

# 'Professionally paralysed'

Testimonies from musicians on  
the immediate impact of Brexit



**ISM**  
INCORPORATED SOCIETY OF MUSICIANS

**Musicians'  
Union**

**mu**



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# Introduction

As the implications of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement ("the TCA") have transpired, the adverse impact on musicians has become clear. COVID-19 has made it almost impossible for musicians to tour over the past year, however, as countries reopen, the new post-Brexit regulatory framework is already making it very difficult for UK musicians to perform in Europe. The two largest bodies representing musicians, the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) and Musicians' Union (MU), have received numerous personal testimonies from music professionals who are facing economic disaster. Loss of income and work, and the inability to tour due to the new visa and work permit rules are now common experiences amongst our members.

## Nature of musicians' work

Europe is one of the most important marketplaces for touring musicians. Working in the EU – whether that involves performing, conducting, recording, teaching, collaborating or other activities – is an essential part of the profession's ability to earn and build profile. There is not enough work available in the UK for musicians to sustain their livelihoods so they must perform abroad. European work forms a significant proportion of musicians' annual income, who pay a substantial amount of UK tax on those earnings. These opportunities help build musicians' profiles and following, increasing sales of their music while generating soft power in the meantime for global Britain.

Musicians depend on the ability to travel easily and cheaply across multiple countries for work in a short period of time. They need to be able to programme tours months and sometimes years in advance and to take up performance opportunities at short notice.

## Key themes

Due to the absence of provisions in the TCA to support the creative industries, musicians and other creative workers are now required to navigate the specific entry and work requirements for each of the 27 EU countries. Musicians have told us how these administrative and financial burdens are damaging their ability to tour in Europe post-Brexit.

Visa and work permit requirements and costs differ from country to country and by the length and purpose of the stay. Applications often require additional paperwork and expenditure which may not be immediately clear. These include multiple copies of documents, translation of documents, certification of documents, police certificates, proof of higher education qualifications, proof of income and health insurance. Applications have to be made in person, which means that travel costs and time off work and rehearsals have to be factored in. In addition, there are also ongoing temporary embassy and consulate closures as a result of COVID-19, making the situation even more complex.

Both established and early career musicians have told us that the costs and the time it takes to apply for visas and work permits now make performing and touring in Europe unviable. Musicians are now facing a mountain of red tape. Short-notice engagements, which were typical within the profession and described as 'enriching' and 'career advancing', are now impossible in many EU countries. We also heard from UK musicians already engaged by European ensembles and orchestras or living in EU countries for work. They are finding that EU freelancers are being 'preferentially engaged' over British citizens as they are 'easier for the orchestra to book'.

# Recommendations

We welcome the Government's firm commitment to work with music organisations to solve these critical issues, including mobility. We understand that this commitment extends across the whole of Whitehall. We now need the same willingness from the EU so that both sides can move forward with this urgent issue.

The ISM and MU are committed to working with the UK Government to fix the problems facing musicians post Brexit. Unravelling and reducing the bureaucratic and regulatory burdens facing music and wider creative sector is the urgent priority.

## Negotiations & bilateral agreements

To achieve this, we are calling on the UK Government to negotiate a bespoke visa waiver agreement with the EU. This would be separate from the TCA and exempt touring performers, creative teams and crews from needing to obtain a visa when seeking paid work. We have been advised by a leading QC that an agreement of this nature between the UK and the EU would be highly advantageous for the following reasons:

1. UK musicians could travel visa-free to carry out paid activity on an ad-hoc basis
2. There is precedent and the mechanisms are well known
3. There is a structure to manage and oversee delivery

In light of the advice received from the leading QC, we strongly believe that a bespoke visa waiver agreement with the EU for the creative and cultural sector would add certainty for the future and start the process of dismantling the mountain of red tape facing musicians. It would also send a strong message that the UK Government is doing everything it can to protect our world leading creative and cultural sector. The bespoke visa waiver agreement is also entirely compatible with the Government's manifesto commitment to take back control of our borders.

We are also calling on the Government to negotiate bilateral agreements with individual EU Member States that do not currently offer cultural exemptions for work permits, such as Spain, Italy, and Portugal or which are financially the most important to UK musicians. We are delighted that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport has started speaking bilaterally with independent nations and urge the Government to progress quickly with these important discussions.

## Other outstanding issues

In addition to these priority proposals, we have the following asks for Government:

- **Outward mobility:** Publish guidance to help the performing arts sector navigate the different visa and work permit requirements for each EU Member State as a matter of urgency.
- **Inward mobility:** Provide further guidance to clarify inward mobility including Short-term visitor routes; Frontier Workers; Paid Permitted Engagement (PPE) and the roles that qualify under this; Longer term engagements.
- **Movement of goods:** Provide further guidance to clarify ATA Carnet Ambiguities, Movement from GB to NI; and CITES Musical Instrument Certificates; and improve cabotage regulations for hauliers.
- **Compensation:** Provide an emergency funding package for the performing arts sector to compensate for the additional costs associated with touring and the loss of work.
- **Replacement funding:** Provide more information about the Shared Prosperity Fund, including how and by whom it will be allocated, and what the alternative will be to Creative Europe.

# Case Studies

The following case studies illustrate the issues currently facing professional UK musicians working in the EU after January 2021.

## Maxim Calver

Maxim is a cellist and student at the Royal College of Music who made his concert debut in the Grand Final of BBC Young Musician 2018. He has performed at the Klosters Music Festival in Switzerland and toured the Netherlands as part of Trio Pantoum. He was a strings finalist in the Royal Overseas League Competition 2020.



