



# **The Polyphonic Ground: Developing Collective Collaboration in Presenting Indigenous and Diasporic Musics Across the Greater Toronto Area**

**April 2019**



**Polyphonic**  
**GROUND**  
Hear Toronto. Where the World Lives.



Cultural Pluralism in the Arts  
Movement Ontario  
(CPAMO)







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# 1. Introduction

Formed in 2017 with the support of Small World Music, Polyphonic Ground is a collective resulting from the shared goals and vision of the following partners: Ashkenaz Foundation, Batuki Music Society, Good Kind Productions, Link Music Lab, MonstrARTity, Music Africa, Revolutions Per Minute, Small World Music Society, Uma Nota Culture and World Fiddle Day Toronto.

It's mission is to build Toronto into a premier centre celebrating the music of the world, as measured by more people enjoying more artist performances at venues across the Greater Toronto Area, and to serve and support the growth of its collective live music presenters.

In this context, Polyphonic Ground's seeks to provide points of connection for artists and audiences, strengthen industry practices and be a united voice to government, business and industry. Polyphonic Ground will encourage exchange and discovery through an innovative Polyphonic Ground monthly double-bill series and professional development initiatives for diverse artistic leaders.

This shared collaborative working model unites 12 small to medium-sized live music presenters committed to building and sustaining Toronto as a global music city. The initial 12 organizations include Ashkenaz Foundation, Batuki Music Society, Good Kind Productions, iNative, Link Music Lab, Lula Music & Arts Centre, MonstrARTity Creative Community, Music Africa, Revolutions Per Minute, Small World Music Society, Uma Nota Culture, and World Fiddle Day Toronto. Together, these presenters constitute a formidable cultural force, employing 40 key operating people and presenting almost 300 concerts per year to an estimated audience of over 300,000.

To initiate this effort, Polyphonic Ground has launched a series of double-bill concerts on the second Thursday of every month at Revival Bar, 783 College Street. Two distinct partner organizations have been paired to collaboratively program a night of musical discovery. The inaugural concert paired Ashkenaz Foundation and Small World Music Society followed by Batuki Music and Uma Nota, Link Music Lab and Good Kind Productions, and Lula Music & Arts and Music Africa.

Beyond the concert hall, Polyphonic Ground is determined to increase access to training and leadership, bolstering professional development opportunities within the music industry. A key part of this has been the convening of a Diversity & Live Music Panel Series supported by MusicOntario, Music Canada Live, City of Toronto and Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario (CPAMO). The purpose of this series has been to cover topics that range from funding, media coverage, city services, conferences and venues to programming.

Further, in partnership with Music Ontario, City Hall Live, CPAMO and Music Canada Live, Polyphonic Ground has convened a series of conversations about diversity in the live music industry. These sessions were facilitated by CPAMO and this report discusses the key issues raised in these sessions along with the results of a Visioning Session, an assessment of these processes and recommendations aimed at providing guidance to Polyphonic Ground to support its growth

*Creating communities to appreciate the plurality of artistic/cultural expression through the promotion, development, presentation and education of music, as well as active advocacy on behalf of and collaboration with musicians, promoters, and educators.*



## 2. Methodology

To address its interests, working with CPAMO Polyphonic Ground undertook the following activities:

- A) Convened public meetings in 2017 and 2018;
- B) Engaged project participants in interviews in 2019; and
- C) Conducted a Visioning Session in 2019.

Motivated by the lack of gender and cultural pluralism reflected by the larger Toronto music industry, several conversations around these issues have taken place at recent panels and forums focused on topics such as venue closures, noise bylaws, the media etc. However, there have been few opportunities to work together to build new models for music in Toronto and to explore how inequities can be addressed.

As a result, this project hosted a series of industry events to tackle these big topics about equity and pluralism in the live music industry to hear about experiences, insights, questions and to develop possible strategies for change.

The parameters for these events focused on **Inclusive Practices in Programming** involving Indigenous, racialized and other diverse musicians, music managers and agents of all styles to discuss the barriers they face, what is working for them, and to suggest strategies to promote change. These sessions also discussed:

- i. Expanding your programming to include Indigenous, racialized and other diverse artists and their audiences as away to grow your reach as a venue; and
- ii. Introducing culturally diverse artists from different genres and experiences, to programmers.

All workshops were conducted in a safe space for anyone identifying as Indigenous, racialized (i.e., people of colour), the deaf, disabled and mad, LGBTQ2 and others who self-identify as marginalized and the framework for these conversations was developed using the 'roses, seeds and thorns' approach that invited participants to discuss:

- A) What's in the way? (THORNS);
- B) What's working? (SEEDS); and
- C) Where do we want to go? (ROSES)





## 3. What We Found

To engage in dialogue on this matter, Polyphonic Ground held several sessions in 2017 and 2018 and completed this process with a series of interviews of its members and a Visioning Session to determine who will be involved in the next phases of Polyphonic Ground's development and growth.

