

Jersey Music Service: introduction of user pays charges

I would just like to air my concerns about the potential loss of free music in schools. Since I was 9 years old, I have been a part of JIS and was lucky enough to learn the French horn. Everybody from all different backgrounds and schools island-wide has been able to unite in their love of music and as a result, a high percentage of school children, irrelevant of their financial status, are now enthusiastic musicians.

Many people I was friends with during my years with JIS would not have been able to or perhaps even considered it possible to learn an instrument had there been a fee involved. Though the service provides beginner instruments, I remember a few requests being made for cheap second-hand instruments by parents who were concerned about being able to afford an instrument now it was time to buy.

If music is no longer free, there won't be such an array of students involved with the JIS. Schools which don't accumulate wealthy children will most likely suffer a depleted music department whilst JIS, in the absence of students who cannot afford to join, will increasingly consist of a JCG/Beaulieu/Vic majority and lose some of its flavour.

I remember excitedly applying to play the trumpet and being tried on the trombone and tenor horn before settling on the French horn. Since then, I have played with JIS in Fort Regent, at the Bailiff's inauguration ceremony in town, with the marines in the Opera House and now, with the university band, touring Belgium. I have made good friends and overcome many fears with JIS. There were times when I had no self-esteem and wanted to give up, but I persevered and for that I am proud of myself.

Had money been involved, I know I would probably never have considered learning, let alone made it this far, for a French horn costs at least £1,000 and if it costs £165 a year (and let's be honest, once a fee is in place it is going to rise) and takes 4 years to get to the standard when it's worth making that investment, that's enough to discourage anyone from beginning to learn a beautiful instrument.

Some of my most positive childhood memories are thanks to JIS, and I am forever in debt to the kindness shown by Neil Sawyer and Dave Jones. Nothing is worth taking away that opportunity, restricting children's access to music based on finance. We should be looking to protect our island community, inspire the children and provide a system where opportunities are not dependent on wealth. The Island is small; we should try to support our people in every way possible,

Please don't take this social initiative away by making it wealth dependent. It's part of a local culture that the Government should be supporting. There are other ways to raise money. I fear that one day, Government will look and see that it has finances and international recognition only to realise that in the process, the local culture was lost.

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