

Committee	Dated:
Culture, Heritage and Libraries – For Information	25/03/2019
Subject: Barbican Music Library exhibition programme	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Richard L. Jones, Music Librarian, Department of Community and Children's Services	

Summary

Barbican Music Library's exhibition programme has developed into one of the most high-profile and successful ventures of its kind in any UK public library. The forging of partnerships with individuals and organisations from the world of music has resulted in a vibrant programme which celebrates the musical and cultural diversity of London and the UK, and facilitates engagement with community groups. The delivery of professional exhibitions has been made possible through an ongoing partnership with Barbican Art Gallery whose staff carry out the installations and take-downs.

This work has raised the Library's profile through features in the media including The Guardian and BBC Radio 2 & 3. It has encouraged customer engagement via social media, and many of the exhibitions have garnered large amounts of positive feedback. Partnership working, both internal and external, has brought many benefits and collaborations with prominent figures have provided opportunities to generate additional revenue. The programme ties in with the City's ambitious initiative, Culture Mile, and plays an important role in bringing the work of Barbican and Community Libraries to the attention of new audiences.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. As public libraries continue to face challenges resulting from changes to reading and listening habits in the digital age, it is essential that a library service evolves in order to retain existing customers and attract new ones. Since 2011 Barbican Music Library has developed an exhibition programme that has become a vehicle for building partnerships and expanding the Library's customer base. Members of the Music Library's staff pro-actively forge partnerships with individuals and organisations from the musical sphere, enabling a rich and diverse programme. All

Music Library customers - approximately 72,500 per annum - pass the display area, and many of the exhibitions are accompanied by events.

Current Position

2. The exhibition programme is based around five themes:

2.1. To celebrate cultural diversity and engage with local communities

The exhibition programme celebrates the musical and cultural diversity of London and the UK. It provides opportunities to reach community groups, for example the exhibition, *Bang, Bang Bangladesh* enabled the Music Library to engage with the local Bangladeshi community; it was complemented by events showcasing traditional and modern-day Bengali culture. A collaboration with the Jewish Music Institute also resulted in a display, and the Music Library partnered with the Pink Singers on *Singing the Changes*, which told the story of LGBT London throughout the choir's 30-year history.

2.2. To support the health and wellbeing agenda

Many of the City workers who use the library view access to culture as a sanctuary from the stressful business world. Evaluation of Music Library events has been overwhelmingly positive, for example 100% of the attendees at an event to complement a Sufi music exhibition said they valued the event and agreed that: "The library's services and activities have a positive impact on my health and/or wellbeing". To raise public awareness about the benefits of music therapy, the Music Library partnered with the British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT) on an exhibition and event.

2.3. To mark important anniversaries

Notable dates in the history of leading music organisations are celebrated, for example a 2015 partnership with the Philharmonia marked the orchestra's 70th birthday. The anniversaries of eminent musicians and composers' births and deaths - including Elvis Presley, Sir Georg Solti and Benjamin Britten - have also been highlighted with exhibitions. To tie-in with the City of London's World War One commemorations, the Music Library partnered with the Museum of Army Music, and with the Fusilier Museum London (Tower of London).

2.4. To highlight specific genres of music

To cater for a wide range of musical tastes, and to counter the myth that public libraries stock classical music only, a variety of musical styles are featured. This has been made possible through collaborations with organisations such as the English Folk Dance and Song Society and the National Jazz Archive. Popular music has been represented courtesy of exhibitions featuring the acclaimed photography of Jill Furmanovsky and Sheila Rock, and Pete Frame's iconic Rock Family Trees.

2.5. To promote artists who use the theme of music in their work

Both established and lesser-known artists are provided with a platform to showcase their work including Morgan Howell whose SuperSizeArt installations of pop singles are highly collectable. For the duration of his

exhibition Morgan became the Music Library's first 'artist in residence', providing weekly demonstrations of his creative process to customers. The Music Library has also played host to the work that illustrator and cartoonist, Gerald Scarfe, has undertaken within the field of music. The *Scarfe and Music* exhibition ran throughout September and October 2016 with Gerald Scarfe providing a signing session which generated a long but enthusiastic queue of his admirers.

3. Outcomes

3.1. A vibrant display area

The display area captures the attention of customers entering the premises, encouraging them to explore the Music Library further. Libraries play a vital role in making art and culture freely accessible to all, and the exhibitions can enhance a routine library visit by providing customers, some of whom may never have visited an art gallery, with an opportunity to freely access a new cultural experience whilst using the Library's core services.

3.2. A raised profile

Exposure in the regional, national and international press has raised the Music Library's profile significantly. Its exhibitions have featured in print media in the UK and abroad, including the *Guardian* and the *Evening Standard*. There has also been coverage on BBC Radio 2 & 3 and Jazz FM, and a member of the Music Library's staff was interviewed on BBC Radio London.