One of the primary purposes for PG was to address the challenges faced by diasporic music organizations in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), to identify what is working for them and where PG participants would like to go in the future. This was seen as critical as many PG members expressed concerns about their performers being relegated to marginal venues and not receiving the attention they felt deserved from the more successful commercial music venues across the GTA, particularly in the City of Toronto.

This section of the report provides information on the various public sessions held in 2017 and 2018.

### 3.1 THORNS – What's In The Way

Those involved in these sessions noted several challenges to their organizations' and musicians' growth and development. These include:

- There is a low number of shows that actually allow for different generations to be on the bill or attend and there aren't that many venues that are all ages, they often don't allow younger people to perform.
- We need to know more about grants, how to get access to them and a better understanding of how the grant system works.
- We need more opportunities to come together and share ideas, maximize performance space.
- We have to begin as a collective to find/share inexpensive performance space and venues to avoid.
- We need to work more closely with our artists, or with Polyphonic Ground, to work together to understand when shows are happening. These elements hold the keys to the evolution of the industry into something more sustainable.
- There is a lack of accessibility, especially around language barriers, e.g., people who want to get into the arts but have language barriers that don't allow them to partake.
- Managers are needed. Artists are really looking for the managers. This takes a lot of time and energy from artists.
- Although there are a lot of opportunities in music, they feel a person needs to know how to be involved to reach all the festivals in Canada. There can be a lot of money there for musicians.
- Some of the artists aren't local so it's difficult for them to get booked. Those booking artists want to know if they have experience playing in Toronto for draw.
- We need to see more transparency in diversity in bookings - am I going to be the only diverse act? We also need more information about the potential bill for the night in advance.
- World music is often defined as being anything and everything else, though everything else has categories and is super specific. We need to consider how to brand what we are offering so it's not seen as homogenous.

The complete notes for this are attached as Appendix 1.



### 3.2 SEEDS - What's Working

Those involved in these sessions had good experiences they shared as valuable to PG's growth and development. These include:

- We had some educating of venue owners regarding how to create a stand and work with musicians and what is expected from everyone.
- Artists support artists at times. Workshops with other artists -musicians network with others to support the artists, including support for mental health and sharing of work. We don't have to be competitive.
- In mentoring and leadership we have to be thinking about how to envisage a path without the grant system so you aren't living grant to grant.
- Educating people about the type of music being presented, e.g., it is difficult to overcome preconceptions or stereotypes (about what is African music for example). Better if people who partake of the culture in a material sense, build an understanding of what's important within that culture, and what sustains it.
- What is important is who is showing up and supporting those shows. Meet your audiences — go out asking people as a presenter to see what people liked and what brought them there.
- DIY spaces are great spots for mentoring to take place. When everyone is learning and sharing skills they feeling like they are truly building skills.
- Creating public pressure and Media attention is needed from us so we should consider how to work with/join the Toronto Association of Performing Arts, North York Arts, Civic Theatres Toronto and connections with other local arts services in Scarborough, York, East York, Etobicoke.
- Have Arabic orchestra with a Ukrainian singer for example. Culture-crossing and exchanges of traditional music through songs — facilitated sessions.
- We can create more public connections to audiences. If the whole city could have pop up performances, at City Hall and Aga Khan They could use these public forums as testing grounds.
- Create branding where Musicians are noted as coming from a genre as opposed to coming from a country.

The complete notes for this are attached as Appendix 2.





### 3.3 ROSES – Where Do We Want To Go

PG participants had several ideas about the directions they would like to have this initiative pursue. These include:

- The fundamentals of what we need are being out and being able to get the respect from peers... These are opportunities for mentorship. University of Regina is an example, they brought in street kids at a high school, used physical resources, turn tables, records, etc. and built a laboratory. Part of the conference was for participants to have street kids teach conference participants how to do this well. This is an instance of mentorship going both ways.
- Connections and Collaboration is happening that builds resiliency, builds life skills. We can create more of this on our own.
- It's important to know how to present your music in the right venue and funding needs to be in place to be able to try things.
- We have to demonstrate more interest in and develop amongst ourselves concrete collaborations. Polyphonic ground when it was started pulled together disparate organizations representing different programming specializations, championing culturally diverse music. For example, Batuki Music Society has found commonalities within different genres, and within goals.
- Collaborating with audiences is an education. Are audiences coming together when two different partner organizations present a double bill trying to cross pollinate audiences? It's not an easy thing. Crossing audiences is happening though, though not with large numbers. For example, in the world of classical music, Tafelmusik is working with refugee musicians who just arrived in Canada. An essential part of the program is their experience and what they bring, as opposed to a tokenized part. These people generally aren't all in world music or jazz. Within those conversations there are a lot of programs, artist development
- Toronto as a multicultural city, this is important, unique location (there may be many communities but it's difficult to keep connected). However, the people are great, the connections can be made and there are those who are interested in helping.

The complete notes for this are attached as Appendix 3.