*'As a 21 year-old cellist, I have been lucky enough to be able to perform around Europe for the last few years participating in festivals and solo recitals. These concerts are vital for creating contacts but due to being at the start of my career, are often not huge pay checks. With the ATA Carnet now being necessary to transport my instrument into Europe, for young musicians like myself this is a huge upfront cost especially at a time where our income, like so many others, has been completely decimated. I have been invited to Spain and Germany for two festivals this summer, this now means two sets of flights, different work permit/visa requirements and an ATA Carnet. I am still trying to work out if I can afford to go as the visa requirements are not clear and it is devastating to have to give up the opportunities to make music and make contacts with our colleagues in Europe, especially at the start of my career.'*

## Tim Claydon

Tim is a UK based, freelance, international choreographer and movement director, specialising in opera and circus.



*'I'm a freelance choreographer and movement director specialising in opera. Like most operatic contracts, my contract with the Norwegian Opera and ballet company was agreed and signed some 12 months ago. At that time, although Norway was outside the EU (but inside Schengen) and the UK was inside the EU but outside Schengen I wouldn't have needed any form of visa to have worked for the required 6 weeks. Since Jan 1st 2021, this has all changed. I was informed by the company on 13th Jan 2021 that I would now need to apply for a Long Stay Visa Residence Permit. They have been incredibly helpful, and I have been extremely lucky in the fact that they have paid for the application NOK6300 (GBP £561). I'm sure that this is because I'm part of the creative team and not a singer. I was able to get an interview at the Norway Visa Application Centre in London within 10 days. I filled out a series of forms, which I have to say were far more concise than even the US visa applications that I have filed on several occasions. Was asked to list, with dates, all the times that I had ever visited an EU country!! Must admit that I gave up on this section. Went along to the interview armed with:*

- *Passport*
- *Photocopies of all used pages within it*
- *CV*
- *Document showing my education*
- *Documents showing my work experience*
- *2 new photos*
- *Signed copies of contracts*
- *Housing reservation letter (with check in and out times and proof of payment) from company*
- *A letter of Employment form, from company*
- *Pay table-showing that fee meets payment required by Norwegian gov, from company.*

*I was very lucky to be working with a company that could provide all this for me within such short notice and that I had time to be able to pull all this together. So now we wait, I had an email last week to say that my case was being processed but due to various reasons (mainly COVID I think) that there is still a min processing time of 8 weeks. Due to fly out to start my 10-day quarantine on 26th March. I was able to take my passport away with me which is some comfort and the company are being very cool about me possibly arriving after the start of rehearsal.'*

Since Tim shared his initial experience, the project in Oslo has been postponed indefinitely due to the delay in visa processing which meant that three UK members of the five-person creative team would not be ready to leave in time. As a result, he has lost two months' work.

## Simon Halsey

Simon is a conductor, teacher and academic who holds positions across the UK and Europe as Choral Director of London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Chorus Director of City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Artistic Director of Orfeó Català Choirs and Artistic Adviser of Palau de la Música, Barcelona, Artistic Director of Berliner Philharmoniker Youth Choral Programme, Creative Director for Choral Music and Projects of WDR Rundfunkchor, Director of BBC Proms Youth Choir; Artistic Advisor of Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival Choir, Conductor Laureate of Rundfunkchor Berlin and Professor and Director of Choral Activities at University of Birmingham.



Photo credit: Matthias Heyde

*'Since 2016, I have been principal conductor of Orfeó Català, the glorious 7 choir set-up in the iconic Palau de la Música, Barcelona. At present, I'll need 4 x 90 day visas to do my job because I live in England and work at the LSO. I earn 2/3 of my income in Euros, pay tax on those Euros in the UK - quite a significant sum. My first Visa is applied for but has cost £490.50 so far; it hasn't arrived but I'm sure it will one day. The later visas may be cheaper once Covid allows one to go to the Consulate in person? I also work in any given year in at least the following countries: Germany, France, Netherlands, Austria ... I am 62 and at the height of my career so agents and managers thankfully take some of the stress away. But had this happened 20 years ago, I'd never have been risked as an unknown in all these countries and I wouldn't have got to the Berliner Philharmoniker for 15 years. Shame on our government for stopping Britons competing, succeeding; for stopping us spreading soft UK power and influence through mixing and collaboration. And my tax payments to HMRC over the past 20 years would have been less by some £750,000 had I not been allowed to prosper in the EU. It goes further than that. I have founded an internationally recognised MA course in Birmingham and we have 4-6 students every year, the majority paying overseas fees - but will they come any longer when our fees go up? The senseless narrowing of opportunity for everyone!'*

Since Simon shared his initial experience, he was turned down for his visa despite being principal conductor of a major Spanish organisation since 2016. The Spanish Consulate have been unable to say which visa should be applied for.

## George Jackson

Conductor George Jackson has earned critical acclaim for the authority and eloquence of his music-making. Winner of the 2015 Aspen Conducting Prize, Jackson came to attention after stepping in at short notice with Orchestre de Paris, where he stepped in for Daniel Harding.

Highlights of this season have so far included conducting *Noli me tangere*, a new work by Isabel Mundry, with Collegium Novum Zürich, and conducting a programme including the world premiere of Claire-Mélanie Sinnhuber's new work, *Chahut*, with Brussels Philharmonic.

Other recent highlights include leading Ensemble Intercontemporain at the Rainy Days Festival in Luxembourg and Festival D'Automne in Paris, as well as conducting the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, the orchestra of Opéra de Rouen, and the world premiere of Tscho Theissing's *Genia* with Theater an der Wien.



Photo credit: Liliya Namisnyk

*'Next October (2021), I am invited to conduct the premiere of a work by Steve Reich with the Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris. We rehearse for 3 days in Paris, and then fly to Rome for one performance. Nobody knows how to do this now, because I will be Entering Schengen in France, and paid by a French organisation but entering Italy within Schengen so no checks, and therefore probably nobody to show a potential Italian visa too.*

*So, this demonstrates why the UK needs to negotiate something that treats Schengen as one entity, not bitty countries. Am I really supposed to pay £500 for an Italian visa that isn't necessary?*

*The new system does not work!*

## Robert King

The Kings Consort is one of the world's leading period instrument orchestras and choirs. Its more than one hundred CD recordings have won many prestigious international awards and sold more than 1,500,000 discs. The vast majority of its work is in mainland Europe, where it enjoys a considerable following, especially in Spain, France, Austria and Germany.

