, should they wish to take exams or further their musical education.

We work with the same families over many years to build long-term trust, encourage consistent musical learning and developing lifelong skills. With over 90% of participants from a global majority background, Learn to Play also helps to nurture a more representative future of diverse young people entering prestigious musical institutions.

The programme is much more than music lessons. It encompasses all weekly music lessons, ensembles, choirs and orchestras, as well as our Composer's Club delivered in partnership with the Royal Northern College of Music, three termly concerts each year at Olympias, and a vast range of wraparound cultural experiences we provide for free. **Learn to Play builds cultural capital that will serve young people throughout their lives.**

I really like the venues that Olympias put in place because it brings about more connection. You get to learn about new things and you're put in an environment where you're able to learn and gain from the experience along the way, so that's really good.

– Adora, 16

41,185

free one-to-one music lessons delivered since 2015

THE RECYCLED ORCHESTRA



With support from The Oglesby Charitable Trust, we were able to deliver our new Recycled Orchestra project this year. Each year, thousands of musical instruments go to landfill as the cost of repair is so expensive. Unwanted musical instruments present a recycling challenge as they are typically made of high-value materials such as rare woods and metals. However, with regular maintenance and repair, these instruments can last for decades.

As part of this project, seven wonderful luthiers got together to start the repair of 70 string instruments at Manchester Museum in March. This fabulous community event invited children to see their instruments being repaired, and tutors were taught 'first aid' skills for string instruments.

This project has saved many instruments from going to landfill and resulted in a wonderful online resource for teachers around the country to help save more instruments. It also gained national interest with many news stories, including making the front page of [Positive News](#).

"I love how the wood looks, and the deep bellows it makes."

Jason, 17, is learning the cello – but his 110-year-old cello has a large crack on the front that keeps opening. It is one of the high-priority instruments for repair.

100
donated and
repaired
instruments
in our new
Recycled
Orchestra
for 2025

GLOBAL MUSIC TEACHER TRAINING

Our Global Music Teacher Training programme launched this year with support from Arts Council England. We have three teachers learning valuable teaching skills and delivering lessons in harmonium, santoor and djembe. 41 children and young people have been learning a non-western instrument to date, with some performing at our termly concerts.

Our aim is to broaden and diversify Western models of music education by providing skilled, inspirational and much-needed relatable musical role models for young people from global majority backgrounds.

We are supporting a PhD student placement, funded in partnership with the RNCM and Northern Consortium Charity, to assess the project outcomes and share them with the research community.



MUSICAL HORIZONS

Musical Horizons is our programme for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Olympias delivers weekly music and movement workshops for 115 children with SEND at St John Vianney and Rodney House SEND schools in Manchester.

Music has such powerful benefits, helping participants to improve communication, interaction and self-expression. Our workshops increase motivation and nurture physical activity and coordination and have a particularly powerful impact with children who struggle with speech or are non-verbal.



Musical Horizons also gives young people a chance to step out of school and into cultural venues. This year, participants enjoyed two bespoke visits to Manchester Museum and a special creative workshop with the Hallé. One young person also took part in a supported work experience role at Manchester Museum as part of the project.

MUSIC AND MOUNTAINS



Each year, a group of children and young people on our Learn to Play programme take part in Music and Mountains. This week-long residency takes place in Snowdonia, where participants receive individual music lessons in the morning and enjoy outdoor activities in the afternoon.

The residency was originally inspired during the COVID-19 lockdowns by the lack of green space in Longsight and the negative health implications of this on the area's young people. It is designed to be a source of inspiration for our young musicians, many of whom experience outdoor pursuits for the first time.

Noa, pictured above, is seven years old and plays the cello. She said of Music and Mountains: "When I went to sleep I saw the stars, they are so pretty... The countryside is the best part of it, like there are no bad gases or anything! In Manchester it's all about electronics and everything... so thank you!"



This year's trip saw eight children aged 7-10 take part, all of whom gained new inspiration from nature for their artistic development in addition to their usual instrumental lessons. Above all, a lot of fun was had and some beautiful friendships were made.

Moshin, pictured left, is eight years old and plays trumpet: "My first favourite thing was making the bow and arrows. My second most favourite thing was going in the water. The music that I liked was the one where we wore hats [improvised piece] - that was my favourite music piece!"

SUPPORT THE NEXT 10 YEARS

We rely on the generosity of our funders and supporters to make our work possible. As a registered charity we are incredibly grateful to all the organisations and individuals featured on the next page who supported us last year.

We know there is so much more we can do. Olympias is the only charity in Manchester providing this level of exceptional music education, delivered in the heart of the community to children and young people experiencing low income.

Will you help us realise our vision of championing diversity in music and help more young people enjoy a musical future? Your support will ensure that Olympias' children and young people can grow in confidence, raise their aspirations and flourish – whatever path they choose in life.

Can you support us in 2025–26?

We have ambitions to deepen connections with our children and young people this year through continued and sustained learning, brand new small ensembles, a new Youth Board and workshops to develop life skills for the future.

Whether you would like to make a one-off or regular donation, or would like your organisation to support our work – we would love to hear from you. To find out more about how you can support us, please contact: info@olympiasmusic.com



THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS

Funders

- The Albert and Eugenie Frost Music Trust CIO
- Arts Council England
- Baker Family Charitable Trust
- Bloxham Charitable Trust
- The Boris Karloff Charitable Foundation
- The Camelia Trust
- The Casey Trust
- The Eric and Margaret Kinder Charitable Trust Award
- The Gisela Graham Foundation
- The Golsoncott Foundation
- Greater Manchester High Sheriff's Police Trust
- The Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation
- The Houghton Dunn Charitable Trust
- The Ida Carroll Trust
- The Maingot Charitable Trust
- The Marchus Trust
- The Martyn Bracegirdle Charitable Foundation
- National Lottery Community Fund
- Northern Consortium Charity
- The Oglesby Charitable Trust
- One Manchester Community Fund
- Peter Kershaw Trust
- Postcode Neighbourhood Trust
- The Radcliffe Trust
- The Shears Foundation
- The Victoria Wood Foundation

Corporate supporters

- Atelier Crescendo
- Big Yellow Storage Manchester
- Creamline Dairies
- Eversheds Sutherland
- John Pass Jewellers
- LOVE Creative
- Northern Trains Limited
- November Productions
- Viet Shack

Individual supporters

- Andrew and Deborah Roberts
- Carole Nash OBE
- Will Fulford-Jones

Partners

- The Bridgewater Hall
- Co-op Live
- Dean Trust Ardwick School
- Forsyth Music Shop
- The Hallé
- Hope Mill Theatre
- Longsight Library
- Manchester Collective
- Manchester Jazz Festival
- Manchester Museum
- Rodney House School
- Royal Northern College of Music
- St John Vianney RC School
- University of Manchester

Olympias Music Foundation is a charity
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