

World famous cellist Julian Lloyd Webber joins City Hall drive to improve young Londoners' music education

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Mayor of London Boris Johnson today (24 October) announced plans to increase music participation and improve music education for young people in London.

At a breakfast meeting attended by opinion formers from the music education world, musicians, music practitioners and the Mayor's Director of Culture Policy Munira Mirza explored how the Greater London Authority (GLA) can work with other agencies to encourage more young people to make music and further their musical interests and skills.

Although many excellent initiatives for affordable music exist in parts of London, the Mayor is keen to build on these and develop a more coordinated approach. This work will tie in with the Mayor's new cultural strategy that is due to be launched later this year.

As part of this strategy, the Mayor is initiating a 'musical instrument amnesty' in conjunction with Time Out. The aim of No Strings Attached is to enable as many young people as possible to have access to a musical instrument by encouraging Londoners to donate their unused instruments.

Boris Johnson said:

"I can think of no better place than London, with our world class facilities and thriving live music scene to engage young people in music. In our concert halls and night clubs, our opera houses and community centres, there are countless opportunities to inspire all musical tastes.

"I'd like to see a significant improvement in formal and informal music teaching across the capital, for the classical violinist and urban DJ, the folk guitarist and rock drummer alike. I'm looking forward to seeing London schools, boroughs and arts organisations working together in greater harmony to greet the 2012 Games with a veritable fanfare. "

Munira Mirza said:

"It's a tragedy that so many young people across London are denied the opportunity to learn about music – whether it's classical, folk, jazz or any other genre – simply because their parents cannot afford to buy an instrument or pay for their tuition. The No Strings Attached scheme is a first step towards making great music accessible to everyone, regardless of their background."

Julian Lloyd Webber is the first person to donate an instrument to No Strings Attached and said:

"There must be hundreds of musical instruments gathering dust in the capital that could be put to much better use by our capital's young people. I've donated an instrument because I want more young people to discover the joy of learning a new skill and gain the satisfaction of performing as part of a group. I fully back No Strings Attached and sincerely hope that hundreds more people will donate their unused musical instruments to young Londoners who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to make music."

Time Out Editor Gordon Thomson said:

"Time Out has a long record of campaigning for equality in the capital. As such, we're immensely proud to be endorsing No Strings Attached because it gives ordinary young Londoners a chance to play and perform music together - a simple, but incredibly powerful and rewarding pleasure. I urge all those with unused and unloved instruments in their homes to donate them immediately to this fantastic cause".

Karen Brock, Head of Tower Hamlets Arts Music Education Service said:

"This is a wonderful opportunity for a new generation to take up music through playing an instrument - something that really will enhance their lives. No Strings Attached will accelerate the improving musical opportunities for young people in London, but more importantly will help them access an instrument so they can begin their musical journey in the best possible way."

Sting donates bass guitar to campaign to increase music education

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Sting is to donate a guitar to the Mayor's musical instrument amnesty. The Grammy award-winning musician's bass will go to a young Londoner in a drive to increase music education and give every child in the capital the chance to learn to play an instrument.

Sting said: 'The music amnesty is a really important initiative and I'm delighted to support it. Young people deserve the chance to learn a musical instrument, whatever background they come from. Well done to everyone who is helping the campaign.'

More than 150 instruments have been donated already to the amnesty, known as 'No Strings Attached', which was launched by Mayor Boris Johnson in conjunction with Time Out and is backed by London Councils. They include unclaimed ones that have come from the Transport for London Lost Property Office – amongst them a didgeridoo. The instruments will go to schools and young people in Lambeth through the 'In Harmony' music education scheme chaired by Julian Lloyd Webber, who has also donated a cello.

The announcement of Sting's donation coincides with a major summit being held at City Hall today to take forward the Mayor's plans to increase musical education. Other supporters include internationally renowned conductor Sir Simon Rattle and Madness singer Graham 'Suggs' McPherson.

Boris Johnson said: 'It's brilliant that the likes of Sting, Julian Lloyd Webber, Suggs and Simon Rattle are backing this campaign. I'd like every kid in the capital to play an instrument and the prospect of learning on one owned by a superstar like Sting must be absolutely thrilling.'

Julian Lloyd Webber said: 'The Mayor's initiative endorses what I have always believed - that music should be available to every child, not just to the privileged few whose parents can afford to buy instruments and pay for music lessons. This unique collaboration between 'No Strings Attached' and 'In Harmony' is proof of the power of music to bring people together. Music can transform children's lives and the In Harmony project is hugely grateful for the Mayor's support.'

Attendees at the summit include musicians, orchestras and other music organisations; venues and promoters; music colleges and other education providers; local and borough music services; and policy makers and funding bodies.

Young practitioners are giving live performances throughout the day, including a choir from the Royal Academy of Music; an 18-strong saxophone ensemble from the Centre for Young Musicians; a jazz trio from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama; and several vocal and music ensembles from Bigga Fish/Urban Development, who work with talented young vocalists, DJs and producers.

The music education summit culminates with Boris Johnson, Julian Lloyd Webber and Time Out Editor Gordon Thomson formally handing over donated instruments to young people from Lambeth, the borough set to benefit from the amnesty through the 'In Harmony' scheme.

Suggs said: 'No Strings Attached is a very exciting campaign. Music is a great way for kids to socialise and interact. It will give them focus and most importantly allow them to have good fun.'

Simon Rattle added: 'Enabling young people to take up a musical instrument is something in which I passionately believe. It is wonderful to know there is commitment to increase musical opportunities in the capital.'

The summit finale has special live performances by Julian Lloyd Webber, a 42 string orchestra bringing together seven schools working with Lambeth Music Service, and the Mama Cat and the Jazz Kittens, an 18 strong saxophone ensemble from the Centre for Young Musicians. The climax will be a spontaneous jam involving the musicians, the young people from Lambeth, plus Julian Lloyd Webber.

Chairman of London Councils, Councillor Merrick Cockell said: 'The No Strings Attached amnesty and summit have hit the right note with the London boroughs who are instrumental in organising music classes and a range of other initiatives to help children develop their musical skills. London Councils is keen to

work with the Mayor, boroughs and others to encourage more young people to learn to play music, a skill they can use and enjoy throughout their lives.'

Other organisations represented at the summit include: Arts Council England; Barbican; BBC; BPI; City Showcase; Classic FM; DCSF; DCMS; London Philharmonic Orchestra; London Symphony Orchestra; Lyric Hammersmith; Music Manifesto; National Campaign for the Arts; PPL; Royal College of Music; Royal Opera House; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra; Southbank Centre; Trinity College; Youth Music; plus London boroughs and many others.

Lambeth schools taking part include: Paxton Primary School; St Luke's C of E Primary School; Richard Atkins Primary School; Corpus Christi RC Primary School; Loughborough Primary School; Bonneville Primary School; Wyvil Primary School.