Recent work has included major European tours of Bach *St Matthew Passion*, Handel *Messiah*, Bach *Mass in B minor* and *The Coronation of King George*, performances of the Requiems of Mozart and Michael Haydn in Lucerne, Mendelssohn *Paulus* at Leipzig Gewandhaus and at Enescu Festival Bucharest, Haydn *The Creation* at Flanders Festival, Finzi *Dies Natalis* and Britten *Les Illuminations* in France, Purcell *The Fairy Queen*, *King Arthur* and *Dido and Aeneas* in Theater an der Wien, Mendelssohn's 1833 version of Handel *Israel in Egypt* at Leipzig Gewandhaus and the festivals of Rheingau and la Chaise-Dieu, alongside tours to Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Hungary, Malta, Mexico, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland and Spain.



Photo credit: Keith Saunders

*'For 40 years, the professional orchestra and choir The King's Consort has toured extensively across Europe. We have brought millions of pounds back into the UK economy, annually employing hundreds of UK musicians. Those tours tend to be a handful of concerts, usually across several EU countries. The usual daily fee paid to a freelance orchestral musician or a professional freelance choir member is around £160, plus a per diem for their meals. 80% of UK musicians are freelancers - even the members of the London Symphony are not salaried but get paid by the day (few musicians have the luxury of a BBC or Royal Opera House salary: we are predominantly freelancers).*

*On a typical tour to the EU, multiply those freelance £160s across 45 people and 4 concerts in 4 different countries, add a freelance tour manager, a conductor and a "name" UK soloist (earning a larger but not excessive fee), and with a day of UK rehearsal beforehand the tour fee is perhaps £45,000 (all that comes back into the UK economy). Add Eurostar or flights, hotels, local buses etc (across 4 concerts, that's another £35,000). Add a small percentage towards our annual management costs and the requested fee per concert is around £22,500. We used to be able to get promoters in France, Belgium, Germany, Spain etc to pay that sort of fee for a top-level, international quality concert.*

*With the UK now outside the EU, now we must pay for a visa for every performer, for each country, plus a carnet for every instrument (instruments are the property of each individual player - we can't claim them as being the orchestra's property), so that's 25 carnets at c.£350, plus a shedload of paperwork, and put down a deposit relative to the value of each instrument (on a decent violin typically worth say £60,000 that's a large deposit). The visa for each performer for, say, Germany is €80, plus a shedload of advance paperwork and an unpaid half day's attendance for every performer at the Embassy to get the visa. Multiply that process across 4 countries and with carnets and visas we have an additional cost of £700 per performer (plus 2 days unpaid attendance at embassies)- that's an extra £31,500. The tour is now completely uneconomic.*

*The only current way around this would be to ditch almost all of our loyal UK members, employ largely EU performers and rehearse in the EU. So, our wonderful UK performers, some of whom have performed with us for 25 years, would lose their work. And not just them - the ripples spread: our London rehearsal venue would lose its daily fee. The local takeaways and restaurants we would frequent whilst we rehearse in London would lose their income. We wouldn't need to buy flights from any British airlines, so they and the specialist travel agency that*

*orchestras must use when making complicated bookings for cellos and timpani would also lose their income.*

*So, for UK musicians, and for all the support services, it's a potential disaster. We are only one orchestra: all our colleague organisations have the same issue. The UK music industry turns over more than £5 billion per annum. A substantial portion of that would now disappear. And then the loss of profile and reputation would mean fewer recordings get sold, less broadcast airtime, so the recording industry loses income. And so, the ripples spread on.*

*Visa-free would resolve so much of that, almost instantaneously'*

## Ed Lyon

Ed is a tenor who trained at the Royal Academy of Music and the National Opera Studio. He made his Royal Opera debut in 2008 and has performed in international productions at La Monnaie, the Opera-Comique, Teatro Real, Theater an der Wein, Dutch National Opera and the Aix en Provence and Salzburg festivals.



Photo credit: Gerard Collett

*'I have been contracted, quite late in the day, for two shows with La Monnaie, the Royal Theatre of Belgium. I feel deeply fortunate that they have continued to support me after cancelling my original engagement due to Covid. The two, overlapping rehearsal/performance periods add up to 105 days in Belgium. This means I have to apply for a work permit as a citizen of a third country.'*

*'I am waiting for my documentation from my employer. I have begun gathering the required documentation - I am due to depart on March 22nd. The permit itself costs £180 plus £30 for processing. I will have to pay more to expedite it. The documentation includes a medical certificate which must be completed by an approved doctor. This is to say that I am:*

1. *free from illnesses requiring quarantine as stated by the International Sanitary Regulation of the WHO,*
2. *pulmonary tuberculosis active or progressive*
3. *other contagious or transmittable diseases'*

*...but does not include Covid, for which I will have to have another test. The cost of the recommended doctors ranges from £125 - £325.*

*I also have to apply for an ACRO - which is police certification. This costs between £55 and £95, dependent upon urgency (10 working days or 2 working days). This official document FROM THE POLICE then has printed and posted to be rubber stamped by a government office who charge another £35.50 (including courier) but this will take a minimum of 10 days to be processed.*

*These documents are in duplicate or triplicate, and once collected, one applies through a website for an appointment. This form is time consuming and is only valid for 15 days. The office in Wandsworth who process the permits are only open on Tuesdays.*

*It is a logistical nightmare, as I am at present rehearsing another show with a dance company, who have been adhering strictly to social distancing and testing protocols into order to work safely in Covid times. It also means asking for time off from rehearsals to go for appointments.'*

*The minimum cost I will incur for this process is £425.50. To expedite everything as quickly as possible is approx. £665.50. It will all take about a month. I don't honestly think I'll be able to get it done in time to fulfil my contractual obligations.'*

## Catherine Manson

Catherine is a violinist specialising in period music as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral leader. She founded the London Haydn Quartet in 2000, where she is first violinist, and has been the leader of the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra since 2006.



