



Artist Mentoring Programme

Background

Folk, roots and acoustic music is an important but specialist genre within the UK music industry. Over the past decade, the opportunities and audiences have developed alongside radical changes in the wider music industry. Coupled with this, the COVID-19 pandemic has made a career in live performance even more precarious.

As a result, it is absolutely essential for any musician at the start of their career to understand the industry they are working in, learning how to operate and grow their own businesses. Being a musician is far more than playing music. This programme aims to give emerging artists the skills and networks to thrive both in the UK and in the growing international markets.

Programme Objectives

The EEx Artist Mentoring Programme will enable artists to understand the national and international music industry and their role within it. On completion of the EEx Artist Mentoring Programme, we expect artists to be 'export ready' for new and international markets.

English Folk Expo deem artists to be export ready if they:

- *Can demonstrate experience of regular live performances across the UK and potentially beyond*
- *Have released an album in the past 24 months or are planning to release an album in the next 12 months. They must be able to demonstrate knowledge of distributing and promoting recorded music, including physical and digital distribution channels both in the UK and internationally.*
- *Have a team in place to cover the roles of manager, booking agent, label and distributor. Where an artist is self-representing, they must be able to demonstrate knowledge of these areas.*
- *Have a quality, multiplatform and up to date online presence, relevant to target markets.*
- *Can articulate a strategy for developing their career and how performing in a new territory supports their career progression.*

Over 12 months, participants will study selected areas of the music industry, developing their awareness, widening networks and creating a strategy tailored to suit their own business needs. By the end of the course, participants will have a firm understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different parts of the sector, developed new contacts and networks within the industry and have a clear road map for them to follow in the next stage of their careers.

The key topics covered are:

Stagecraft

Participants will work with Nancy Kerr to hone their stagecraft skills. This will comprise a session exploring different approaches to stagecraft. Participants will learn practical skills related to performing in both gig settings and showcases including around show advance, set creation and performance skills. Later in the course, all participants will have a live performance opportunity at Cambridge Folk Festival which will be

reviewed and fed back on. This concert set will include them on the festival billing and be in front of a public audience in The Den; Cambridge FF's space for emerging artists.

Recorded Music

Throughout the year, participants will develop a strong understanding of the recorded music side of the industry. This includes the steps needed to release an album, including physical and electronic methods of distribution in UK and overseas markets. Further to this will be a focus on how to generate financial return on recorded music including sync, licensing and publishing. There will be opportunities to speak directly to representatives from PPL and PRS, as well as other music bodies.

Live Touring

An essential part of being a professional musician in the folk, roots and acoustic sector is through developing a successful live touring offer. In this part of the course, participants will look at the roles of a booking agent and promoter. They will learn about how festival bookers and venue promoters book artists, building personal networks within the sector and understanding the financial structures of deals. Participants will also develop an understanding of the practicalities associated with international touring.

Audience Development

Being able to demonstrate that there is an audience for an artist is vital. Online presence including live footage, social media activity and website are important tools in growing and tracking an audience. The course will include panel discussions and learning about a range of audience development areas. Topics may include information on how to use audience data analytics, develop a mailing list and what should go into an EPK. It will also cover the role of PR and the constant hunt for reviewers and industry recognition.

Business Planning

At the end of the course, participants will have developed a business plan setting out their aims, direction and strategy over the next few years to help them ensure they are on track and viable as a micro-business. There will be a session with an industry expert specifically to explore business planning development. Participants should complete the course with a strong sense of direction and purpose for their careers and this will be articulated as a road map in their personalised business plans. These documents are vital both for artists to map their own progression, and also for funders to determine whether to invest in emerging artists.

Programme Structure

Mentor

Each artist will work with an industry Mentor for the full duration of the scheme. The mentor will have regular conversations with the artists, supporting their development and advising on how to get the most from their opportunities. Mentors are professionals in the folk, roots and acoustic music industry with a broad knowledge of the sector. In almost all cases, they will have been past delegates at English Folk Expo and other showcase events.

Training Days (Friday 16th and Saturday 17th October 2020 – subject to government guidance)

Over two days participants will take part in bespoke training sessions outlining the areas covered by the course, meeting their assigned mentor and getting to know the fellow participants. During these days, they will receive in depth tuition from music industry professionals about key elements of the music industry. Day 1 will be a bespoke, tailored package for the individual participants, meeting their mentor, discussing stagecraft and looking at business planning. Day 2 will be the [Featured Artist Coalition's A:E Day](#) (also open to other artists) which will cover generating income through live touring, intellectual property, audience development and sourcing business. There will also be an opportunity to hear from graduates of the previous years' course. (2 days)

Americana Music Association-UK Conference (Tuesday 26th to Thursday 28th January 2021)

The first of two industry conference events for our participants. AMA-UK is the UK conference for Americana and roots music. Conference panel sessions focus on the wider music industry and has representatives from organisations like PPL, British Underground, BPI and more. There are great opportunities to meet artists and industry from the UK and US roots scenes, hear from funders, labels, promoters and artists, creating new contacts and networking within a small and friendly industry conference. In the evenings, participants will attend the showcasing concerts, seeing a showcase from the point of view of an industry delegate. (3 days)

Cambridge Folk Festival (Thursday 29th July to Monday 2nd August 2021)

Possibly the most famous UK folk festival, participants will perform a short set in Cambridge FF's emerging artist performance space, The Den. They will then have a conversation with our expert stagecraft tutor, Nancy Kerr, to provide feedback on the set, based on the conversations from the Training Days in October. Participants will be billed as performing artists at Cambridge Folk Festival. All performances will be on one day of the festival, exact date TBC. (1 day)

Business Plan Writing

Following the stagecraft performance, artists should then draft up a business plan for themselves covering the next 3 years. Resources for business planning will be provided by English Folk Expo. The mentor will assist the artist in creating this plan.

FOCUS Wales (2021 Dates TBA)

The second of two industry conference events for our participants. FOCUS Wales is an eclectic showcase of emerging artists from all genres. Conference sessions are aimed specifically at emerging artists in the UK music scene and cover topics including showcasing, fundraising and digital opportunities. There are opportunities for one-to-one conversations with key industry professionals to discuss any aspect of career progression and learning. Participants will also get the opportunity to watch multiple artist showcases in a variety of genres and also perform as part of this showcase. (3 days)

English Folk Expo (Thursday 21st to Saturday 23rd October 2021)

To finish the course, participants return to Manchester for the English Folk Expo Showcase where they will perform as part of the delegate showcases. They will meet the next cohort of participants and giving tips and feedback to them on how to make the most of their 12 months. On Saturday, they will host a stand at the EFX Trade Fair and attend delegate activities, including access to the late night networking bar space at HOME. This will give participants finishing the programme an opportunity to speak to delegates about their experiences and promote their music to the music industry attending EFX. There will also be a performance opportunity as part of this weekend. (3 days)

EFEx Digital Membership

Throughout the year, participants on the course will receive free membership of the [English Folk Expo Digital platform](#). This enables artists to have a profile on the digital platform, access information about industry professionals, see various opportunities for artists and to access relevant online resources.

Partners



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