



COMA
Contemporary Music for All

Annual Review 2024-25

Welcome

Tamara Kohler, CoMA CEO

"CoMA has allowed me to merge my identity and interests into worlds of sound and music that I've never had the chance to be a part of."

– Connect the Dots participant

I wanted to start our 2024-25 Annual Review with this inspiring participant quote, which I feel cohesively sums up what this year has been about. To me, this quote perfectly encapsulates the two pillars which have shaped both our creative programming and organisational development throughout the year: Creativity and Accessibility. I've always felt passionately that CoMA's work should at the very least mirror the ambitious, daring steps forward that so many inspiring artists take in the professional music sector every day. Beyond just mirroring, we aim to take this motivation, laying the path for what bold participatory practice can look like. Our incredible team of core staff, freelance facilitators and dedicated volunteers have really committed to this mission, delivering a programme which has fostered participant personal growth, encouraged and



Photo: The Musicians Photographer

celebrated social cohesion, welcomed and championed those who are often traditionally left out and pushed many to leap beyond their comfort zones, honing a new element of their craft.

From experiencing ensemble members composing for the first time in CoMA Bespoke, to celebrating and enhancing how we can support and collaborate with Disabled artists in Connect the Dots, through to beautiful new friendships blossoming at the fabulous York weekend, whilst simultaneously freezing in Olympic sporting poses with musical instruments as part of James Weeks' joyous work *Olympic Frieze*, it was a year of adventurous and playful programming which I hope you enjoy reading more about.



Photo: Alan Weedon

Connect the Dots

CoMA as an organisation has continued to strive forward this year, including a 9.7% increase in revenue from our music catalogue, developing a new set of organisational objectives, implementing a new CRM facility, commissioning a major upgrade to our music digital catalogue and launching CoMA Concert Productions. We are grateful to all of our funders and partners who keep us honest, and ensure we can continue to grow as a business.

It was also a bittersweet year for CoMA as we said farewell to our Chair of 16 years, Tom Service. Tom has been a tireless advocate for CoMA's mission since the beginning, and is

responsible for so many foundational partnerships and creative ideas that have allowed the charity to thrive. Our sincerest thanks to Tom, from the whole CoMA community.

I hope you enjoy exploring our 2024-25 Annual Review. We're so proud of the steps we took forward this year, and whilst there is always further to go, CoMA takes this challenge as an energising prompt that keeps us asking: what more do our participants want, what more can we do, how can we do it better and where will the music take us next?

Marc Dooley, CoMA Chair

It is a pleasure and honour to invite you to read CoMA's Annual Review of 2024-25.

Although I have participated in CoMA's activities for many years, I am lucky to be chosen to chair the organisation at a moment of such obvious energy and creativity.

A word that I have heard repeatedly in recent CoMA projects and events is 'joy'. This is reflected in the enthusiasm and commitment of our network of ensembles who have produced and commissioned new work throughout the year in the UK and across Europe, and perhaps nowhere more apparent than in shared projects such as CoMA Bespoke or the national music-making weekend in York.

Increasingly there is evidence of a mutually nourishing connection between our ensemble and project work, with overlaps in shared concerns revealed in cutting-edge educational projects such as Little Woodland Heights and UpBeat, which bring the work and values of CoMA to important new audiences and contexts.

Underpinning this is the incredible repertoire of new music that CoMA continues to develop and promote globally.

It is thanks to the extraordinary positive engagement of our members and the great dedication of the CoMA executive team that we can look back on a successful year with such pride, and look forward with great confidence to our plans for the year ahead.



Our Ensembles

From Manchester to Maastricht, CoMA's network of ensembles for community musicians offers opportunities across the UK and beyond to meet fellow music lovers from all walks of life, create new works with living composers and redefine musical experiences. This opportunity is open to anyone aged 16+, and no audition is required.

2024-25 in numbers:

10 CoMA ensembles and
6 associate ensembles
across **4** countries,
including:

1 new CoMA ensemble:
CoMA West Midlands

2 new associate
ensembles:
Norwich Sinfonietta
CoMA Amsterdam

160+ CoMA ensemble
members

CoMA West Midlands and CoMA Amsterdam were both formed from 'come and play' days held during the CoMA Festival 2024. Through the events, we found a host of new members keen to make new music and have been able to establish regular ensembles.