*'As a violinist, I have worked for several decades touring, giving concerts, recording, broadcasting and teaching masterclasses all around the EU. I have been the leader of the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra since 2006 but earlier this week the orchestra management told me that I will not be able to participate in the orchestra's next tour in March/April (assuming concerts can happen and that travel is possible by then). The reason for this is that they will now need to apply a work permit on my behalf. If they were to apply now, in good time, the application would be refused as a result of the travel restrictions currently in place, but if they wait, hoping that the restrictions are lifted, it will be too late to apply for a work permit. My place will instead be taken by another violinist who lives in the Netherlands and I will have lost all my income for this season.*

*Typically, this orchestra brings musicians from all around Europe, meeting approximately eight times per year to rehearse a programme in the Netherlands and then setting off to tour around Europe, giving up to ten concerts per project in different countries. For me to procure a work permit for each one of these events would place an enormous and unreasonable burden on the orchestra management. If each of these applications involved leaving my passport at each different embassy, I would also be unable to travel for any other concerts.*

*Normally I would also give another twenty concerts annually around Europe with my quartet, the London Haydn Quartet but as a result of Brexit, EU concert promoters are justifiably nervous about the expense and time involved in bringing a UK group, and so we have no further concerts booked in Europe.*

*And this is not to even mention the carnets I would also need in order to travel with my violin.*

*Essentially, I am professionally paralysed by Brexit and have no idea how I can continue my career. I desperately need some resolution to this problem.'*

## Catherine Martin

Catherine has been leader of the Gabrieli Consort and Players since 2005, appearing on many awardwinning recordings. From 2010 to 2020, Catherine also led Die Kölner Akademie in Germany. From the inception of the Valletta Baroque Festival in 2003, Catherine has had a continual relationship with the Valletta International Baroque Ensemble, going to Malta three times a year to direct concerts with Maltese musicians and give masterclasses. She is a frequent guest leader of Barokkanerne, a baroque orchestra based in Oslo. Catherine has previously taught at the Norwegian Academy of Music, and currently teaches historical violin at the Royal College of Music.



*'I've just been doing a bit of maths about what I earned where in the year March 2019 - March 2020.*

*I spent just over a third of my time (37%) rehearsing in the EU for concerts abroad. This includes my teaching abroad and reflects the work that I did for groups based in the EU. I spent just over a third of my time (35%) rehearsing in the UK for concerts in the UK. This includes my teaching in the UK. I spent the rest of the time (28%) doing concerts in the EU but rehearsing in the UK. So, this is the time I spend with UK groups who perform abroad.*

*Just to put this into context, as an average over the last 3 years I earned under 25k (net per year). So If I were to lose my work in the EU that I do for groups based there, plus a decrease in the amount of touring that we are able to do, I'd probably lose half of my income as a direct result of the loss of freedom of movement due to Brexit. I am established and successful. I shudder to think how anyone is going to be able to earn a decent income who is just starting out.'*

## Ben Papworth

Ben is a Musical Director, vocal coach and piano vocalist who has taught at the Institute of Arts Barcelona and Theaterschool T'extpierement in the Netherlands.



Ben shared his letter to Caroline Dinenage with us about his experience of applying for a visa in order to fulfil a contract in Spain.

*'I am a self-employed musician living in Ealing, London. I recently applied for a Schengen Business Visa in preparation to return to Sitges, Barcelona to work at the Institute of The Arts Barcelona as Musical Director for their 2nd and 3rd year Musicals. I have been working at the IAB since March 2019 and always look forward to returning to work with the school. I have been rejected, not once, but twice for my visa to return to work. In the first instance I was informed by the Spanish Consulate that I was not eligible for the Business visa as I was to be in Spain for over 90 days (21st February 2021 - 23rd May 2021). They suggested I apply for a D-type visa to work over 90 days.'*

*'Talking to the school we decided it was best to reduce my time in Spain to 88 days (25th February 2021 - 23rd May 2021) in order to fall into the Schengen Business category. I applied again, making sure at the BLS application centre that my application was strong and would hold no reason for the Consulate to deny my visa. I was rejected again, as "... according to the purpose of your stay described by your employer, from 25/2/2021 to 23/5/2021, you would need to apply for a National Residence Visa (Work and residence <180 days)..."'*

*'Myself and the IAB were very confused as why my purpose of stay didn't meet the requirements for the Business visa, when the application centre had taken both my application and money twice and assured me I had a strong application. I contacted the Consulate to elaborate on why I was not eligible for the Business visa and received: "There is not much left to elaborate. You cannot apply for a Schengen Visa, as those are for tourism. Since you are going to work, you must apply for a Work Visa, as it clearly states on the letter."*

*'I felt this reply was not satisfactory and also incredibly confusing. I was applying for a Business visa to work in Spain, if I wanted to be a tourist in Spain I would have applied for a Tourist visa. I'm still confused and none the wiser as to how a Business visa is just a Tourist visa and, ultimately, what the need for a Business visa is?'*

*'I am a self-employed musician during a global pandemic and have had my work and livelihood ripped from me. I simply cannot afford to keep spending money on visa applications, for the information provided to me by both the application centre and Consulate to be both below standard and incorrect. I have since lost £236.90 of my own money that I have struggled to earn during COVID-19 and as of yesterday morning I have lost my work opportunity with the IAB and have lost £3250. This is totally unacceptable and incredibly hard to process.'*

*'In a year which has tried and tested my mental health and my staying power in an industry I have worked so hard to survive in, this has been a difficult pill to swallow. I am incredibly upset, angry and in despair with the current situation. I am out of money, out of work and with no light at the end of the tunnel. The entire process with both BLS and the Spanish Consulate has left me both embarrassed professionally and personally. Unfortunately, this isn't just me, this is an entire industry of hard working individuals who do not have the correct information available to them and will fall into the traps and pitfalls laid before them by the new laws for travel and work outside of the UK.'*

## Sophia Rahman

Sophia Rahman made the first UK recording of Florence Price's piano concerto with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, broadcast on BBC Radio 3. She has recorded Shostakovich's piano concerto Op.35 with the Scottish Ensemble for Linn Records and over thirty chamber music discs for a host of international labels including (German) CPO, (Swiss) Guild, Resonus, Dutton/Epoch, Naxos, ASV and Champs Hill.