## 4. Visioning Session

As a follow-up to these public sessions, PG members held a visioning session to discuss how best to continue its growth and direction. Some of the issues explored in this session resulted included:

- The individual groups that make up Polyphonic Ground who were in attendance are all in agreement that the overall long-term health and vibrancy of their specific corner of the larger live music sector would benefit greatly from collective strategic action.
- The group believes the adage that a “rising tide lifts all boats.” All agree that there is opportunity for the collective power of Polyphonic Ground to be leveraged to:
  - Increase the visibility and effectiveness of the individual organizations and their programming efforts to existing and potential audiences, the music sector, funders, etc.
  - Strengthen the operations of the individual organizations.
  - Benefit the artists and types of music the individual organizations support.
- The group also recognizes that there will be instances when the interests of the group might conflict with the interests of individual organizations, and times when some members don’t have the capacity to contribute or participate to the same extent as others. The group agreed that these kinds of issues should ideally be discussed openly in an environment of mutual trust and goodwill.
- The group hopes that having a structure in place that actively encourages the sharing of power, information, responsibility, and accountability will provide the ground on which this trust and goodwill can be cultivated and flourish.

In exploring these issues, the participants in this session recognized that there is potential for conflict of interest between individual organizations and the collective which will need to be strategically addressed and coordinated. The participants also agreed on the strike the following committees to continue its work:

- i. Governance Committee;
- ii. Grant Committee;
- iii. Audit Committee;
- iv. Marketing Committee; and
- v. Vision Committee.

The complete notes on this session are included in Appendix 4.





## 5. Considering the Issues

Many of the issues noted in the Visioning Session were shared in a number of interviews conducted with Polyphonic Ground participants. Amongst these issues were concerns around leadership, expectations, and where this project might go.

On the issue of leadership, the loss of Small World Music's staff who had developed the project was notable as was the transitions taking place in Small World Music in the fall 2018. Regarding the former, it was clear that this project was conceived, inspired and developed by personnel with a vision of what was needed and the potential of the project partners to take up action to achieve this goal of a collective, collaborative community approach to supporting Indigenous and diasporic musics.

Regarding expectations, some felt this was a very ambiguous project in a complicated and competitive industry. The expectations were that each project participant would receive community support from like-minded organizations and resources to support their work, that there would be strength in numbers to have more bargaining power to small presenters, and resources to support day to day operations. Sadly, several felt that these expectations were not met in the last 1.5 years due to lack of leadership and focus on showcases, neglecting the group need for more strategic planning/redirection of focus.

As one project participant said "When (Small World's lead voice) was involved the project was going well, there were meetings and progress but after she left no one was in charge, no one managed it, it died out and there was no benefit."

As for next steps, participants indicated Polyphonic Ground needs to be clearer regarding what it wants to achieve and how. One participant suggested "We need to better define what we are doing and better way to match artists; possibly coming up with guidelines. Up until now each organization brings an artist and then hopes for the best."

Other participants noted that:

"Not sure about challenges but the obstacle is ourselves; we need to manage us better and come up with a program which we can pitch to presenters. Need to figure out how to bring interesting artists and the right artists together. Once we figure out how to do this then the performances will sell tickets which will make the presenters interested in working with us."

"The organizations are small presenters but large presenters don't care about the performances only focused on revenues. The idea behind Polyphonic Ground was to pull small organizations together for bigger impact but it did not happen yet. The reach of the current organizations participating in Polyphonic Ground is huge but their potential was not properly communicated and pitched to large presenters."

"Any organization (including arts service organizations) even if they don't do programming (performances) that can provide support should be involved. Support can be in being more organized during the process. "

"The new leadership at Small World Music has vision and management style which can bring the vision of Polyphonic Ground to reality. Next steps should be a visioning session, including reflection on the vision for the project at the beginning and what did and didn't work. Last year it was time consuming to meet the grant requirements and now it's time to step back and reflect."

"An arts services organization could play a part but first the participating organizations need to come up with a plan. It will be useful if ASOs can help bridge the gap – both the gap in vision of the project and the broader disconnect in the arts between small and large presenters."

These comments came from project participants who have a sense of the potential for positive and constructive growth, particularly given shifts in community composition and what this suggests about current and potential audiences.



In this context, there have been several reports indicating significant shifts in community demographics and how this relates to audience preferences. For example:

- “...(a)rts organizations are constantly looking to broaden, deepen and diversify their audiences. The focus on audience development has intensified in recent years as the competition for leisure time has increased and as the changing ethnic and cultural mosaic has caused professionals to re-evaluate the nature of the public and their target demographic.”<sup>1</sup>
- A 2001 Decima research study indicated that 86% of Canadians were interested in seeing arts from different cultures and that, in 2004, 44% of Canadians attended a live performance or exhibit of diverse cultures;
- A 2001 Environics survey suggested that 75% of Canadians of ‘ethnic minority backgrounds’ were interested in arts activities expressing their own cultures; and
- A 2003 Ethnic Diversity Survey conducted by 63% (6.5 million people) indicated that maintaining ethnic customs and traditions was important.<sup>2</sup>
- Challenges resulting from shrinking attendance of ‘baby boomers’ and the relative lack of engagement/development of younger audiences and the impact this will have on the market for live entertainment; and
- Changes in audience/community demographics and the implications this has for the evolution of new genres, challenging presenters to maintain core audiences while building new ones.<sup>3</sup>

