



**MUSIC UNITE AND SHANKILL
ROAD DEFENDERS:
A REPORT INTO A PILOT
PROJECT ON THE ARTS AND
PEACEBUILDING**



**Beyond
Skin**

Dr Francis Teeney
and Professor John D Brewer



MUSIC UNITE AND SHANKILL ROAD DEFENDERS:

A REPORT INTO A PILOT PROJECT ON THE ARTS AND PEACEBUILDING

Dr Francis Teeney
and Professor John D Brewer

INDEX

FOREWORD | 03

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 04

INTRODUCTION | 05

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE | 07

MEDIA COVERAGE AND COMMENTS | 09

PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION | 13

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION | 17

RECOMMENDATIONS | 20

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF AUTHORS | 23

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | 24

This publication has received support from the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council which aims to promote a pluralist society characterised by equity, respect for diversity, and recognition of interdependence. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Council.

Photography: Hannah Mitchell



**Beyond
Skin**



FOREWORD



I want to say a sincere word of thanks to Dr Francis Teeney and Professor John Brewer for the substantial and conscientious work that they have done in producing this evaluation and review of the Music Unite project.

They correctly picked up the initial anxieties of those who participated in the project, especially the members of the Shankill Road Defenders Band, and these anxieties were shared by those of us who were considering the project at the start. We wanted to find ways of addressing the alienation of young people, especially young men in the working-class loyalist community, but finding ways to engage them in many of the usual work and educational projects proved a challenge. I have long been of the view that the Arts, especially music, have a key role to play in processes of healing and I introduced Music Therapy to the Centre for Psychotherapy that I established for the NHS in Belfast many years ago. However taking this principle from individual treatment to wider community problems when certain kinds of music had deeply divisive resonances was a much more challenging option. In the absence of obvious alternatives and with the good fortune of genuine commitment from Shankill Road Defenders Flute Band and support from Community Relations Council officials, our CEO, Eva Grosman and Darren Ferguson from Beyond Skin. I am extremely gratified that our external assessors share the sense of encouragement that we felt as the project proceeded and indeed the excitement that perhaps we were beginning to find a new route to peace and relationship building in our divided society - by no means the only route and certainly not a 'traditional route' but a new way of working together that goes beyond rational argument and links people and communities at that more fundamental level where music can engage.

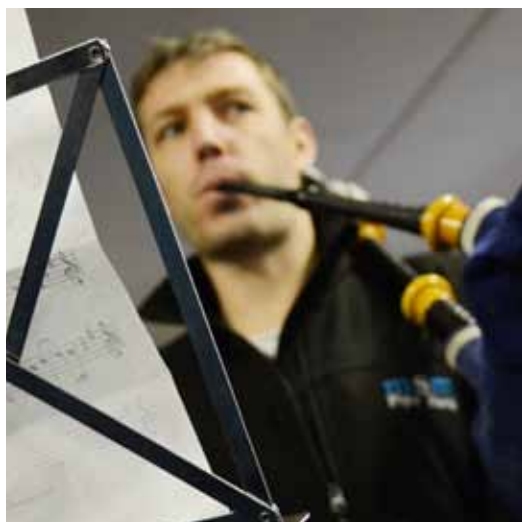
After substantial scrutiny, Professor Brewer and Dr Teeney not only give a seal of approval to the pilot and to following it up, they also provide a series of very helpful pointers towards increasing the value and potential success of Music Unite and, in addition to seeking all the necessary funding to take the project forward, we will now give careful consideration to how their valuable advice might be implemented.

The Lord Alderdice

CDPB Chairman



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS



- 01** The project was successful in meeting its aims.
- 02** The public was widely supportive and enthusiastic.
- 03** There was widespread encouragement amongst stakeholders to develop similar initiatives.
- 04** We recommend that more bands should be encouraged and facilitated to participate in initiatives like this.
- 05** We recommend targeted funding to encourage Loyalist bands to widen their musical horizons and to collaborate with musicians from other cultural backgrounds.
- 06** We recommend the development of professional codes of social conduct for participating bandmen as part of their music training.
- 07** We recommend the employment of professional musical directors to enhance professionalism.
- 08** We recommend further progress be made in developing a suitable repertoire of neutral music.
- 09** We recommend that future events are internationalised in terms of musicians, musical styles and musical instruments.
- 10** We recommend that key opinion formers, like the media, civil society and politicians, develop strategies that help in supporting changes in the public image of Loyalist musical culture.
- 11** We recommend that large musical events, festivals and public celebrations routinely involve Loyalist cultural and musical traditions.
- 12** We recommend careful consideration be given to venues, both to avoid tensions and exploit maximum publicity from Loyalist participation.
- 13** We recommend that future initiatives be conducted with transparency and openness and with full consultation in order to maximise community buy-in to them.
- 14** We recommend that future initiatives use an audience evaluation questionnaire to capture additional data.