Sophia teaches on the String Masters programme run by the Irish Chamber Orchestra at the University of Limerick's Irish World Academy of Music and Dance and has also coached at the University of Malta, junior chamber music at the Sibelius Academy, Finland and Lilla Akademien, Sweden, and on a course she designed at the Arvo Pärt Centre, Estonia, especially for young Estonian chamber musicians.

She is Artistic Director of the Whittington International Chamber Music Festival which every year aims to bring together a distinguished band of artists from across the globe to play chamber music together in rural Shropshire.



Photo credit: Mait Jüriado

*'A glance through my own accounts for the year ending April 2020 tells me that well over two thirds of my income was either earned within the EU (Austria, Estonia, etc.) or within the UK but with one or more collaborators from the EU.'*

*'When UK musicians tour abroad we are not 'taking work away' from local musicians but representing our country's rich cultural heritage. When foreign musicians come to the UK to collaborate with us there is an exchange of ideas which stimulates both sides and offers a chance for unique work to be created. Artistic standards are driven up by such interaction as each party benefits from the opportunity to learn from and inspire the other. [This is emphatically NOT an immigration issue, as we all wish to return to our home bases after creative interaction!]*

*'Because of Covid travel restrictions I have given only two live performances within the EU since March 2020. I am extremely concerned that when these restrictions are eventually lifted the practical difficulties (red tape and associated costs) of touring post-Brexit will mean the permanent loss of two-thirds of my income. This would render a formerly viable career unsustainable, even more so when you consider that work at home has been so limited for the past year with no prospect of a return to anything like normal service in the foreseeable future and also that streaming which the public has relied upon to ease them through successive lockdowns is not adequately remunerated.'*

## Poppy Walshaw

Poppy Walshaw (baroque cello) is active as a soloist, chamber musician, and continuo player throughout Europe. Following her studies in Bremen, Germany, she has been the regular continuo cellist for many European ensembles, including Le Chardon (Germany), Oslo Baroque orchestra, and Arte dei Suonatori, a leading Polish baroque orchestra with whom she has also extensively toured and broadcast as concerto soloist.



Photo credit: Adam Szewczykowski -  
Poppy performing with the  
Arte dei Suonatori

*'In addition to regular touring with UK groups abroad, I consider myself very fortunate to have had more than 50% of my performing work with baroque orchestras based in the rest of Europe.*

*I was the continuo cellist for ensembles in Poland and Germany since 2007, as well as appointments for several years as the principal cellist of Oslo Baroque Orchestra, as a member of Spanish orchestra Al Ayre Espanol, and so on. After my postgraduate study in Bremen, Germany, from 2001-04, I returned to the UK and have lived in London, travelling frequently for work. Specialising in early music, there is a small pool of players, many of whom work with several ensembles, often in different European countries. In the case of Poland, I first went there at less than 24 hours' notice to join a recording project with Arte dei Suonatori. It clicked musically straight away and the following month I became their regular cellist. I found my musical home in this ensemble, and centre of my musical identity and exploration. Most years, I have worked in Poland far more than the future maximum of 30 days for Polish work that I have seen on information from the ISM. When the Brexit vote happened, I was with Arte at a festival in Copenhagen, performing as a concerto soloist as well as continuo cellist... With the unclarity on Brexit over the intervening four years, sadly my work in both Poland and Germany fizzled out in favour of the ensembles using musicians from the rest of Europe and locally. It is a huge loss for me, in terms of both personal and musical identity. The enriching opportunities that I have had were a result of jumping in for projects at short notice. It seems that travelling at less than 24 hours' notice in that way will be either completely impossible with the various future regulations, for many EU countries, or even for those countries where it's theoretically possible, a UK player would not be chosen because of the perceived or unknown difficulties. This is something that I understand will also have an enormous impact on other areas of the performing arts, such as opera "stand-ins".'*

## Roderick Williams

Roderick is a baritone soloist who regularly performs in operas, concerts and recitals in Great Britain and all around the world. His work in Europe has included appearances with the Vienna Philharmonic, the Berlin Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, the Portuguese Symphony Orchestra, operatic roles with the Opera de Lyon, The Netherlands Opera, Oper Köln, and recitals at the Beethovenhaus, Bonn, the Musikeverein in Vienna, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam. This year, post-Brexit, he is will be premiering a new opera at The Netherlands Opera in Amsterdam, which tours to Cologne, Germany and Bregenz, Austria, as well as further recitals and concerts in Amsterdam, and Gstaad, Switzerland, with a European tour with the Concert Lorraine at the end of the year.



Photo credit: Benjamin Ealovega

*I'm stuck on the twin horns of Brexit and the pandemic. I came to Amsterdam on the 17th January to begin a two-week rehearsal period for a contemporary opera, one that tours to Cologne in April (if we're allowed) and Bregenz in July. My rehearsal period was to have been two weeks, then I was supposed to return to the UK for the first two weeks of February and come back here to start again sometime this week. However, while I was here in January, the discovery of new strains of the virus caused the Netherlands to close its borders to the UK and cancel flights. I realised that if I did manage to get home in between the two rehearsal periods, I was unlikely to get back here. So, I took the decision to stay here right through, to protect this project which would have folded without my input - there are only two people in the cast. Some work in the UK had to be postponed and rearranged. So far so good... except that this decision of course has begun to eat into my 90-day quota. I came here without thinking I was going to be staying here so long. When I go to Cologne in April, I shall have to quarantine for at least five days before I can start work. And quarantine days of course count as part of our 90 days. So, my agents are busy inputting my travel dates into a website that can keep track of the rolling total, making sure, day by day, that I keep within my limit. They are trying to investigate whether I can apply for a visa or permit for the German and/or Austrian jobs but the embassies are closed at the moment, so we don't know how or where to apply. I have invitations to sing in Berlin with Simon Rattle in May and to return to the Netherlands for a Fauré Requiem in the summer. We just don't know how this is going to work practically. We don't know to whom we should apply for what. We just know that, should we get it wrong, I could be faced with fines, deportation and possible temporary barring from visiting the EU Schengen area.'*

Since Roderick shared his initial experience, he has had to turn down an invitation to sing with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra this Easter. He could not accept the work as it would have exceeded the 90-day quota and as he was in Amsterdam, there would not have been time to organise a work permit or process the documents.