Further, an in-depth Ontario-wide study conducted by Wolf Brown and Associates for the Ontario Arts Council provides ample evidence of the interests of Indigenous and racialized communities in the arts. For example:

- Racialized communities are more engaged than their White counterparts in arts learning and skills acquisition with persons of African-descent more engaged in community-based arts events;
- Indigenous peoples are more engaged in inventive activities than their White counterparts;<sup>4</sup>
- Study respondents connected to their own cultural heritage are more likely to be engaged in arts activities, particularly those interested in other cultures;
- Racialized and Indigenous communities appear to be more engaged in participatory music arts activities, i.e., music, dance, theatre, reading/writing, and visual arts/crafts and film;<sup>5</sup>
- Indigenous peoples are more actively engaged in visiting galleries and museums;<sup>6</sup>
- Racialized and Indigenous communities reported higher engagement in community arts events;<sup>7</sup>
- Racialized groups are more engaged in media-based arts activities;<sup>8</sup>

1. See *Trends in the Arts and Arts Funding*, R.A. Malatest & Associates, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, 2007 at 25

2. See *Arts Fact Sheet Series: Cultural Diversity – Our Regenerative Strength in the 21st Century*, Sharon Fernandez, May 2006, unpaginated

3. Training Gaps Analysis: Presenters, kisuared, Cultural Human Resources Council, 2007 at 19

4. See WolfBrown, *Ontario Arts Engagement Study: Results from a 2011 Province-wide Study of the Arts Engagement Patterns of Ontario Adults*, Ontario Arts Council September 2011 at 5 and 50

5. Ibid at 23,26, 29,32,35

6. Ibid at 44

7. Ibid at 46

8. Ibid 1t 48



- Indigenous and racialized groups are more engaged in inventive activities (i.e., activities that “engages the mind, body and spirit in the act of artistic creation that is unique...”);<sup>9</sup>
- Racialized communities are more engaged in personal practice activities than whites (a 15 point difference) and audience-based activities are also higher for these communities;<sup>10</sup> and
- Racialized and Indigenous communities, particularly persons of African descent, demonstrate a higher interest in their own cultural heritage’.<sup>11</sup>

Based on this, Wolf Brown asserts:

“...arts engagement is generally higher for Ontarians of colour, and highest for Black populations. This is driven primarily by higher engagement in arts learning activities and community-based events. (Visible minorities, as a group, have an arts learning index of 25 compared to 13 for whites (12 point difference))...

“Patterns of engagement by race are partly driven by age as respondents of colour are, on average, seven years younger than white respondents (41 vs. 48 years old).<sup>12</sup>

Further, Wolf Brown suggests that there are four key “Implications for Arts Providers, Funders and Policymakers” based on the evidence from the research. These are:

- I. “Findings point to the key role that the arts can play in social bridging and bonding, which are both critical to a healthy arts ecology. Solidifying this message could help to connect the arts to larger community issues, such as the need for tolerance and dialogue amongst diverse communities.”
- II. “...this study’s findings serve to underscore the interconnections between various types of activities and disciplines – attendance, media and arts creation. Increasing engagement will require innovative approaches and collaborations across disciplines and delivery channels ...”<sup>13</sup>

This evidence is supported by the recent Hill Strategies report suggesting that:

- “Many demographic groups have similar overall arts attendance rates, including racialized and non-racialized Canadians (based on a survey question related to respondents’ “racial or cultural groups”), Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents, as well as immigrant and non-immigrant respondents. However, for each of these demographic groups, there are differences in the attendance rates for some of the eight arts activities.
- “Overall arts attendance rates are similar between racialized (88%) and non-racialized Canadians (86%). However, racialized respondents have higher attendance rates than non-racialized respondents at cultural festivals, and other kinds of cultural performances but lower attendance rates at theatre and pop music performances. In addition, attendance rates for racialized Canadians are higher for heritage or ethnic performances, a question that included specific wording related to dance, theatre, or music performances including “Aboriginal Peoples, Chinese or Ukrainian”. Racialized Canadians have lower attendance rates than non-racialized respondents at theatre and popular music performances.
- “For Indigenous respondents, the overall arts attendance rate is similar to that for non-Indigenous respondents (84% and 86%, respectively). Indigenous respondents have much higher attendance rates than non-Indigenous

9. Ibid at 52 and 11 respectively

10. Ibid at 64

11. Ibid at 76-77

12. Ibid at 63

13. Ibid at 89



respondents at heritage or ethnic performances, which, as noted above, specifically referred to performances involving “Aboriginal Peoples”. On the other hand, Indigenous respondents have lower attendance rates than non-Indigenous respondents at public art galleries, classical music performances, and cultural festivals.