Norwich Sinfonietta contacted CoMA expressing a wish to collaborate as they are creating opportunities for young composers to write for their ensemble, providing a rare and valuable chance for composers to actually have their music played!

Our Ensembles

2024-25 in numbers:

9 concerts

1 intensive weekend of workshops + performances run by CoMA Leeds

2 open participation days run by CoMA London and CoMA West Midlands

Around **400** attendees across all events

2 new Musical Directors:
Chris Gibbons (CoMA Bristol)
Simon Hellewell (CoMA Glasgow)



CoMA Leeds held Create : Explore : CoMA in Yorkshire, a two-day event filled with workshops and an Open to All Orchestra exploring contemporary music at York St John University. Around 70 people came together for an inspiring and lively CoMA weekend in the centre of historic York, performing a final concert that included James Weeks' *Olympic Frieze* and Nigel Osborne's *I Am Swimming*.

Projects and commissions

Whether it was ancient Greek gods and the music of trees or reinventing the marching band, in 2024-25 CoMA's projects had people of all ages composing, collaborating, conducting and performing – each experiencing contemporary music in new and joyful ways.

Photo: Sasha B Owen

LETHE

July 2024

LETHE film launch

Directed by Loré Lixenberg and starring a cast of CoMA participants from the UK and Greece, *LETHE* merges the worlds of film, experimental music theatre, LARP and goats to communicate the myths of the past and how they continue to shape our future. The film launched with a screening at South London Gallery. Future screenings and follow-up workshops are planned for 2025-2026.



CoMA Bespoke

CoMA Bespoke project launch

Composer Matthew Shlomowitz collaborated with CoMA to create CoMA Bespoke. After receiving 96 applications from a national call-out, we selected three composer leads to mentor participants of CoMA ensembles to write compositions for their own groups. For some participants, this was their first time composing a piece of music. CoMA Bespoke will culminate in June 2025 with a performance in London showcasing all the new works created.

The CoMA Bespoke lead composers (pictured left with CoMA team and Matthew Shlomowitz):

Franklyn Oliver with CoMA Sussex

Fraz Ireland with CoMA London

Uri Agnon with CoMA East Midlands and CoMA Sheffield

Projects and commissions

September 2024

Little Woodland Heights

Little Woodland Heights is a 10-week programme for 8–11 year olds teaching music through trees, and forests through music. CoMA partnered with the programme's creator, composer/saxophonist Nick Roth to deliver the project in primary schools across the UK and Ireland.

The pilot project was held at Mowlem Primary School, London, led by facilitators Simon Roth and Alexandra Skevington. The project culminated with the children performing their new compositions and planting two trees in their school grounds. Little Woodland Heights runs again in 2025 in Yorkshire, Limerick and Suffolk.



"It was a fantastic experience for the children. They thoroughly enjoyed it and learnt a great deal about music, composition and nature. It allowed them to release their creativity in new ways."

– *Mowlem Primary School teacher*

October 2024

Choral Development Workshops

CoMA Singers' musical director Janet Oates travelled to Staffordshire to deliver a workshop for local vocal group facilitators, using pieces from the CoMA *choral partsongs* anthology to introduce techniques for teaching contemporary classical music. Janet also guest conducted a Keele Women's Choir rehearsal, introducing them to CoMA repertoire for the first time.

January 2025

Midwinter Composers

A residential course delivered in collaboration with Allcomers String Course at St Hilda's, Oxford, from 2–6 January. Eight budding composers received tuition from Ivor Novello Award winning-composer Gavin Higgins to write new works for amateur string ensemble and a professional string trio.

"The workshops were very helpful and run with the right level of professionalism, humour and musical insight." – *Midwinter Composers 2025 participant*



Midwinter Composers

Midwinter Composers photo: Alan Weedon. Little Woodland Heights photo (above): Nick Roth

Projects and commissions

February 2025

Connect the Dots 2025

CoMA's professional development course for composers and music facilitators ran for its second year. Facilitated by Disabled professional musicians, the programme aims to teach collaborative techniques for inclusive music-making. Ten composers and facilitators from diverse genres and practices took part in illuminating sessions led by freelance musicians and those from partner groups National Open Youth Orchestra, Sonic Bothy and BSO Resound.