## Louise Alder

*'I have to say thus far I haven't had much bad experience Brexit wise. I have been lucky.'*

*I was in Spain on 31st Dec and they only asked for visas for contracts after my contract ended (Jan 10th). I was in Austria for 3 weeks in January and needed no visa either because it's under the 30-day limit.*

*However, in April/May/June and then again in Nov/Dec I will most definitely need an Austrian visa because I will be there too long. As yet we don't know what that visa is, but we are asking and desperately hoping that as a German resident I will be allowed to apply for it in Germany and not have to fly back to the UK each time. The headache is of course each EU country has their own rules with regards to 3rd country nationals and trying to get them to make sense when most or all of your work is in the EU, back to back, is a nightmare.*

*I have lived in Germany since 2014 and have been granted permanent residency by the government here. All I need to do is have an interview and collect my card. It was very painless. It only allows me to live and work in Germany without a visa however... not the rest of the EU. HOURS have been spent on the phone to my agent trying to work out day counts in every country and then overall in the EU.*

*This will not get easier. And I fear for those who are not so well represented as I, working with smaller companies, living in the UK. The future certainly looks bleak.'*

## Sam Glazer

*I'm MD and co-creator of Musical Rumpus, a high-quality professional opera for babies and toddlers initially commissioned and produced by Spitalfields Music. Since 2012, we have created seven productions and given hundreds of free performances in libraries, children's centres and nurseries across Newham, Tower Hamlets and Barking and Dagenham, as well as performing at the Royal Opera House and RichMix, not to mention several UK national tours. In 2014 we won a Civil Society Charity Award and were shortlisted for the Royal Philharmonic Society Audiences and Engagement Award.*

*The margins are not high for this work. It's very resource-intensive and we've historically relied on ACE and trust/foundation money in order to be able to make it truly accessible. This kind of creative participatory work happens to be an area in which the UK is genuinely a global leader and we've toured to festivals and theatres across Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. The EU touring is not particularly lucrative, but European budgets for children's theatre and music tend to be significantly higher than in the UK and this has enabled us to invest in better production values and longer rehearsal periods, improving the quality of our work, cross-subsidising our UK tours, creating more work for UK artists, producers and technicians, and ultimately more revenue for HMRC.*

*We've recently been invited to return to Hamburg in 2022 and I'm currently working on a budget. It looks as though additional Brexit-related costs will potentially include visas and work permits for all cast and crew, health and travel insurance, and carnets at around £350 for each musical instrument and piece of tech equipment. It seems possible that these costs will push this project into the realms of unviability.*

*This is devastating. It looks like a significant portion of my work to date has no future. A pioneering project rich in cultural exchange and learning, creating employment and boosting the UK economy as well as representing a valuable cultural export, looks set to be unnecessarily sacrificed on the altar of Brexit.*

*I'm in the ridiculous situation of having to submit a quote to German promoters for a tour next year, without knowing what visa restrictions will apply and what the cost implications will be <sup>\*because the details have not been published by UK gov\*</sup>. There is no clear sector-specific advice on gov.uk. The cost of carnets for musical instruments, work permits and additional health and vehicle insurance for a small-scale tour could easily add £1-2K to a budget in the region of £12-15K. So, am I supposed to budget for these costs and likely push the project into the realms of unaffordability? Or cross my fingers and budget low, win the contract and then be left out of pocket if the costs do apply? How on earth am I supposed to be able to work in this scenario? It's all very well blaming the EU for being intransigent, but this doesn't wash - it's UK government's responsibility to protect the interests of UK musicians and in this they have manifestly failed.*

## David Juritz

*'During a career of nearly four decades European tours have always been an important part of my work. As well as giving concerts with British ensembles and orchestras I have also worked regularly as a guest concertmaster with orchestras in Switzerland, Portugal, the Republic of Ireland and France, sometimes spending as much three or four months a year working outside the UK.'*

*'Following the UK's exit from the EU, that work, which constituted a significant proportion of my income, is no longer available to me. For British ensembles and orchestras, the loss of touring revenue from which they derive vital income is likely to be disastrous and without it many of them will struggle to survive.'*

*'Unfortunately, the damage done to the UK music industry is likely to extend much further than a financial loss. Music has always been an international business and it is usually the most able musicians who are the most mobile. Musicians coming to work in the UK do not take jobs away from British musicians - they help create and sustain them.'*

*'Similarly the plethora of well-resourced opera houses on the continent offers (or used to offer) great opportunities for young and established British singers and conductors, many of whose careers received an early boost when they received a call to deputise at short notice for a performer who was ill. Sadly, those calls will now not be made to +44 numbers.'*

*'Touring and performing in major venues are also extremely important in artistic development. The Beatles period in Hamburg has passed into legend as a formative period in that group's history. My experience of touring is that the concentrated time spent together and the pressure of performing in famous concert halls plays a very important role in any group's development. With no disrespect to British audiences, playing to a packed Musikverein audience in Vienna is a very different experience to playing at the Hexagon in Reading and, while the coach trips on to the next day's concert aren't exactly glamorous, they are a far more bonding experience than a solitary drive back up the M4. Everyone in sport understands the importance of the 'big stage' and, since that concept is borrowed from the performing arts anyway, it's hardly a surprise that it applies to us as well.'*