- “Immigrant Canadians have a similar overall arts attendance rate to non-immigrants (84% and 87%, respectively). Immigrant Canadians have much higher attendance rates than non-immigrant respondents at heritage or ethnic performances and other kinds of cultural performances but lower attendance rates at theatre and popular music performances.
- “Where there are differences between recent and earlier immigrants, the pattern is for recent immigrants (i.e., between 2006 and 2016) to have higher attendance rates. For example, the overall arts attendance rate is 90% for recent immigrants and 82% for earlier immigrants. There are similar differences for five of the eight arts activities.”<sup>14</sup>

This information on both community numbers and artistic/cultural preferences are critical to the growth of Indigenous and diasporic musics in the GTA, particularly in Toronto where the most recent census in 2016 indicates that racialized peoples make up 51% of the population of Toronto as follows:

- Black: 239,850 (9%)
- Asian: 887,835 (33%)
- West Asian: 60,325 (2%)
- Arab: 36,030 (1%)
- Latin American: 77,160 (3%)
- Not Included Elsewhere: 36,975 (1%)
- Immigrants are 46.3% of Toronto’s population with 7% of the population as newcomers (defined as having arrived between 2011 and the present)

There are varying statistics for the Indigenous population of Toronto, which include First Nations, Metis and Inuit. The percentages range from 1% to 3% of the Toronto population. However, these percentages are most likely lower than the actual percentage of Indigenous peoples living in Toronto due to under-reporting.

This information points to the important opportunity for Polyphonic Ground participants to consider and develop ways to harness this community interest and support in order to build audiences. Such an approach will be beneficial to project participants in terms of building connections and relationships with these communities but, also, as part of demonstrating to larger presenting organizations the potential impact of these changes and preferences.





## 6. Next Steps

As noted in its founding document and in the ongoing interests of its project participants, PG provides a rare and unique opportunity for the growth and development of Indigenous and diasporic musics in the Greater Toronto Area. This can occur because of:

- I. The interests of the project partners and the opportunities they have to share resources, including space, programs, promotions and administrative services;
- II. The demographics of the city and the interests of these communities are particularly open to the diverse range of programming offered by the project partners;
- III. The interests of several other presenters to the range of programming offered by the project partners, particularly local arts services and presenters across Ontario.

These factors can contribute to PG's growth, strengthening its autonomy, providing a clear structure for collaborative decision-making and action and establishing a clear vision/mandate, membership, programs and collaborative performances, sharing spaces, administration, fundraising, and organizational/professional development.

However, to undertake this effort will require commitment from the project partners to engage in a collaborative process that can be of benefit to those involved. Such strategies can be developed with reference to the CPAMO toolkit *Tilling The Field: Unearthing Collaborative Practices in the Arts*<sup>15</sup> - a document that provides both the reasons for, and tools to assist, organizations in developing collaborative projects that are open, mindful of equitable sharing and envision a more collective approach to arts creation, presentation and administration.

Further, while the challenge of gaining specific funding for PG is an ideal goal, PG participants may have to pursue their interests without additional financial support either in the immediate- or long-term. As such, PG participants may need to assess what they can do without additional financial support and how they might collaborate with the resources its members have, e.g., space, administration, promotion and sharing of programming.

It is in this context that the following recommendations for action are put forward to encourage the Polyphonic Ground members to indicate their commitment to:

1. Develop a framework for growth through collaborative professional and strategy development to establish ways to support:
  - A. The development, promotion and presentation of Indigenous and diasporic music practices. This can be done by developing a calendar of performances, sharing rehearsal and performance spaces, developing and promoting shared programs, and promoting each other's work;
  - B. Data-sharing on communities, audiences to promote/educate/engage across cultures/communities/audiences
  - C. Developing a collaborative approach to fundraising that can appeal to donors who may be interested in the supporting the range of communities represented in Polyphonic Ground. This would require a common pitch that illustrates to potential donors the combined reach of their financial contributions across the organizations involved in the project and the communities they connect with;
  - D. Sharing facilities for rehearsals, performances and meetings;

15. <https://www.scribd.com/document/335474777/Tilling-the-Field-Unearthing-Collaborative-Practices-in-the-Arts>



2. Setting goals/timeframes/action plans to follow-up on and provide structure to the various committees set-up in the Visioning Session;
3. Approach various funders to seek support for the development of Polyphonic Ground as an entity to support Indigenous and diasporic music organizations. Such can begin with exploring the Ontario Arts Council's Compass Grants, the Ontario Trillium Foundation Seed grants, the Department of Canadian Heritage Multicultural and Presentation Grants, the Toronto Arts Council's Strategic Initiatives grants. These sources can be helpful in supporting the development of the organization's infrastructure, operational and strategic planning as well as supporting shared stage performances and connections to local communities through the local arts services, e.g., Scarborough Arts, North York Arts, Neighbourhood Arts Network;
4. Develop working relationships with diverse arts services organizations involved in the performing arts, e.g., Ontario Presents, Urban Arts, Scarborough Arts, North York Arts, Etobicoke Arts, Lakeshore Arts, East End Arts, Neighbourhood Arts Network, MUSE Arts and Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario.

