

## The Conservatoire Crisis: An Exploration into the Lived Experiences of Conservatoire Graduates

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**Abstract :** Widening participation amongst state schooled and British and Minority Ethnic (BME) students in UK conservatoires throughout the past years has persisted to remain at an all time low despite major efforts to increase access for those from underrepresented backgrounds. In the academic year of 2017/18, two of the UK's leading music conservatoires recruited less state school students than Oxbridge. Whilst conservatories face further public stigmatisation and heavy financial penalties for failing to meet government benchmarks; there appears to be a more costly outcome to this crisis. This of course, is the lack of sociocultural diversity, which is perpetuated both within the conservatoire sector and the classical music industry. This research investigates the lived experiences of former state-schooled students who attended a UK music conservatoire. Given the participant's underrepresented status, the research seeks to answer whether or not the students are fitting in or standing out within the conservatoire environment. The research will explore the findings through a Bourdieusian contextual framework with hope of generating a wealth of new practises to the field of Higher Music Education. It is through illuminating the underrepresented voices within these elite spaces, which could aid future research and policy to help tackle the diversity dilemma and give classical music the social and cultural renewal it so desperately needs.

**Keywords :** classical music, lived experiences, higher music education, Bourdieusian

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