*'The current arrangement, or lack of an arrangement, is seriously damaging to the music industry economy. The artistic damage will be no less severe and represents a choice by this government to opt for a cultural downgrade.'*

## Joseph Middleton

*'An email from my agent, the first post-Brexit correspondence relating to work in Spain, explaining that a recital for which I signed a contract two years ago, would now cost me £600 in visa-related bills. Even though I would only spend 24 hours there, my agent would be required to work on a raft of extra paper-work, my accountant to furnish me with documents giving proof of income, and my bank would need to provide me with recent certified bank statements (no pesky home print-offs here, thank you). My passport would need to be submitted to the Spanish Embassy and held there until the visa was processed, causing problems for when I had to travel for other work. Apparently the 'normal' visa cost would be nearer £150, but with the Embassy only currently open one day a week, the promoter had told my agent the only option would be to pay out for the £600 fast-track. The concert in Spain, one of the few remaining non-Covid cancellations in my diary, is part of a tour that also takes in recitals in France and Denmark. Pull out of one engagement because the numbers don't stack up, and risk losing the work in the other countries as well. Too many visas, even at £150 each (and that figure obviously doesn't include cost of travel to the embassies, the lost work time, or the extra costs to agents and accountants) and it's clear that your livelihood is going to take a nosedive. Brexit means that musicians now need to apply for a short-term work permit before travelling to work in a number of EU countries, each with their own different requirements.'*

## Email to Oscar Whight from a European orchestra manager

Oscar had reached the final round of auditions when he received this email. He had complete his master's degree in Germany under one of the leading trumpet teachers in the world. He has now secured a position as principal trumpet with the Cairo Symphony Orchestra.

*Dear Oscar*

*I'm so sorry, I sent you an invitation last week for the upcoming trumpet audition, but unfortunately I have to inform you that as you are from the UK it will not be possible to participate in the audition after all.*

*All auditions for all tutti positions (not only Academy) are only for European Union citizens plus Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. At this moment the UK is no longer in the EU and deals are not made yet.*

*I feel so sorry, but I can't do anything about this.*

*I wish you all the best.*

# Anonymous Case Studies

## Singer and actor

*'I'm a professional singer and actor and I'm deeply concerned about the impact Brexit will have on my future employment and earnings. A lot of the talk has been around touring, i.e. a few weeks or months in a country at a time but my experience is mostly one-off overnight trips. Some years these European gigs have made up 30% of my annual income.'*

*'I've been engaged as a freelance performer for the incredibly successful [REDACTED] who have provided surprise-type entertainment for 20 years. Since the UK corporate entertainment market shrank with the 2008 recession, the company still grew by performing increasingly across Europe. In addition to corporates we do many birthdays, weddings and private functions and often these bookings are last minute, within a week or even 24 hours, an icing on the cake to get the party started. We have many repeat bookings from individuals now used to throwing parties at the last minute and with visas as a barrier both in time and cost, they will simply look elsewhere. A loss to us and a loss to the UK tax paying company. As an individual performer, our fee for these gigs is roughly £300-£450, so it is not feasible for us as individuals to pay more than 10% in visa fees nor spare the time in processing. The clients come to this UK based company because we are considered the very best, they can offer West End performers and now only those lucky enough to have Irish passports will be able to work. It really is that simple! I am married to an Irishman and have Irish heritage but am still not eligible for a passport. Brexit has cut off a significant proportion of my income not to mention the cultural benefit of the exchange. We warned this would happen and were dismissed as "project fear", it is beyond galling! As a side, several major UK theatre tours I've been in have included a week or 2 in European cities. With large casts and several lorries of equipment, set and costumes these simply will not be viable in visa and carnet costs or administrative time.'*

## Conductor

*'More often than not, certainly for the chamber and period instrument orchestras, it was those EU tours that generated the surpluses that enabled the (loss-making) UK concerts.'*

*'Then add that almost all UK orchestras (the exceptions largely being the salaried BBC and opera orchestras) are made up of freelancers – even being a member of the London Symphony Orchestra (let alone all the wonderful chamber and period instrument orchestras) brings no salary: performers are only paid, by the day, when there are rehearsals and/or performances.'*

*'For many of those freelancers, up to 50% of their income came from European touring. That isn't going to be replaced by concerts in the UK – they are already the loss-making concerts. That's because the UK arts funding model sits way beneath that of almost every mainland European country. The UK music industry used to generate more than £5 billion (yes, billion) for the UK economy, much of it coming in from Europe (pop, jazz, classical – they are all similarly affected by these new restrictions). Then factor in loss of profile: if you don't tour, you don't get the exposure and PR, so your recording income and airtime reduces. That also directly affects income streams. Then factor in the "ripple" effects – less work means technicians, rehearsal venues, travel companies, truckers, editors, publishers, even the cafes next to the rehearsal premises: all these lose income too. So, even setting aside the less immediately quantifiable loss to culture, all this amounts to significant financial losses for the UK economy. There are no winners here.'*

## Mezzo-soprano

*'Politicians don't seem to get that classical music is largely composed by Europeans and in order to be able to be good enough to sing in German / French / Italian to a comparative high standard we need to be in the midst of the action : in a cast in Bayreuth, be invited to be a member of that orchestra (invitation only), be on a Fest contract in Germany, be invited to tour Europe with any number of high class Baroque groups, be invited to be in an all French cast of a French opera in Paris (2 month contract with a 2 month tour later in the year).'*

## Cellist and composer

*'We have a concert in Italy in May, postponed from last year. Now the promoters are:*

- a) very confused as to whether or what kind of visa or work permits we need*
- b) so are we*
- c) if we have to pay for work permits/visas it will cost us a large cut in our fees*
- d) the Carnet business without instruments will cost us over £1500 apparently for a year*
- e) still have no clear info. from the UK govt about what is going on etc, etc...*