Taking on this approach will require addressing a number of difficult issues. For example:

- A. Setting up an ad-hoc process until a structure can be put in place. This will require steps to move forward on the Visioning session and the subcommittees that were established. When will they meet? Who will coordinate each and bring together all groups? What are the timelines?
- B. Resource sharing and accountability with any grants received. For example, how can the members share what they currently have with each other? If grants are received, where will the funds go and who has authority to record, release and be accountable for them?
- C. Sharing databases of audiences, volunteers and developing/implementing a collaborative public fundraising campaign. These are sensitive matters that cut to the core of each organizations public support. To build audiences across the organizations involved and to raise funds for a collective cause is a significant shift in arts practices that requires strong relationships of trust and confidence in the achievement of the mutually beneficial outcomes that not only assist each organization and the collective but, as well, bring Indigenous, diasporic and other communities together to share, learn about and appreciate the beauty and magic of Indigenous and diasporic musics, the artists that create them and the organizations that support this work.

In implementing these actions, it will be important to note their goals, objectives, timeframes, who is responsible and leading, the outcomes hoped for and how the process and results will be assessed. This can ensure the next steps are done in a timely manner with accountability and clarity around what the purpose is, why, how it is to be done and by whom.





# APPENDIX 1: THORNS – What's in the Way

One of the primary purposes for PG was to address the challenges faced by diasporic music organizations in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). This was seen as critical as many PG members expressed concerns about their performers being relegated to marginal venues and not receiving the attention they felt deserved from the more successful commercial music venues across the GTA, particularly in the City of Toronto.

In this context, those involved in these sessions noted several the challenges to their organizations' and musicians' growth and development. These include:

- There is a low number of shows that actually allow for different generations to be on the bill or attend and there aren't that many venues that are all ages, they often don't allow younger people to perform.
- It could be that there are lack of venues, or venues find revenue streams from certain demographics.
- We need to know more about grants, how to get access to them and a better understanding of how the grant system works.
- It's difficult to find community leaders of different groups. If you aren't in the same genre for instance, you may not understand who the leaders are outside what you're working in.
- We need more opportunities to come together and share ideas, maximize performance space.
- We have to begin as a collective to find/share inexpensive performance space and venues to avoid.
- We need to work more closely with our artists, or with Polyphonic Ground, to work together to understand when shows are happening. These elements hold the keys to the evolution of the industry into something more sustainable.
- We need amongst ourselves to build an atmosphere of trust, building up the city.
- There is a lack of accessibility, especially around language barriers, e.g., people who want to get into the arts but have language barriers that don't allow them to partake.
- There is a lack of skill development to create tangible things.
- From community programs to professional work there is the idea of people being left behind at whatever level. Even the beginning of these programs are being challenged.
- People drop off because there isn't much change or effect, e.g., Music City is only changing things for so many people. They only have one active project Toronto Music City.
- Transit to our venues is a challenge. We live in the west end, in Woodbridge and costs add up without steady pay, or no pay at all. Network and relationship building is costly. They could be in the downtown core every day.
- People didn't have contact there. They were often (over) focused on work. How to reach the community? Feeling of hiding. Many of us wonder how to connect as a musician in the music scene?
- Managers are needed. Artists are really looking for the managers. This takes a lot of time and energy from artists.
- Although there are a lot of opportunities in music, they feel a person needs to know how to be involved to reach all the festivals in Canada. There can be a lot of money there for musicians.
- Some of the artists aren't local so it's difficult for them to get booked. Those booking artists want to know if they have experience playing in Toronto for draw.



- Arts worker factor... It's difficult to pay artists, and be an artist, or even a promoter paying artists.
- Applying for non-private funding, most things are for people with PR (Permanent Residents). If you are applying for PR, even for a work permit, there is a gap of 6 - 7 mos. before applying. Can only apply to private corporations for funding. Reaching out to Indo-Canadian organizations because they can't pay artists. They become the connectors instead of the presenters to overcome barriers.
- You need x amount of shows and need to exist for at least 2 years. If you don't have the correct status it's difficult to apply for funding. The seed funding doesn't exist.
- Under 24 to apply >> restrictive guidelines. A lot of opportunities are under 24 or under 29, then if you are not these age categories you can't participate. Over that age you either have to pay for it, or stumble for an extra few years. You could be "giving if you understood what's going on" (potential rose). They could be filling the gaps or sharing with other people and gaining the experience.
- Volunteer but there is no feedback loop to keep you there, even though it's to the benefit of the organization. Unless you're on the committee – relationship fail. To get from volunteering to anything else is very hard, and to land a job is 10x harder. Volunteering for an "in" but it's only appearing as an opportunity, not actually one. Gatekeepers are there too. How do we, can we get, to know who is who in the industry?
- There isn't a lot of inter-sectionality. Art streams very isolated. Music easier to access than other industries, especially if you have the skills, but it's very confusing. Much is hidden
- You are prepared but it's not enough. Need to have some idea of direction. Understand who is who.
- We need to see more transparency in diversity in bookings - am I going to be the only diverse act? We also need more information about the potential bill for the night in advance
- Subsidized help for musicians (i.e. promoters) so musicians can make the music
- World music is often defined as being anything and everything else, though everything else has categories and is super specific. We need to consider how to brand what we are offering so it's not seen as homogenous.