INTRODUCTION



It has often been said that music is a common language throughout the world. Crotchets and quavers are a common language understood by musicians. However, a society's social divisions and cleavages can be reproduced in music. In Northern Ireland, for instance, Celtic harps, pipes and fiddles are identified with the Nationalist and Republican community, whereas Lambeg drums, flute bands and fifes are associated with the Loyalist community. In these circumstances music is not a unifying language but an identification of one's ethno-national allegiance. However, peace processes throughout the world often witness people taking risks to step outside conventional ways of doing things.

This Report looks at one such example, the Music Unite project developed by the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building (CDPB) in partnership with Beyond Skin that explored the potential for music to assist peacebuilding rather than perpetuate ethno-national division.



Music Unite aims to provide opportunities for members of Loyalist flute bands to meet and exchange musical ideas, genres and instrumental collaboration, in an effort to bring together people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. In doing so it was envisaged they would develop new skills, explore their own identity, challenge their own community's stereotypes as well as challenge the labels that have been attached to them.

Important to this was the aim of improving the public perception of the Loyalist band culture, by hosting public events where Loyalist band musicians can play with fellow musicians from Kurdistan, India, Slovakia, Ghana, Jamaica and Ireland, in total musical harmony and friendly cultural diversity. The three month project was supported by Cultural Awareness Workshops, culminating in public performances that included songs and tunes that belonged to no one side yet at the same time were globally recognised and accepted. The Shankill Road Defenders was the band that took part in the project.

This was a brave initiative. Within the Northern Ireland peace process many people have a part to play and peace initiatives present a challenge to everyone involved. These challenges come in different guises.





INTRODUCTION



First, there was anxiety about what the Loyalist community's reaction would be to the initiative. The challenges from within the band members' own community turned out to be exaggerated in spite of being real in the minds of the participants. Secondly, bandsmen faced musical challenges in being asked to play a completely different type of music incorporating global tunes. This was a major challenge and created a nervousness that understandably pervaded other aspects of the project.

Before we evaluate how the project overcame these challenges and met its aims, it is useful to briefly describe the nature of the project.

This was a brave initiative. Within the Northern Ireland peace process many people have a part to play and peace initiatives present a challenge to everyone involved.





BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE



The thirty-five members of the Shankill Road Defenders were attempting something admirable by branding themselves as facilitators of cultural togetherness through the medium of the arts. In the past, it would have been hard to imagine instrumental compatibility between flutes and drums from the Shankill Road, pipes from a Nationalist background and a wide variety of national instruments from as far afield as Jamaica, Ghana, and Kurdistan, and yet this is exactly what happened during the Music Unite project. The project was an attempt to reduce the social stigma around Loyalist band music, create a multi-cultural musical event, present Loyalist band music as a respectable part of the arts, and to tackle racism and sectarianism through the medium of music.

Such was the success, that the Shankill Road Defenders played at Belfast Culture Night where this achievement was measured not just by the impact that they made but because: [a] that they played there at all; [b] there was no controversy surrounding their performance; and [c] it was just one of two hundred and fifty other acts that performed on that evening.



It is fair to say that members of the band were slightly nervous about stepping outside of convention. They had to learn a new style of music, incorporating new tunes that required a completely new set of skills and improvement in their musical ability way above even they thought possible. In addition to this, band members also had to pay attention to feedback from within their local community. The local community on the Shankill Road, however, were fully supportive of the Band's initiative. Examples of this would be frequently stopping band members in the street, coming along to practices and vocally supporting them with public displays of encouragement.

The issue of learning a new type of music required a professional approach. With the cooperation and support of Music Unite, the Shankill Road Defenders employed the services of Mr John Higgins, who had been a friend of the band for a number of years while he was training at Music College in Glasgow - his speciality being the flute and music theory.



BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE



Although there were many people involved in this project who made its success possible, John Higgins requires special mention, as he scored new songs, composed new arrangements, incorporated visiting musicians from foreign shores and prepared the band to be assimilated into the arts. It is fair to say that Higgins allowed Loyalist bands to take their rightful place at the stand of arts and music, due to the standard of music he was able to instil.

