

Written evidence from Name Withheld [MiM0005]

I am a semi-professional musician from Oxford. I have worked for several years in both classical and popular music, but I stopped working in classical music as a direct result of the misogyny I experienced.

Areas where I have witnessed and/or been a victim of misogyny are classical choirs - both within Oxford University and in external professional choirs -, professional recording studios, and any amateur or professional jazz music environment.

What expectations are there on women working in the music industry compared to men?

- Far far greater expectations are placed on women. If a woman has been “allowed into” a toxic male environment, she is expected to be completely perfect, and any mistakes are seen as confirmation of the belief that women are less capable.
- In a professional church choir I was part of in Oxford - notably consisting purely of women and girls who were teenagers to early twenties, and men who were in their forties or older - there was a huge culture of misogyny.
 - Jokes were frequently made about the intelligence and ability of soprano and alto sections.
 - If mistakes were made by members of these sections, it would be pointed out with mockery or a sense of inevitability.
 - By contrast, mistakes made by tenor or bass sections were given a respectful, supportive approach, with advice on eg. how to stay in tune during a difficult/ clashing note. There was a sense that the men were professionals, and the women were amateurs.
 - Women would be talked about disrespectfully when they weren't there, with implications of stupidity or lack of musical ability. As a woman this gave me a sense that I was being talked about in a similar way.
- In a professional recording studio I have been working in, I have heard a lot of very alarming information about the behaviours of one male artist who records at the venue.
 - I have been told he frequently offers recording opportunities to “young attractive women” and then makes sexual advances on them in the studio. The person who told me this information stated that these women are “all the same type, very petite, young, impressionable, shy and attractive”.
 - I have been told that he met another recording studio client who was a “young attractive woman”, then in the presence of another engineer, wrote and sent inappropriate messages to her.
 - The person who told me this information encouraged me to leave the studio before he arrived, with an implication that he might behave in similar ways towards me.
 - I have been told by the person relaying the information that “this is all very normal in [the genre]”
- In Oxford university choirs I have experienced less misogyny than the extremely toxic church environment I worked in.
 - However, I often found that men were treated, and behaved with a sense of having superior musicianship.

- In professional and amateur band rehearsals, I have frequently experienced men assuming I have far less competence and knowledge than I actually have.
 - I am a synth player, and it is usually assumed that I lack a lot of knowledge about the technicalities of synthesisers.
- Student music group environments - such as jazz societies and band societies - are almost exclusively competitive male environments. There might be occasional “token women”, but they are usually singers. There is a sense that “true instrumental musicianship” is for men.
 - I am a synth player, but never felt welcome or confident performing in my university jazz society. No women ever played instruments during live jam sessions. It was competitive and unwelcoming - which is very typical of that kind of space.
- Generally I have found in rehearsal situations men will compliment each other’s playing. Women are never complimented - they have things explained to them (usually things they already know).

What types of support exists for women experiencing sexism or misogyny in the music industry? How can they report problems or abuse?

- This point is almost laughable but sad at the same time. There is literally no support, just sad groups of women all nodding in solidarity because we all experience the same thing. Who are you supposed to go to about these problems? If you talk to men about the endless pervasive frustrations and barriers experienced by women, they eventually start to feel the exhaustion of it and can’t really deal with being confronted by it.
- In the professional church environment I worked in I made a complaint about the toxic culture.
 - The person who handled my complaint said that “the language I was using was very inflammatory” and that they would “have to take it very seriously, if I was sure I wanted to use words like “bullying” and “toxic culture””. I dropped the complaint. It completely wasn’t worth my energy or time. It was much easier for me - as with all women in this situation - to just leave, and try and find more supportive environments.

What steps should the Government and other industry bodies take to tackle misogynistic and sexist attitudes towards women in music?

- Things that men could be taught:
 - What it feels like to be in a professional space where everyone is a gender that you aren’t. How off-putting this feels, how much pressure that puts on you as an individual to “represent all women”, and how unwelcoming it is.
 - Research and data that demonstrates how men often dominate conversations but perceive women as “too talkative”.
 - That women/ people might be much more competent and capable than they believe.
 - They are not necessarily a better/ more competent musician than someone else just because they are a man, but they might be treated like it.

- It is my personal belief (from having worked in primary education settings) that men need to be taught about misogyny from primary school age. This education should be thorough, continuous, and working towards discouraging them from performing misogynistic behaviour.
- Men need to be educated, relentlessly, about misogyny, and taught **how to not be misogynistic**. Women know about this stuff already. Support groups aren't enough. The change is on men. Men need to know HOW to be better at supporting women.

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