## APPENDIX 2: SEEDS - What's Working

- Some collaboration by promoters is happening.
- We had some educating of venue owners regarding how to create a stand and work with musicians and what is expected from everyone.
- Artists support artists at times. Workshops with other artists -musicians network with others to support the artists, including support for mental health and sharing of work. We don't have to be competitive.
- Better use of social media and communities facilitated by promoters.
- Some music conferences allow artists to stay for the full festival to network and support other artists .
- Diversity is the norm and this should support more inclusive video awards and promote famous + non-famous musicians on the same level.
- Bridging communities (ie Ukrainian and Spanish) to get both communities out.
- Less generalization/labeling (pop/country/etc...).
- Reversing Thorns; difficult process, no easy solutions, thorns difficult to see past, feels hopeless, easy to focus on the bad but this does have hope.
- Seeing people represented within their communities and finding ways to incorporate more language opportunities.
- In mentoring and leadership we have to be thinking about how to envisage a path without the grant system so you aren't living grant to grant.
- In terms of individual professionals there's FACTOR (lower levels so you can get more grants) and other sources of income or revenue.
- Toronto City Hall regularly holds panels throughout the year, they are looking for people to tell them what they need... but there aren't a lot of people there. How can we share this with our communities?
- Some youth are involved on the juries but some of those grants are competitive. They try very hard to be diverse on their juries now (in the last 5 years)
- Finding more payment opportunities for audiences so they can see more free or subsidized art (removing the price barriers). Should we adopt a nobody will be turned away policy/PWYC model?
- Educating audiences to get them into the room so they know what types of opportunities to experience live music are around. But there are questions, e.g., Where to best educate audiences? Is it at the event? Through outreach? Community engagement?
- Educating people about the type of music being presented, e.g., it is difficult to overcome preconceptions or stereotypes (about what is African music for example). Better if people who partake of the culture in a material sense, build an understanding of what's important within that culture, and what sustains it.
- What is important is who is showing up and supporting those shows. Meet your audiences — go out asking people as a presenter to see what people liked and what brought them there.



- It's on the presenters to really be interested and communicate with the audience so it leads to other opportunities in future.
- Are there models around PWYC in the music scene? Yes, different levels, mostly smaller. Depends on the venue you are working out of. Batuki Music has policy allowing those under 18 in free. The disincentive is that it's hard to meet your break even with ticket revenue. One possibility to have a regular admission and then another section for those under-employment. The regular fee and then under wage fee.
- The presenters and people themselves must know who their audiences are and how to communicate with them in order to find fit in what they require, not just what the presenters require.
- DIY spaces ARE GREAT SPOTS for mentoring to take place. When everyone is learning and sharing skills they feeling like they are truly building skills.
- Toronto music advisory council has a subcommittee of the advisory council that is supposed to be for outreach. It's their job to be finding this \*our conversation\* but maybe we should be finding them for voices to be heard IT does seem hopeful.
- Creating public pressure and Media attention is needed from us to them so we should consider how to work with/join The Toronto Association of Performing arts, North York Arts... which does have access. Civic Theatres Toronto and connections with other local arts services in Scarborough, York, East York, Etobicoke.
- What can we grow in Toronto? Arabic specific festival in Toronto (jazz, blues, country, visual arts as well). Take inspiration from Wassla Festival (Dubai).
- Focus of the musician to connect the people. Have Arabic orchestra with a Ukrainian singer for example. Culture-crossing and exchanges of traditional music through songs – facilitated sessions.
- Bring musicians as residency for free, for certain time span, to open opportunities for collaborations.
- Fill the gap, involves having mentorship opportunities created for new/emerging programmers.
- We can create more public connections to audiences. If the whole city could have pop up performances, at City Hall and Aga Khan They could use these public forums as testing grounds.
- Create branding where Musicians are noted as coming from a genre as opposed to coming from a country.
- While grants are very focused on ways projects benefit the city or Canada (seems like unnecessary nationalism). More important to understand why people are putting on the shows.
- We need ore Mundial-like opportunities to showcase talent (but then bands would have to be ready). For this, a Resource directory could be put together by the city to have lists in the form of usable information, e.g., a database for information. Eliminate paid access to the lists (currently you can purchase book for \$200 that lists all the agents and managers each year).