The Community Relations Council provided support, funding, community platforms, forums and positive direction. It also invited the band to play at the Community Relations and Cultural Awareness Week. The band also toured the country with the visiting musicians. Even some of the venues chosen were of special political significance. For example the Crumlin Road Gaol was one such place where the band and visiting musicians performed.

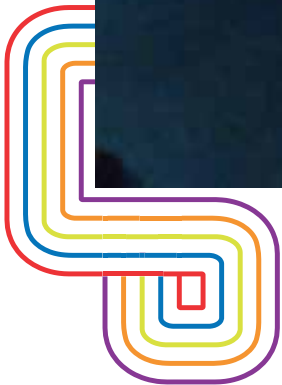


Following each performance discussions and dialogue sessions were held in order to promote greater understanding. There was no community backlash and music had indeed brought people together in an open way. Nothing was hidden from local communities and the initiative's agenda was agreed beforehand and accepted by all.



While Culture Night was the highlight for most if not all the band members and their visiting musicians, they also played at other venues as well. The tour of the country mentioned above included places such as The Braid in Ballymena which was covered by the Ballymena Times and a local radio station Q107 FM. In what follows, we first describe the media coverage the initiative received ¹.

¹ The data to evaluate this project was collected from a variety of sources, including the *Belfast Telegraph*, *The Irish News*, social media, local radio, local newspapers, the BBC reports on Belfast Culture Night coverage, from members of the Community Relations Council, and, most importantly, from the members of Shankill Road Defenders band.





MEDIA COVERAGE AND COMMENTS



The Belfast Telegraph is an extremely important medium for the dissemination of current affairs and peace process initiatives. In the past it has given considerable coverage to controversy surrounding Loyalist band parades. Therefore, it was very heartening that it welcomed the initiative and closely followed the activities of the Shankill Road Defenders. The Irish News, a mainly Nationalist medium, was also supportive of the initiative. Quoted in the Irish News, Jacqueline Irwin from the Community Relations Council said:

“There is one message that we hope everyone will get from the week: Nothing about the future can be taken for granted.”

“The job of learning to live peacefully is not yet done and if we want this place to be positive and inclusive, we all have to play a part in making it so at village, town, city and regional levels.”



The Belfast Telegraph went much further interviewing extensively those involved with the project: David Thompson the chairman of the band admitted:

“We were very nervous about going into town in full uniform with our bass drum with Shankill Road Defenders written all over it. But we reckoned our culture should be included in a Culture Night and that was the main driving force behind our taking part.”



David commented on people's reactions:

“I could see some folk in the audience wondering what was going on - especially as there were all these guys playing with us on bongo drums. In the end, we had nothing to worry about because the response was absolutely amazing.”

David said the Defenders, who have played at Somme commemorations in France and at Orange parades in Canada, were keen to break down barriers with Music Unite and to protect their own culture at the same time. He was also very aware of the political situation at present as he extensively explained to the Belfast Telegraph:

“The way the present situation is going with the Loyalist bands - we can't walk here and we can't walk there - we feel our culture is in danger. We are misinterpreted. We thought Music Unite would be an opportunity to show that we are not a sectarian mob and we are not racist. We are working-class people who go to our work and then try to express ourselves through our music. And we can feel sympathy with the multi-cultural people who live here and who are fighting the same battles as we are against bigotry and stereotyping”.





MEDIA COVERAGE AND COMMENTS



And yet despite some negative publicity around Loyalist bands David had encouraging words for people of all political and cultural persuasions:

“We want to get across the message that if the Shankill Road Defenders can sit down and play music with people from the other side of the world, why can’t everyone let them live beside them instead of wrecking their houses. They’re not monsters. Their culture is under threat - the same as ours.”



The Belfast Telegraph did not confine itself to the participation of the Shankill Road Defenders but also embraced the entire project by speaking to visiting musicians from other cultures. For instance Karwan Shareef, a human rights lawyer and musician from a Muslim background in Kurdistan who has been living in Belfast for nearly three years, says he believed Music Unite could be a force for good, for everyone. Karwan says he had been intrigued by the music and colourful exuberance of the Loyalist flute bands after seeing the Ulster Covenant Centenary celebrations in Belfast and wanted to know more and to get a greater understanding of the culture. He added:

“I was excited by the vision of Beyond Skin and was only too happy to get behind Music Unite. And I have discovered that the loyalist bands have been portrayed in exactly the same incorrect way as I have been coming from a Muslim community. We are all sometimes depicted as extremists or terrorists just as the loyalists - and nationalists - have been stereotyped, too.”



