**The problem with music….**

……is that it is so important to so many people for so many different reasons. It is a very important part of the lives of almost everyone. This may be listening to music, participating as an amateur, engaging for recreational or for health purposes, as a career, as a source of income or for other reasons.

At the 8th Research Into Music Education (RIME) conference this week in a session on ‘Changing contexts, evolving perspectives: Re-appraising music in higher education’ there were strong arguments made as to why music sits within humanity faculties in many universities – not the arts. Katie Overy gave an engaging and informative keynote on ‘the musical brain’. Many of the delegates were sociologists as well as musicians. Sistema, a social action programme using excellence in music; the German ‘Every Child an Instrument’; and England’s First Access whole class ensemble programmes were discussed. At the same time there were calls for the importance of music for its own sake not for its utilitarian values. I could go on….

And of course, they are all right. Better still, one function of music doesn’t have to eclipse another. What is it? Why are we doing it? Who is it for? What happens next? All become important questions for those who wish to get on with important business of engaging directly with music as active or passive participants. (Though I would argue that listening – often considered to be passive is often active too).

Policy makers and funders create frameworks and provide the wherewithal for music to take place. What we do within those frameworks and with that funding is up to us. Debates about: What is it? Why are we doing it? Who is it for? What happens next? are debates we must have as a music sector. They already happen in small pockets between small groups of individuals all over the place. Now is the time for music organisations to support and facilitate similar debates. If we can be smarter about how we communicate the importance of music, and to whom, we will be ready to benefit from the improvement in the economic situation when it finally comes. The fact that music cuts across so many areas means that there are many more places to seek funding but lots of policy areas to influence.

During my year as President of the ISM I will be doing my part to try to make a difference. I am also on the executive of the Music Education Council, a member of Music Mark and the SMA. Do let me know how I can be most supportive to you in this essential work and this critical time. halla@globalnet.co.uk 07850634239