

## An open letter to politicians



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The polls are in, and key voter issues in the run-up to the 2015 UK general election include music education, air support for cellists, and highlighter pens. In a candid open letter to politicians of all parties, tenor Christopher Gillett explains just what it will take to secure his vote.

Dear politicians,

In order that you might address my demands more effectively, I have assembled them in list form.

- **Don't promise a ton of money for the arts unless you can guarantee that**
  - a) you will cough up the dosh, and**
  - b) you won't pour the money into consultancy and feasibility studies.**

Musicians want to work, to play music. They're not interested in forging the ongoing development of socially-prescribed cultural and heritage infrastructure in the creative industries, nor do they have a clue what that sort of guff means. Stick on lots of concerts and operas and make the tickets cheap. Simple as that. You'll get your money back in VAT.

- **For God's sake, just bring back proper music education in schools and stop worrying that you'll end up with a nation of artsy layabouts with no clue about science or how to fix a computer.**

How many more studies will it take (<https://www.dosomething.org/facts/11-facts-about-music-education>) to prove to you that music education is simply brilliant for kids? That kids who learn a musical instrument are not only better-disciplined and more academically focused, but turn out to be more analytical and even better at maths, sciences and languages?

Are you really worried that having a population that have benefited from proper music education will lead to a nation that only wants to drop out and play in a band? And so what if they did? What else are they going to do – work in a call centre? Become politicians? I've yet to meet the piano-playing nuclear physicist (of whom there must be many) who thought of his music education: 'Ah, what wasted years, learning how to play [Bach \(/uk/learn/composers/johann-sebastian-bach\)](/uk/learn/composers/johann-sebastian-bach) as a child! If only I'd spent all that time on the computer instead!

Yes, middle-class kids will have their violin lessons no matter what the government provides. Just extend the same opportunity to the less fortunate. If you want a more equal society, universal music education is the way to get it done. I promise. And if you don't want a more equal society, I'm not interested.

- **Simplify tax codes.**

Every year I tot up my income and what I spent in earning it – travel, agents, hotels, paper clips, tonsorial care etc etc. – and it takes me days. And every year is exactly the same: my expenses come in at one third of my income. So, I tell you what, let me simply tot up what I earn – it won't take long – and let me pay tax on two thirds of that. Simpler for you, simpler for me.

- **We need some sort of law defining what is and what most definitely ISN'T classical music (/uk/features/blogs/christopher-gillett/katherine-jenkins-and-crossover).**

While you're about it, you could make it illegal to call someone who has never sung an opera an 'opera singer'. Believe me, that one would be a real vote-winner. Oh, and no [Puccini \(/uk/learn/composers/giacomo-puccini\)](/uk/learn/composers/giacomo-puccini) to be sung by anyone under the age of 21.

- **Just make the airlines let musicians carry on their instruments, will you?!**

At the same time, you might want to introduce compulsory check-in counters at airports that are solely dedicated to cellists. Anyone who has queued behind a cellist will know this is a good idea.

- **UKIP: you might have a snowball's chance if your policies will keep out André Rieu and Andrea Bocelli.**

Make that promise and we can talk. Oh and chuck in [Lang Lang \(/uk/learn/artists/lang-lang\)](/uk/learn/artists/lang-lang) for good measure. Just saying.

- **A cap on conductors' fees of £3,000.**

Or less. I'm happy for it to be less. Anything over the cap, they have to divvy out to the players and singers.

- **Something really needs to be done about viola players.**

Failing that, about viola jokes.

- **Free counselling for anyone married to a high soprano.**

I don't need to spell out what that must be like.

- **End VAT on highlighter pens.**

Sincerely,

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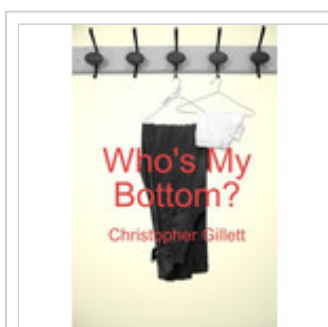
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