The extensive article covering various aspects also spoke to Darren Ferguson, the Chief Executive Officer of Beyond Skin, which has been trying to develop diversity through music, arts and dance for 11 years and which works with some 80 musicians from 50 different nationalities based here. He said:

“This all started after our partner organisation the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building approached us with a plan for a project which would engage Loyalist flute bands and help show the positive side of what they do rather than the negative stories which always seem to come out. There’s a lot of frustration in the Protestant community and with loyalist bands in particular that the negative image is the one which is always portrayed in the media, ignoring the great musicianship and the skills and discipline they are teaching young people. Irish traditional music is very easily accessible, but from a tourist point of view, there just doesn’t seem to be any access to the other side of our culture. Most Loyalist bands are hidden away in clubs somewhere, or if they are out playing





MEDIA COVERAGE AND COMMENTS



at parades they are always going to attract the same audience. The idea was to use music as the glue that would bring people together from different walks of life, learn about the bands and allow the bandsmen to find out about other cultures at the same time."

While the Belfast Telegraph gave extensive coverage to the project local papers such as the Ballymena Times also took time to recognise that something different and inspiring was happening here. Quoting a spokesperson for the project:

"The event was a celebration milestone of the journey, achievements and relationships developed between the Shankill Road Defenders Flute Band members and musicians from different cultural backgrounds".



The initiative utilised social media to disseminate news. A single Facebook video post received 243 'likes' and had 17, 676 views, which is very impressive. Among the various comments on the Facebook page were messages of support and encouragement. One comment left in response to a posted video remarked:

"A positive news story about a loyalist band - brilliant, keep up the great work guys."

Another comment saw a bigger picture:



"A fantastic example of how the arts unite all communities, well done to everyone involved."





MEDIA COVERAGE AND COMMENTS



Feedback on this small project was clearly very positive and there was agreement that as a pilot this was an excellent programme. It was good for the PUL community for many reasons, not least because it assisted people with their sense of identity by enabling them to see Loyalist culture in a positive light. The local community was very supportive, diffusing the major fear of the Shankill Road Defenders that there would be a backlash from their community. Quite the opposite evolved, with a generally positive attitude amongst community members towards the project. Furthermore, there were no sectarian overtones, given that it was an international and cross cultural event and the tunes and songs that were in the repertoire, such as 'Yellow Rose of Texas', were completely neutral. There was agreement amongst all stakeholders - the bandsmen, the visiting musicians, the CDPB, Beyond Skin, the Community Relations Council as well as those involved in Belfast Culture Night - that such a project reflected its multi-cultural musical influences and could indeed bridge divisions.

One measure of the benefits is that stakeholders in the initiative developed further ideas for future collaborations. One suggestion, for example, was for bands from Loyalist and Nationalist traditions to perform together at some point in the future, although, it was acknowledged that a little caution may be needed and that this would not happen immediately.

In what follows we first evaluate the project from the perspective of the participants, before offering our own analysis.



PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION



As noted, media coverage of this project was very positive. From major media outlets such as the Belfast Telegraph, the Irish News and smaller local newspapers such as the Ballymena Times, the positive reviews and the encouragement of this pilot project were evident. This itself was a great step by the media, considering some of the negative publicity in the past, often focusing on the anti-social behaviour of some people within the Loyalist marching band fraternity. Indeed, participants in this pilot project demonstrated excellent discipline, maximum co-operation, an international degree of friendliness and a crossing of the sectarian divide. This dedication and commitment accumulated in the Shankill Road Defenders being one of two hundred and fifty acts that took part in 'Belfast Culture Night'. The latter point is extremely significant as it diffused some original scepticism within Belfast City Council. The Shankill Road Defenders performance did not just add to the event in a very positive way but also propelled these positive feelings into the wider community.

The participants in the band and the international musicians deserve great credit, not only for stepping outside of their musical comfort zones but also for taking on the challenge to promote greater understanding and tolerance. Visiting musicians were able to come to Northern Ireland and engage with the project, despite some original hesitation that may have existed. They took on the challenge of coming to a new culture, brought their very different instruments and cultural heritage into the heart of the Shankill Road. Many musical obstacles were overcome, including different styles, rhythms and instruments which resulted in a tour of the country featuring a professional musical event supported by opportunities for dialogue.

As a personal experience, it cannot have been an easy start to the project for the Irish pipe player, Cormac O'Brian. He had never been on the Shankill Road before and commented that he was too afraid to tell his friends that he was taking part in the project. Even up to five minutes before his first practice he admitted to having severe doubts as to whether he could actually go through with the venture. The bandsmen were very conscious of his fears and they made him feel extremely welcome and safe. One of them remarking that perhaps he thought

"we were going to be throwing darts at a photograph of the Pope, when in actual fact all we wanted to do was play music together".





PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION



It is important not to underestimate the magnitude of the musical obstacles that this pilot project had to overcome. Introducing a great variety of various instruments associated with various cultures across the globe was a fantastic idea but not easy to put into practice, similarly styles of music were new and required openness and practice. One would hardly expect classical music to blend with 'Rock and Roll' or 'Heavy Metal' without some degree of artistic improvisation that allows harmonisation. The performances achieved exactly this. For instance, from another personal experience, Karwan Shareef, a Kurdish musician, was aware of some potential underlying Islamophobia, but yet when he played a Kurdish tune at his first meeting with the Shankill Road Defenders the drummers began to attempt to join in with the rhythm. Similar experiences were reported from other visiting musicians who were playing musical genres, such as Reggae from Jamaica. All these interpersonal encounters created a musical camaraderie that allowed Davy Bates from Beyond Skin, to remark upon the professionalism that the participants adopted. For instance, he stated that the

“uniforms buttons buckles and shoes were so meticulous that they could have been on parade in front of Buckingham Palace”.

It should also be highlighted that while Belfast City Council did not fund the band taking part in Culture Night, other individuals such as Adam Turkington, the Director of Culture Night, had no such reservations. He could clearly see the enormous benefits from bringing Loyalist bands in from the cold, giving them a prestigious public platform and embedding them into a project with a theme. People present at the Culture Night events were pleasantly surprised and perhaps somewhat bemused when a Loyalist marching band accompanied by an international flavour began to play the 'Yellow Rose of Texas', supported by Jamaican drums, followed by a professional rendition of the theme tune from 'Match of the Day'.



PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION



It is evident that a number of emotions were running through the entire project, not least of all nervousness on behalf of participants. Each new venue presented a new audience and with it a new challenge. Despite previous audiences reacting favourably, there was no guarantee that it would always be like that in different parts of Northern Ireland. And yet the bandsmen themselves were the first to admit that on each occasion this nervousness dissipated very quickly when they walked on stage and began to play. It became obvious up and down the country, that audiences approved of this venture and far from diluting their culture it broadened it, gave it respectability, brought it to a wider audience, internationalised the musical genre and de-stigmatised Loyalist bands, showing them not to be the sectarian bigots they are sometimes accused of being. One band participant, Darren, acknowledged that the project was a risk for many people given that it was surrounded in sensitivities, and yet he was quick to point out that this should not be a problem in the future as the pilot project was an overwhelming success, a huge step forward and should be easy to build on.

Whilst the band members themselves were very keen to expand the project, unfortunately, the difficulties of funding such a venture became very clear. The band members, as well as their international partners would have liked to have taken their music and message into schools and clubs so that other people could see that they were not just bands that play 'stereotypical music'. One of the international musicians, Karwan, commented, that this would be an excellent idea not only for breaking down sectarian barriers but as an aid to learning positively about other cultures. Another band member pointed out some other issues to be addressed should the extension of the project materialise, for example, that a neutral space should be found for rehearsals and workshops. Unfortunately, the Shankill Road may still be a difficult location for some interested participants from the wider community. Therefore, a neutral venue, ideally in Belfast City Centre might be more likely to attract people from across the sectarian divide.

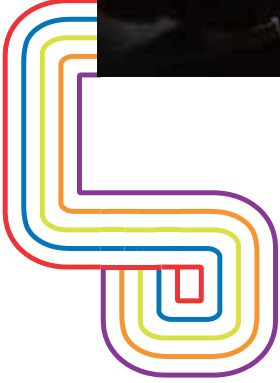


PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION



The band members themselves were very enthusiastic about the results of this pilot project involving Music Unite. It removed stereotypes, racism and sectarian labels. They believed with these obstacles removed, the audience could just listen to the music and appreciate it. Other successes worth mentioning were a greater attendance at band practice. It gave people a sense of belonging, it was good for the PUL community and it did take young people off the streets. Perceptions of Loyalist bands among the Protestant middle class changed greatly. Many in the band thought that the middle classes were ashamed of working class Loyalists. One prominent member of the band, Davy Thompson, felt there was an ever improving situation for the band, with people taking a greater pride in their achievements and this was reinforced by compliments from the local community.