*Disaster.'*

## Orchestral player

*'I have a position in a Norwegian orchestra - I'm a British citizen with residency there. I have had to reapply for my residency in the wake of Brexit and my changed status. My situation has been relatively uncomplicated but British freelancers who work in the same orchestra have already been pushed down the 'extras list' as it takes 2-3 days for the administration to process their paperwork for each visit they make. Other domestic and European freelancers are now being preferentially engaged - often less able/talented musicians but 'easier' for the orchestra to book. This onerous administrative burden doesn't take account of the extra new costs incurred by the British musicians themselves.'*

## Mezzo-soprano

*'A friend directing something in Spain didn't have time to apply for a working visa with less than 90 days before the show. She was advised to go slightly under the radar on a tourist visa - she was being paid by an organisation in France - but then being a tourist became no-go because of Covid. Fast-tracking a working visa was the next option, but the French company she's working for said they would only get the visa with massive pressure from the Spanish theatre, who were not inclined to help out. My friend doesn't want to pay it herself (£400), because the production could get cancelled on account of Covid! Even if she somehow manages to go, she could lose her whole fee on the visa, multiple Covid tests, and then any potential hotel quarantine if the rules change again.'*

*'Other friends have had so much work cancelled due to Covid, they won't know how badly they are affected by the new Brexit situation until a year or two years hence. I know this is probably stating the obvious, but an important part of the discourse is that this currently looks like a much smaller problem than it actually is and could therefore be more easily dismissed.'*

## Conductor (letter to MP)

*'I am writing ahead of the debate in Parliament next Monday to alert you to the problems I, as a freelance international conductor, and many other of my colleagues will be facing unless an agreement can be reached with the EU to waive visa and work-permit requirements for visiting musicians, orchestras and groups. Flexibility is of the utmost importance in this field: I have to be able to go at a moment's notice to conduct at the last minute in opera houses and concert halls all over the EU. My schedule is by no means always fixed a long time in advance, and last-minute engagements will be particularly prevalent as soon as Covid 19 restrictions are relaxed here and in the EU. This is a separate issue from the potentially catastrophic costs for orchestras and groups, and for smaller organisations that arrange tours, often in fact run by one person, who will be impossibly hard-pressed both in terms of workload and cost, unless there is a reciprocal agreement on this matter. Both problem-lines are critically important.'*

*'As you know, the music industry is one of the UK's most successful industries, a billions-of-pounds a year exporter, and, through the visits of orchestras, groups and individual artists, a huge magnet for tourism. I would implore you to put as much pressure on ministers as you can to make clear to them how important this issue is, and how vital it is for an agreement to be reached.'*

## Orchestral musician

*'One musician has been obliged to sign an annulment agreement which states that it would be illegal for the Spanish orchestra to employ him without having been able to secure the correct permit. He will not be remunerated. Also barred from applying for certain EU-based orchestral jobs (on the application notice it states that British passport holders are not eligible).'*

## Unknown

*From our recording standpoint, ease of work and travel in the EU has hit the buffers. And actually, very few people understand what we have to go through in the event of recording teams, such as ourselves, being able to work in Europe. I have two outstanding projects in the EU that were in the books, subject to Covid restrictions ending - one, the conclusion of a recording started a couple of years ago in Lille and the other a new project in Portugal with the ██████████. As things stand, neither can now go ahead. In both cases, the budgets were agreed in advance but now we would have to factor in trade carnets and costs of work visas and neither client is prepared to wear these, so the work will transfer to indigenous recording teams.*

*Similarly, there has always been an influx of EU artists coming to make recordings in this country and the situation here is just as confusing...So the present situation restricts both UK artists working abroad and also visiting artists working with UK recording teams.*

*You only need to mention the Proms as a major casualty of this. Sadly, the people in power probably do not realise what level of cooperation we have been accustomed to as culture has been way down the list of governmental priorities for many years - both on the left and the right.*

*The practical solution to this is to return to what we once had - i.e. artistic freedom of movement/employment throughout the EU bloc. But I can't see this being viewed as anything other than "remoaner speak". It has to be said that our sector has been completely ignored in Brexit negotiations and this has led to the current situation. Of course, it's all impossible anyway just at the moment due to Covid, but UK orchestras have relied on foreign touring as a major source of their revenue as they are not adequately funded by government. This Brexit/Covid double whammy completely exposes this. Surely the current "downtime" is the ideal moment to put the situation to rights so that when things can happen again, there is a clear way forward?*

*Lastly, in answer to our job vacancy for which we're holding interviews today, the most qualified applicant is from Austria. We cannot consider this lady without paying to be a licensed sponsor - the application fee for this is non-refundable. This is unsustainable and potentially limits us employing the best person for the job.*

# About

## About the ISM

The [Incorporated Society of Musicians](#) (ISM) is the UK's professional body for musicians and a nationally-recognised subject association for music. Since 1882, we have been dedicated to promoting the importance of music and protecting the rights of those working in the music profession.

We support almost 11,000 music professionals across the UK and Ireland with our unrivalled legal advice and representation, comprehensive insurance and specialist services. Our members come from all areas of the music profession and from a wide variety of genres and musical backgrounds.

We campaign tirelessly in support of musicians' rights, music education and the profession as a whole. We are a financially independent not-for-profit organisation with no political affiliation. This independence allows us the freedom to campaign on any issue affecting musicians.

## About the Musicians' Union

The Musicians' Union (MU) represents over 30,000 musicians working in all sectors and genres of music. As well as negotiating on behalf of its members with all the major employers in the industry, the MU offers a range of services tailored for the self-employed by providing assistance for professional and student musicians of all ages. MU website: [www.theMU.org](http://www.theMU.org)

The Union was founded in May 1893 in Manchester by a musician, JB Williams, who became the Union's first General Secretary. Further details about the history of the Union can be found here: <https://www.muhistory.com/>