Photos: Alan Weedon



"This was a brilliant course, beautifully put together. Thank you for this very special opportunity, which has had a profound impact on the way I think about music making and composing, and will have a lasting impact on my future practice." – *Connect the Dots 2025 participant*



March 2025

UPBeat

Conductor Rebecca Miller delivered a conducting workshop for 25 Year 10 GCSE Music pupils from two schools in Bromley, Kent to develop leadership skills and build confidence. The vast majority of students said they didn't know what a conductor was and/or had never seen one before. Students discussed what they wanted in their leaders, learnt basic conducting skills and took turns to conduct the school's youth choir. Rebecca also delivered a CPD session in conducting for 10 teachers from the local area, developing their skills, confidence and helping them introduce new, contemporary pieces to their youth ensembles.

"Rebecca's clear explanations and practical advice have really boosted my confidence."
– *UPBeat CPD participant*

Projects and commissions

March Static

CoMA collaborated with Australian-based ensemble Speak Percussion to form a peaceful marching band of community participants to open the Norfolk & Norwich Festival 2025. Around 30 woodwind, brass and percussion players from across Norfolk joined forces to workshop Thomas Meadowcraft's piece *March Static* in preparation for performances in May 2025.

Photo: David Rogers/Speak Percussion



New commissions

CoMA Summer School 2025 Commission

Our open call for the Summer School 2025 commission received 95 applications. The panel included CoMA trustee (and now Chair) Marc Dooley, previous trustee and MD of CoMA singers Janet Oates, CoMA East Midlands Chair and MD Antony Clare and previously commissioned composer Blasio Kavuma. The selected composer was Elif Karlıdağ.

CoMA Festival 2026

We received funding from Creative Australia to support two early-career Australian composers to learn about open-scored commissioning and write for CoMA. Jodie Rottle and Alice Chance are both writing commissions which will premiere in the CoMA Festival 2026.

CoMA x sound

We continued our partnership with the Aberdeen-based organisation sound, focusing on commissioning and building a repertoire of open-scored works for youth ensembles. CoMA and sound delivered an open call for the commission and selected Finn McLean to create a new work with the Get Creative ensemble in Aberdeen.



Elif Karlıdağ.

CoMA Catalogue

The CoMA Catalogue has undergone major changes this year with the start of our in-depth audit, reviewing over 1,000 scores. We are refining our catalogue to ensure we include music that truly represents the aims and ethos of CoMA.

Our goal is to ensure that all scores on our website have a viewable full score and audio excerpt. In addition, we are working on making the catalogue section of our website more user-friendly by adding more detailed descriptions of the pieces, recategorising works, and ensuring there are searchable keywords for all works.

We are proud to support emerging composers and regularly add new works to our catalogue. As part of this, our perpetually open Call for Submissions has received 14 scores, of which 10 have entered the CoMA Catalogue, alongside our commissions. Our new additions include *The Last Syllable of Recorded T...* written by David Machell for CoMA East Midlands ensemble, *And so on* by Janet Oates written for CoMA Singers, and Elo Masing's *interference*, commissioned by one of our Associate Ensembles, KNM Campus Ensemble.

Works from our catalogue continue to sell internationally, with CoMA works reaching nine different countries this year. Our anthologies remain our bestsellers, and works across the catalogue are regularly performed in the UK, Europe, the USA, and Canada. We are delighted so many people are interested in the CoMA Catalogue and are striving to make it as accessible, interesting and intersectional as possible.



Janet Oates

Photo: Tim Fearon

2024-25 sales summary:

Total value of sales:
£2,710.78

Revenue increased by **9.1%**
and quantity of sales
increased by **4.2%**

Most popular anthology:
Open Score

Most popular single score:
Arcades by George Lewis

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

CoMA's ongoing commitment to opening access into contemporary music continued throughout 2024-25. Our EDI subcommittee of trustees and staff met monthly to analyse processes for upcoming projects and reassess policy. 72% of CoMA projects were free to participate in, and the remaining projects were either low cost, or 'pay what you can'. We implemented concessionary bursaries and full-funded placements, aiming to reach those traditionally underrepresented in classical music projects.

We trialled an anonymous recruitment process for staff hiring, again attempting to counteract natural unconscious biases and improve representation within staffing. CoMA also registered for the UK Government's Disability Confident Employer Scheme, ensuring our workplace is accessible and adaptable. We are currently working our way towards achieving level two within the scheme.