3.3. Customer engagement

The exhibitions attract customers from across the UK, many of whom provide verbal, written and digital feedback: for example *Chunk of Punk* received 289 positive written comments. Use of social media enables instant communication with the public and a tweet about *Scarfe and Music* was retweeted by Pink Floyd's official website to its c.2.5 million followers. Inclusion in City of London publicity brought a Music Hall display to the attention of Blue Badge Tourist Guides who organised tours for groups of senior citizens.

3.4. Income generation

Working in partnership with prominent figures provides opportunities to generate additional revenue through the sale of event tickets, publications, and badges produced in-house. Events have included: performances from folk music stars Eliza Carthy & Martin Simpson, and question and answer sessions with Peggy Seeger, Jah Wobble and Jill Furmanovsky and Mark Perry (founder of punk fanzine, *Sniffin' Glue*). Pete Frame of Rock Family Trees fame did his first and only Q&A session at the Music Library. Demand for tickets often exceeds the Music Library's seating capacity.

3.5. Benefits of external partnership working

Partnerships with external individuals and organisations, provide many benefits including the pooling of resources and the sharing of expertise. They also bring in their own audiences which may not otherwise have discovered the library. Our partnerships benefit Library users and the wider library and cultural sectors, for example photographer, Jill Furmanovsky recommended

the Music Library to Gerald Scarfe which resulted in his exhibition and library staff introduced Jill to the Henry Watson Music Library in Manchester which led to its successful Oasis exhibition.

3.6. Collaborations with other City of London departments

As a result of funding from the Barbican Centre's Artistic Director, a purpose-built display wall and monolith were installed in the Music Library, and an ongoing partnership with the Art Gallery was developed. Its staff carry out the exhibition installations and take-downs, enabling displays of a professional standard. Barbican Centre colleagues have also assisted with marketing. Last autumn the Music Library hosted an exhibition, *Rattle*, a collaboration with the London Symphony Orchestra which was launched by Sir Simon Rattle. Barbican Music Library has also partnered with London Metropolitan Archives whose staff curated an exhibition, *Music Hall in London*.

3.7. Promotion of music organisations

Exhibiting in Europe's largest arts and conference venue helps music organisations to raise their profile. Publicity is provided through several channels including social media and press releases, and written customer feedback can be submitted as evidence of outreach for funding bids, for example, to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

3.8. Access to behind-the-scenes treasures

Some of the exhibitors possess rare and fascinating items not on public view, and the exhibition programme affords an opportunity to put them on display. These range from photographs and artefacts from Abbey Road Studios to a selection of items from the BBC Music Library's unique collection. For the duration of the National Jazz Archive's exhibition, *All That Jazz: The Golden Age of British Popular Music*, on selected evenings, some of its staff were on hand to offer customers a unique opportunity to handle archive material.

3.9. Highlighting Library stock

A listening station adjacent to the display area is used to feature recordings complementing an exhibition, thereby providing an opportunity to highlight sections of library stock. A recent exhibition, *Inside Abbey Road Studios: through the lens of Jill Furmanovsky*, resulted in a donation to the Music Library of the state-of-the-art listening station from the exhibition's sponsors, Audio-technica and Naim.

3.10. Opportunities for staff development

Involvement in the exhibitions programme provides benefits for staff members: opportunities for personal and professional growth, the chance to work alongside leading musical figures and organisations, and the satisfaction of being involved in a project enriching the cultural life of the City of London.

3.11. Priorities Investment Pot Funding

A successful bid for Priorities Investment Pot funding to upgrade the display equipment will enable better access for wheelchair users. The new cabinets will be in use from April 2019.

4. Corporate & Strategic Implications

The exhibition programme supports the following City of London Corporate Plan 2018 – 23 objectives

3. **People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential**
We will...
 - a. Promote and champion diversity, inclusion and the removal of institutional barriers and structural inequalities.
 - b. Provide access to world-class heritage, culture and learning to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.
 - d. Cultivate excellence in academia, sport and creative and performing arts.
4. **Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need**
We will...
 - a. Bring individuals and communities together to share experiences and promote wellbeing, mutual respect and tolerance.
 - b. Support access to suitable community facilities, workspaces and visitor accommodation.
10. **We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration**
We will...
 - b. Curate a vibrant, attractive and complementary blend of uses of space.
 - c. Create and transform buildings, streets and public spaces for people to admire and enjoy.
 - d. Protect, curate and promote world-class heritage assets, cultural experiences and events.
 - e. Champion a distinctive and high-quality residential, worker, student and visitor offer.

5. Implications

There are no adverse financial, legal, property or HR implications to consider.

6. Conclusion

Over the last seven years the Music Library team has devoted much time and effort to developing a high-profile and successful exhibition programme which brings numerous benefits to the library. Partnership working has resulted in a diverse and vibrant programme which has featured regularly in the media and the feedback that has been received clearly demonstrates its value to existing customers and also its ability to attract new visitors to the Library. The exhibition programme is a Culture Mile asset and plays an important role in bringing the work of Barbican and Community Libraries to the attention of new audiences.

Richard L. Jones

Music Librarian, Barbican Music Library

T: 020 7638 0672

E: richard.jones@cityoflondon.gov.uk