A personal comment by Cormac O'Brian, illustrates this very well. He pointed out, that Irish traditional music could be found in pubs and clubs up and down the land, it is regularly heard on television and radio and widely available to buy on CD etc. It is a reflection of the musical culture of Nationalism. Cormac was therefore surprised that the cultural music of Loyalism was not as readily available throughout the same mediums as Irish traditional music. The Music Unite project is impacting greatly in this field and is a chance for this to change in the future. Evidence for this came from the mainstream media who were very supportive of and enthusiastic about the results achieved in this pilot project. Perhaps the members of the band, the CDPB, Beyond Skin and their visiting international musicians, as well as their professional band leader, John Higgins, have demonstrated in some small way, that music can transcend and bridge divides. They believed that this pilot project could be repeated and developed as long as there are musicians willing to accept invitations and engage with other communities.



The band members themselves were very enthusiastic about the results of this pilot project involving Music Unite. It removed stereotypes, racism and sectarian labels. They believed with these obstacles removed, the audience could just listen to the music and appreciate it.



ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION



It is quite evident that the aims and objectives of Music Unite were met. It was undisputedly a great success in bringing together Shankill Road Defenders with a team of international musicians under the directorship of Musical Director, John Higgins. The venture did not fracture but rather nurtured camaraderie and esteem. The attitudes of the band members certainly changed on many fronts. It enabled them to achieve a high standard of music. The challenge of incorporating a wide variety of international musicians stretched the band members to achieve even greater musical heights. It increased their self-esteem and gave them a sense of achievement that was measurable. It became evident from repeated comments that appearing at Culture Night was a highlight for them - something they would not have dreamed possible or within their abilities prior to taking part in the pilot project. Their behaviour also changed. Professional commitment was clearly demonstrated by the bandsmen, resulting in great dedication and devotion to raising the standards of their musical ability; evidenced also in the way they turned themselves out in their uniforms and regalia.

Some of the other aims were very challenging. Attempting to reframe the perception of a Loyalist band is no easy task. Yet the public performances alongside international musical visitors at various venues across Northern Ireland have gone some considerable way to showing others a pathway that can be followed to shake off the stigma of sectarianism. Combining musical performances with opportunities for dialogue the project facilitated many of the benefits discussed above for the band members, the international guest musicians, the supporters of the project and the wider community. With the evolving ideas for follow-up projects along similar lines, it is very clear that the project was a great success, with the participants involved craving for more, despite the hard work required. The coverage in the press and on social media shows that the public also viewed it in a positive way.

It is quite evident that the aims and objectives of Music Unite were met. It was undisputedly a great success in bringing together Shankill Road Defenders with a team of international musicians under the directorship of Musical Director, John Higgins.



ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION



At a micro level it did improve social and race relationships with those who came into the project, including the audiences. For instance David Thompson speaking to the Belfast Telegraph explained that the struggles that Loyalist bands face in being accepted and stereotyped are no different from Muslim people trying to live in peace in Belfast: “...we can feel sympathy with the multi-cultural people who live here and who are fighting the same battles as we are against bigotry and stereotyping”.

However, it has to be acknowledged, that this was a pilot project that involved only one band with a limited amount of musical visitors and within a limited time frame. It is evident that a greater expansion of the idea would be essential in order to make a greater impact within cross community and cross cultural relationships.

The pilot project was too small to evaluate its impact on improving social relations in the wider community with respect to sectarianism and racism, but its impact on the musicians and the media is impressive, as illustrated by the two page spread in the Belfast Telegraph. Music in itself can sometimes be seen as the panacea to many ills, yet the internationalisation of music as a medium for bringing people together can also bring cultures together under a common theme. In the case of this project there is ample evidence to merit a repetition of the project on a much larger scale in order to establish its effects on the wider community. This would require larger number of bands, a much wider participation, and involvement not just from Belfast audiences and participants but from rural bands as well. The actual name of the project - Music Unite says that music can indeed unite people of different skins, creeds and colours. This is particularly so when a brand of music such as that of Loyalist marching bands is brought under the umbrella of the arts, as it makes it more acceptable, less threatening, less sensitive and very accessible. It was a very effective way of reaching out to Loyalists, as it provided cultural recognition of Loyalist culture - a vitally important aspect of the peace process in order to overcome Loyalist marginalisation. An expanded project that involved other musical and cultural traditions could well assist interaction and engagement with Nationalist and Republican musicians.





ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION



This is very well illustrated by the suggestion from within the Shankill Road Defenders band that someday it would be a good idea if a Catholic and Protestant band played together. Whilst they added a caveat that this might be difficult in the immediate future, the fact that it was not ruled out can only be viewed as a positive and bold step forward. Even such a suggestion itself demonstrated a real change in attitudes and perceptions amongst the bandsmen.