Keychange

The Keychange pledge was launched to challenge the gender imbalance across the music industry by encouraging music organisations, festivals, and conferences to publicly commit to programming 50% women artists and professionals by 2022. In 2022, this pledge was expanded to include a commitment to increase the representation of non binary and gender diverse people.

CoMA joined the Keychange pledge in 2017 and committed to ensuring that 50% of works commissioned were by women. That pledge was reflected in our *partsongs* and *choral partsongs* publications, whose works were 50% and 55% respectively composed by women and non binary people. Since then, we have expanded that pledge to a commitment of 50% of commissioned composers being women, non binary and gender diverse individuals.

For 2024-25, 70% of our 10 commissioned composers were women and non binary people and 30% were from the Global Majority. Since our initial commitment in 2017, we have met our 50:50 pledge in commissioning, with 55% of our 60 works being by women and non binary people. As such, we are adapting our pledge to reflect our organisation's ambition to be more inclusive, and expanding it to encompass more aspects of our organisation.

Photo: Alan Weedon

Financial Summary

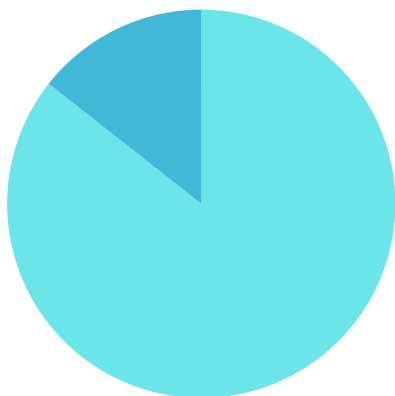
Income: £208,787

Unrestricted funds: £178,745

Restricted funds: £30,042

● Unrestricted funds

● Restricted funds



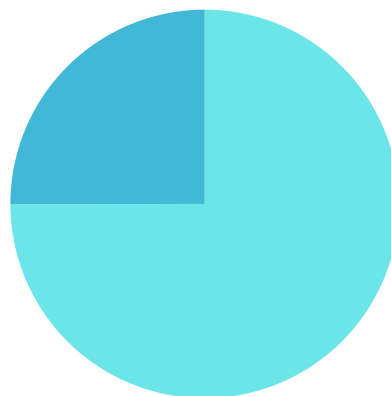
Expenditure: £184,022

Charitable activities: £137,967

Operational expenditure: £46,055

● Charitable activities

● Operational expenditure



Surplus: £24,766

Unrestricted reserves: £83,424

Coming next

CoMA activities during the 2025-26 financial year include:

March Static

Opening the Norfolk and Norwich Festival with a massed community band performance in May 2025.

New Music Biennial

Presenting two community ensemble performances of Uri Agnon's MARCH in Bradford and London as part of PRSF's new music festival.

CoMA Bespoke

A showcase concert in London for the new pieces by our three composer leads and ensemble members.

CoMA Summer School

Hosting our five-day residential of workshops, performances and new compositions at Keele University.

Little Woodland Heights

Working with more schools to deliver our music and nature project in the UK and Ireland.

Keychange

Reviewing progress against our Keychange targets and updating our pledge to aim for greater diversity across CoMA and its activities.

Acknowledgements

CoMA is grateful for support from the following funders in 2024-25:

Arts Council England
Arts and Humanities Research Council
British Council
Creative Australia
Diaphonique
Fenton Arts Trust
Hinrichsen Foundation
Radcliffe Trust
Three Monkeys

Our 2024-25 project partners:

Allcomers Music
All The Queens Men
Mowlem Primary School
Norfolk County Council
Norfolk & Norwich Festival
Norfolk & Suffolk Music Hub
Speak Percussion
University of Southampton

Staff & Board

CoMA Team 2024-25

Chief Executive Officer &
Artistic Director: Tamara Kohler
Project Manager:
Francesca Le Lohé
Music Sales & Catalogue
Manager: Emory Southwick
Digital Content &
Marketing Manager:
Tamera Heron (until Oct 2024)
Abi Bliss (from Oct 2024)
Company Secretary: Mick Kahn

CoMA Board 2024-25

Chair of the Board: Tom Service
Board Members:
Marc Dooley
Jaya Govindan
Tony Harris
Róisín Hughes
Rūta Vitkauskaitė
Alex Wright

CoMA team photo: Chris Adams. Bassist photo: Tim Fearon