## APPENDIX 3: ROSES – Where Do We Want To Go

- The fundamentals of what we need is being out and being able to get the respect from their peers... These are opportunities for mentorship. University of Regina is an example, they brought in street kids at a high school, used physical resources, turn tables, records, etc. and built laboratory. Part of the conference was for participants to have street kids teach conference participants how to do this well. This is an instance of MENTORSHIP going both ways.
- Connections and Collaboration is happening that builds resiliency, builds life skills. We can create more of this on our own.
- It's important to know how to present your music in the right venue and funding needs to be in place to be able to try things; through project grants.
- Toronto music city, so there are more collaborations and co-presentations. However, people aren't waiting for Toronto music city to happen, everyone is saying, okay let's all just do something.
- We have to demonstrate more interest in and develop amongst ourselves concrete collaborations/Polyphonic ground when it was started, pulled together disparate organizations representing different programming specializations, championing culturally diverse music. For example, Batuki Music Society has found commonalities: within genres, and within goals. As much as a music city, they are talking about it, however, over the last 2 years, piles of collaborations that wouldn't have started something.
- Collaborating with audiences is an education. Are audiences coming together when two different partner organizations present a double bill trying to cross pollinate audiences? It's not an easy thing. Crossing audiences is happening though, though not with large numbers. For example, in the world of classical music, Tafelmusik is working with refugee musicians who just arrived in Canada. An essential part of the program is their experience and what they bring, as opposed to a tokenized part. These people generally aren't all in world music or jazz. Within those conversations there are a lot of programs, artist development.
- The Billboard tax is an example we should explore to get some of Toronto advertisers to support our work through a percentage going towards arts.
- Take the stress off the mentor to allow them to take time away, and for the mentee gave them more opportunity to learn all the skills as a duty. While fostering elements mentee excels at.
- We need access to space and ways to address the housing crisis: Targeting developers and asking early on how people will give back? Is this happening with performing art spaces? Where do we want it to go?
- We have to create more opportunities for youth to see our programming and to ask them to get involved.
- We must make sure there is diversity and inclusion in leaders and find new funding streams with those who have interest in diverse culturally representative events.
- Even though we live in a city that doesn't really value the art that is created here, both for emerging and established musicians, Toronto is a breeding ground for amazing product and creativity, but it's no longer allowing the city to be the hotbed that it is known for and expected to be. How can we retain talent? Instead of losing it to south of the border?
- Toronto as a multicultural city, this is important, unique location (there may be many communities but it's difficult to keep connected). However, the people are great, the connections can be made and there are those who are interested in helping.



## APPENDIX 4: Visioning Session

As a follow-up to these public sessions, Polyphonic Ground members held a visioning session to discuss how best to continue its growth and direction. This session resulted in the following:

- The individual groups that make up Polyphonic Ground who were in attendance are all in agreement that the overall long-term health and vibrancy of their specific corner of the larger live music sector would benefit greatly from collective strategic action.
- The group believes the adage that a “rising tide lifts all boats.” All agree that there is opportunity for the collective power of Polyphonic Ground to be leveraged to:
  - Increase the visibility and effectiveness of the individual organizations and their programming efforts to existing and potential audiences, the music sector, funders, etc.
  - Strengthen the operations of the individual organizations.
  - Benefit the artists and types of music the individual organizations support.
- The group also recognizes that there will be instances when the interests of the group might conflict with the interests of individual organizations, and times when some members don’t have the capacity to contribute or participate to the same extent as others. The group agreed that these kinds of issues should ideally be discussed openly in an environment of mutual trust and goodwill.
- The group hopes that having a structure in place that actively encourages the sharing of power, information, responsibility, and accountability will provide the ground on which this trust and goodwill can be cultivated and flourish.
- At the end of the session, a number of big questions (WHO, WHY, WHAT, HOW) remained as follows:
  - Should this be a stand-alone entity (vs. initiative of a lead organization). What does this entity look like? Informal collective? Not-for-profit organization? ASO models?
  - What should the Leadership/Governance/Structure be: Committees; Board, Executive?
  - How will it handle Reporting/Transparency?
  - What checks and balances will be put in place regarding Authority/Decision-Making, Responsibility of members to the group and the group to the members?
  - What is the Membership model and is there room for more voices at the table? How to develop/maintain a balance between being inclusive with remaining focused, nimble, and effective? What would the criteria for membership be, including participation expectations?
  - As for an Operational Structure, should there be dedicated staff? If so, to whom do they report?
  - What is the Vision, mission, mandate, definition of “World Music” (what exactly is the special common “niche” of the member groups... underrepresented and hybrid forms of popular and folk music from all over the world?)
  - What are the strategic priorities, e.g., audience development, joint programming, cross promotions and group initiatives like a weekly ad in NOW for member shows, sharing resources, e.g., professional services (lawyer,



accountant, designer, etc.), best practices (contracts, HR, org. policies, etc.), developing/sharing calendar (useful for both programming and marketing purposes)?

- How can this group address advocacy and speak as a single voice for sectoral issues;
- How to bring issues forward in other forums, e.g., have someone on PG sitting on TMAC, participate more actively on other bodies like FMO, Canadian Live Music Association, Folk Alliance International, etc. on behalf of the group?
- What are the specific actions/activities the group can commit to undertaking both collectively and also individually to support those strategies?

In exploring these issues, the participants in this session recognized that there is potential for conflict of interest between individual organizations and the collective which will need to be strategically addressed and coordinated. The participants also agreed on the strike the following committees to continue its work:

1. Governance Committee;
2. Grant Committee;
3. Audit Committee;
4. Marketing Committee; and
5. Vision Committee.