While this is a remarkable suggestion for a band from the Shankill, it would not be completely new for Northern Ireland, as recently a Loyalist band performed in Derry/Londonderry with a band from a Nationalist background. Nor is it unique historically. In the early 1930s, as part of the outdoor relief crisis, the working class men of Belfast marched together to protest at the lack of work. The accounts of the day showed that Loyalist bands marched down the Shankill Road and Nationalist bands marched down the Falls Road, meeting in Belfast City Centre, where they mingled together and played a neutral tune, 'O Yes We Have No Bananas'.

One way to encourage further cross-community musical collaboration is to de-sensitise the occasion by making it part of a larger celebration. Initiatives like that of Music Unite in bringing together the Shankill Road Defenders and visiting international musicians would work even better when made part of a bigger celebration, such as Community Relations and Cultural Awareness Week. There are several other occasions, however, when such an initiative could take advantage of being part of a bigger whole, such as St Patrick's Week Celebrations, the West Belfast Festival, the East Belfast Festival, the CS Lewis Festival, plus many multi-cultural events given over to the Chinese and Indian communities. It would also be vital that any future initiatives should involve bands from rural communities in order to extend the number of participating bandsmen.

Given that this small project was effective in overcoming bandsmen's feelings of ostracism and helped in dispelling stereotypical myths about the innate sectarianism and bigotry of Loyalist bands, it can be argued that the project helped in assuaging

working class Protestant frustrations over their marginality. The bandsmen themselves, on travelling around the country and opening themselves up to media and audience question and answer sessions, displayed a model of good behaviour which is completely at odds with television and newspaper reports on other significant days of the year. This can only be an asset to the peace process as it assists communities in learning to live together. The Music Unite project could be seen as a building block on which to accumulate greater progress, were it to be expanded. The point, though, is to use this pilot project as a learning experience so that larger initiatives in the future can benefit from it. We thus turn to a series of recommendations.



RECOMMENDATIONS



In order for any future extension of this pilot project to be successful several key factors need to be incorporated. Of course, among these would be the willingness of Loyalist bands to engage in the arts. As became clear with the pilot project, there was not only willingness from the band members but encouragement from the local community and therefore one can be optimistic that the original fears of getting involved with this venture would be unfounded. The subsequent positive media coverage, the social media chatter and the benefits of participating in Culture Night are all positive indicators that would encourage other bands to get involved in festivals. The arts provide many opportunities to bring Loyalist bands into the mainstream musical family and traditions. We recommend that more bands should be encouraged and facilitated to participate in initiatives like this.

It is imperative that any participating band in any future project would develop much wider relationships than they have at present. The weekly or monthly band parades witness the same member turning up to the same venues, playing the same tunes before returning home to await the next venue. In order to broaden their musical contacts, targeted funding should be made available to those bands that wish to collaborate with musicians and musical partners from a much wider community and cultural background. We recommend targeted funding to encourage Loyalist bands to widen their musical horizons and to collaborate with musicians from other cultural backgrounds.

Critical to this expansion in Loyalist participation in multi-cultural musical events is professional behaviour by the bandsmen themselves. This pilot project showed a perfect example of good practice. Participation enhanced professional behaviour and expansion would have the effect of improving the behaviour of bandsmen as a result of working alongside professional musicians. We recommend the development of professional codes of social conduct for participating bandsmen as part of their music training.

Another key recommendation for any future expansion on this pilot project is to continue embarking on the development of a repertoire of common songs, with an inclusive neutral manner. Witnessing the Shankill Road Defenders playing 'The Yellow Rose of Texas' and the 'Match of the Day Theme', did not arise naturally, but was facilitated by their professional Musical Director, John Higgins. The development of an inclusive repertoire would institutionalise neutrality. We recommend the employment of professional musical directors to enhance professionalism. We recommend further progress be made in developing a suitable repertoire of neutral music.



RECOMMENDATIONS



The institutionalisation of neutrality was not only assisted by the employment of a professional musical director and a neutral repertoire of music, it was the result of internationalising the initiative by involving musicians from across the globe and by using musical instruments from diverse cultures. We recommend that future events are internationalised in terms of musicians, musical styles and musical instruments.



