

# Don't turn off the

Gavin Henderson fears that strides made in bringing music into the community could be halted by the Education Bill, he tells **Simon Tait**

**I**n trying to find a mirror of the present music scene in all its polychrome facets, it's hard to look beyond Gavin Henderson. There isn't a part of this country's musical patchwork that Henderson hasn't featured in. So when someone of Henderson's stature expresses fears of the future of music he deserves to be listened to.

Henderson established a reputation as an artistic director and manager in Bracknell, Dartington and Brighton before becoming principal of Trinity College of Music in 1994. He is also the founding chairman of the lottery funded project the National Foundation for Youth Music, now shortened to Youth Music, which since its foundation in 1998 has been devoted to bringing music to the non-school lives of young people from five to 18. The peril for him is fundamental, he says, and it could be devastating.

"My real fear is the fragmentation of the music in schools" he said. "Music supply systems to schools in the 80s and early 90s were starved, effectively destroying music teaching because of the patchy and often non-existent funding, and gradually that has been hauled back by a recovery programme.

"The Education Bill the DfES is putting through now could take us right back to the start, with schools having to make choices themselves from limited funding again.

"There are some really good things in the Music Manifesto (see right), but all that



could be negated if we go back to music in schools being an unaffordable luxury."

This has a knock-on effect on music colleges, on orchestras, on concert halls, on audiences and on the general cultural life of the nation, he says.

He's proud of the achievements of Youth Music, but there are concerns about just how much cover its programmes can provide.

"It was devised to fill in gaps, by providing music services outside the education system particularly in areas where music for young people is scarce, but it can't be a core provider" he says.

For it is in the community that music's future lies, not in the conservatoire studio, as he has found in Greenwich where he moved the college from central London.

"Higher education has been based on a

traditional model of getting young musicians fit to join an orchestra, but it is changing with outreach and community partnerships, working as teams – music making for a job is as important now as appearing in the Royal Festival Hall. We've proved that music has real social value, and performing arts companies are now moving to the Greenwich area because it's turned out to be so vibrant"

And by "we" he means not just the students of Trinity, not just the facilitators of Youth Music – whose chief executive, Christina Coker, last year called for training camps for children who wanted to sing but didn't have the opportunity at school; it's also the Laban Centre in its brand new Deptford building where new cross-overs between music and contemporary dance are being tested; Blackheath Halls where the programme is offering opera, folk and the cross-cultural work of the singer Susheela Raman in the next few weeks; it's at Dartington which has been named one of the three centres of excellence by the Arts Council (with Gateshead and Aldeburgh).

"It's electrifying what's happening, but deeply worrying that in the education funding world attempts at recovering so much lost ground are in danger of being cancelled out."

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# music

Departmental u-turns encapsulated in the controversial Education Bill could spell the end of last year's Music Manifesto, which started so cheerfully with the words...

## 'Music can be magic'

Two departments, the DfES and the DCMS, collaborated last year with music organisations, musicians, teachers and composers, the music industry, broadcasting, teachers' unions, arts and education charities and trusts, with the Musicians' Union, the Specialist Schools Trust, ACE, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, Ofsted, the Teacher Training Agency and Youth Music – 60 individuals in all – on three seminars, led by the then school standards minister, David Miliband, which resulted in the Music Manifesto.

At its heart, Miliband said, was a desire to see more opportunities in music for more young people, from high quality curriculum tuition to out of school hours garage bands; from composing to live performance; from classical concerts to DJ-ing and gigs.

More than 40 organisations signed up for what

was to be a three to five year programme to provide every young person with first access to a range of music experiences; to provide more opportunities for young people to deepen and broaden their musical interests and skills; to identify and nurture our most talented young musicians; to develop a world class workforce in music education; to improve the support structures for young people's music making.

In short, says its introduction, the Music Manifesto is about creating more music for more people. At its heart "is a determination that all those involved in music education should work together to deliver musical opportunities for young people. We intend it to be a benchmark for future activities across the music sector.

"We hope that it will act as a spur for those who want to contribute to music education but don't know how, and we believe that it will help both to nurture diversity and to channel it, so that activities are mutually reinforcing."

Miliband had already announced an extra £30 million for music services, seen as a support for the good intentions of the later

manifesto, but Gavin Henderson and others fear an announcement by schools minister Jacqui Smith a year later signals a skidding u-turn by a post-Miliband DfES.

That "Wider Opportunities" fund – now melted to £26m – was abruptly changed when she said the money would not be ring-fenced. In other words, heads could spend the cash wherever they liked, with a recommendation but no incentive to spend it on music.

The likes of Henderson and Richard Morris, of the Associated Board which sets all music exams, see a return to the 1988 Education Reform Act which delegated local authority music fund money direct to schools, which devastated music teaching for more than a decade.

In 1999 Labour government created a Music Standards Fund, which currently feeds £59m direct from government, but with the u-turn on the Wider Opportunities money Morris sees that also being turned over to heads to spend as they wish.

And the Music Manifesto, like magic, will disappear in a puff of smoke.

*Pictures: Youth Music*

of the music in schools... The through now could take us right ving to make choices themselves Henderson