One of the aims of the pilot initiative was to change public thinking and perceptions about Loyalist bands and band music. Liberating people's thinking from old-fashioned negative stereotypes about Loyalist musical culture might well be the outcome for participants and audiences involved in the initiative, but this 'cognitive liberation' can be facilitated by changes in image amongst other musicians, the media, civil society groups and politicians, so that the wider public undergoes transformation in how they perceive this musical tradition. We recommend that key opinion formers, like the media, civil society and politicians, develop strategies that help in supporting changes in the public image of Loyalist musical culture.



The effectiveness of this small-scale pilot initiative in meeting its aims assures us that the example should now be rolled out on a larger scale and attached to numerous festivals and public events, particularly those that are shared and involve members of the public from all traditions. The larger the event, the greater the public nature of the event, and the more internationally diverse it is, the more effective will be the de-sensitisation of Loyalist band participation and the more extensive will be the improvement in the public's image of Loyalist musical culture. We recommend that large musical events, festivals and public celebrations routinely involve Loyalist cultural and musical traditions.





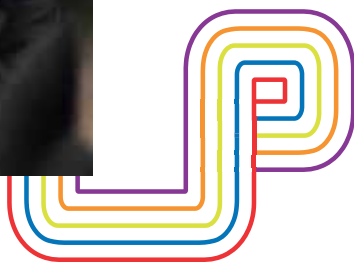
RECOMMENDATIONS



Where some venues might be considered problematic because of community tensions, it would be advisable that concerts be held in neutral spaces. Strategic decisions about the location of events should be made to avoid tensions but also to maximise and to enhance the impact of Loyalist involvement, such as at prestigious venues and public festivals. We recommend careful consideration be given to venues, both to avoid tensions and exploit maximum publicity from Loyalist participation.

A further recommendation is that any future project should be open, transparent, with full consultation with the host communities. One thing that is clear in processes of conflict transformation is that secrecy only breeds suspicion; this was especially so in Northern Ireland. The Music Unite pilot project undertaken by the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building, Beyond Skin and the Shankill Road Defenders benefitted enormously by employing open and honest communication at all times. So much so that one ardent opponent became an active supporter of the project after one meeting when everything was made clear. We recommend that future initiatives be conducted with transparency and openness and with full consultation in order to maximise community buy-in to them.

Finally, in order to ensure full and effective evaluation, future initiatives should use an audience evaluation questionnaire to capture another perspective on the effectiveness of the initiative. We recommend that future initiatives use an audience evaluation questionnaire to capture additional data.





BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF AUTHORS

Professor John D Brewer

John Brewer is Professor of Post Conflict Studies at Queen's University Belfast. He is a Member of the Royal Irish Academy, Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He has held visiting appointments at Yale University, St John's College Oxford, Corpus Christi College Cambridge and the Australian National University. He holds an Honorary DSocSci from Brunel University, London for services to social science. He has been President of the British Sociological Association and is now Honorary Life Vice President. He is a member of the UN Roster of Global Experts for his work on peacebuilding. He is the author or co-author of 15 books and editor, or co-editor, of a further three. He is Book Series Editor for Palgrave Studies in Compromise after Conflict. He was Principal Investigator on the six-year, £1.26 million Leverhulme Trust-funded project Compromise after Conflict, which explored victim issues in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Sri Lanka, and runs its online interactive data archive <http://compromiseafterconflict.org>.

Dr Francis Teeney

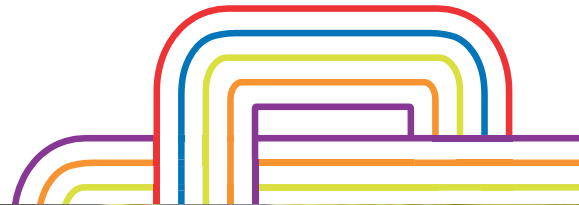
Francis Teeney works at the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice and the School of Psychology at Queen's University Belfast. He is also an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Aberdeen. He currently is an Outer International Assessment Board (IAB) member for the Government of Ireland (GOI) Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme - the second time he has been asked to take up the position. He was the co-founder and editor of the Compromise after Conflict blog which attracted over 1.5 million hits within one year. He has recently founded a new blog Political Mind Fields based at the School of Psychology, for which all main party political leaders including the Deputy First Minister have written. In the past he was the project manager for HUMAINE - an EU funded project comprising 43 international universities and partners researching emotions; he remains a media commentator on Northern Ireland politics and has written several articles and books with Professor John D Brewer on the Northern Ireland peace process.





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank our Music Director John Higgins and Shankill Road Defenders Flute Bank for their commitment, dedication and courage and Dr Lydia Wilson, Senior Fellow, Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict, Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford for her assistance with the interviews and field research.





CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY AND PEACE BUILDING



Beyond Skin