

# The Open Fund - Meet The Music Creator - Angharad - PRS Foundation

[00:00:00] Hi everyone, welcome to this Meet the Music Creator session with our Open Fund grantee, Angharad. Angharad got the Open Fund for Music Creators in 2022. It was for your debut album as a solo artist. So welcome. Do also feel free to intro yourself. Oh, hello everyone. Yeah, it's lovely to be here and thank you for asking me to speak a little bit about my experiences.

Fantastic. And also to intro myself for those who don't know, I'm Becca B. I'm one of the grants coordinators here at PRS Foundation. I work across a multitude of our funding schemes, including the Open Fund. To get started on the conversation. Why did you choose to apply to the Open Fund? Basically I applied back in 22.

So 2022, so to have a little look back at everything and basically what happened, I [00:01:00] initially applied for the women make music funds, but I was unsuccessful at the time I was on maternity leave. So I. I couldn't do much but I could apply for grants. That was, that's what I did with my time. And I'd written a load of songs about motherhood that I was really passionate to get down on record.

But having failed and been unsuccessful in the Women Make Music Fund, I just thought, why not give this a go? And I couldn't believe actually that this was, I was successful because I thought it was such there would be far more people applying for this fund. I don't know if that's true, but I thought I was just really surprised actually.

Yeah, it's good to know that background information and also yeah, worth putting out there that it is really rare that people will get their like a grant awarded on [00:02:00] their first try. And we do often signpost those who did very well in, for example, Women Make Music, to then take any feedback you may have had and apply to the Open Fund or vice versa.

And it's worth demystifying that they are around the same success rate and we see around the same number of applications. And it's worth mentioning as well, across the Open Fund and Women Make Music they are both for the same

maximum grant amount of 5,000. They're both Open-ended in terms of the genre of music and your career level.

So it's really good to see you taking advantage of both of those opportunities and worth those watching, knowing as well. So that's cool. So can you tell us a little bit about your background as a music creator and yeah. The things you've been through in your career before you decided to apply to the open fund and wouldn't make music?

Yeah, so I've had a very strange little journey which I suppose no musician's journey [00:03:00] is linear and one, one route. But I spent 15 years as a fiddle player playing traditional Welsh music and instrumental music predominantly. I played with a Welsh folk band called Calan since my early 20s.

late teens, early twenties. And we recorded sort of five or six studio albums, toured internationally a lot, playing a lot of Celtic festivals over in America and lots of folk festivals around the UK and Europe. The interesting thing for me was that I never. I think I did a little bit of backing vocals, but they were very much at all.

In fact, I believed I couldn't sing. I was told as a teenager, I couldn't sing. But that all changed when I became a mother for the first time in 2019. I found my voice. my voice, because I soon realized that the only way to [00:04:00] communicate with a newborn baby is by singing. It's the only way that can soothe and entertain them.

So by using my voice every day, it became better and stronger. And suddenly I got bored of the same old Lullabies. So I, and I was quite bored actually looking after a baby. It's not the most stimulating conversation all day, every day. So that's when I started writing songs literally in my head because I couldn't play my violin as a fiddle player, I felt really frustrated and I couldn't play.

So I started writing these songs and just into my phone on the voice notes, just every day as I'd go for walks, I'd be singing to the baby, singing to myself. And within six months, having never written a song in my life, I'd got more than an album's worth of material. And, because I'm a musician, I've got musicians friends, I'd sent a few ideas to a [00:05:00] great multi instrumentalist friend of mine, Ethan Williams, who's background in jazz.

And he helped me put these together and produced them and arranged them for a full band. And so I've done a complete 180 degree turn from folk music to pop, art, pop, indie sort of music, which is surprised me as much as everybody

else who knew my background. Yeah, I love that. It's really cool to hear about the journey you've been on.

And I think it's a really good example of how the Open Fund is for all career levels and you don't have to have a kind of linear career of I'm starting here and now I'm doing this. It just goes to show the artistic process can take so many twists and turns. So yeah, thank you for going into that.

So I think you've [00:06:00] started to answer my next question which was, why did you think it was a good time for you to apply to the funding? Because we get a lot of questions on how is best to answer the why now question on the application form. So I think people watching. and may find your answer really useful.

Why now? I was actually totally honest in my application. I explained why that I'd written all these songs on becoming a mother and in the question they ask for short term and long term in terms of why now. Short term, my perfectly honest answer was just like, these songs are about being a mother.

I'm in like. I'm in the thick of it now. If I don't release these now, they are gonna become irrelevant pretty quickly. Like I don't want to be talking about breastfeeding, for example, in five years time. So I was completely honest, but then [00:07:00] long term I concentrated a bit more on the reasons for my career.

I couldn't No, I could no longer tour as much as I had been with the folk band. We used to do all this international touring sort of three, four weeks at a time. I couldn't do that. And. It wasn't fair for the band that I couldn't do that. So I had to, I explained that I had to step away and I wanted to establish myself as a solo artist in my own name to give myself a bit more flexibility and autonomy over my own career.

Um, it and that's exactly what's happened really by, by being establishing myself as an artist in my own name. I've been able to, make decisions based on my own personal situation without having to worry about the rest of the band. So I just, I, yeah as I mentioned, it was a, it's a completely new [00:08:00] direction.

I'm at the start of this new project. But I just explained, in perfectly honestly, why. Now, I had no major prizes, or record deals, or anything like that. I just kept it honest. Yeah, that's the best way to be. And also I really like the fact that you linked into the creative reasons why, and also in terms of your career, that's

really important because at the end of the day, we want our grants to be able to put music creators on the path to a sustainable career in music.

So we love to see it. As we've mentioned you came in for for the release of your debut album as a solo artist. So how did the release of the album go? And in terms of reaching an audience did you reach the audience you expected to? Yes. I had a very clear demographic of who I wanted to target with this [00:09:00] audience.

In a way, the album is a concept album about becoming a mother. So I knew that mothers would probably resonate with this music. And also I knew for a fact that you don't really hear songs about motherhood very often on the radio and in music in general. Um, I also thought how am I going to attract these people who perhaps don't normally are not able to go out to gigs in the evening because of childcare responsibilities.

So I released my album. I did two performances on the day. It came out pretty well. First and then a month or so later, I did a launch gig one was in the afternoon, which I specifically said was people who have care responsibilities and who can't come out in the evening. I left open that could include all [00:10:00] sorts of other people as well, but that was lovely.

I had lots of mothers and grandparents and people with their babies. It was in the same venue. So it was lovely to see it. They they came, even a local nursery came with a group. My music is not aimed at children at all. It's. It's very much adult themed, but but live music is great, isn't it for children and young people to hear as well?

So I had a lovely mix, and then I repeated it then in the evening for which was a much louder event. I've also been tapping into lots of other initiatives and groups that are available out there. For example, there's Mama Coaching in Bristol who do loads of daytime gigs and after school gigs and lots of mothers in music meetups.

I've been engaging with them. Also there's Mamas in Music who [00:11:00] do online meetups. They're based in London and in LA. And I also recently, which was lovely, I did a gig to a lecture hall full of student midwives because I thought they would also be able to get the music. So I'm just really aware that because of the subject of my music, I might not fit.

naturally into the usual places, I'm still applying for showcases and gigs and festivals. I'm also really focusing my attention on some of these alternative

places because I just know that's where my audience are going to be. Yeah, that's really cool. That's really cool to hear how you've been quite creative and outside the box about how you're reaching your intended audience.

And then going back to the creation of the album itself. So you applied for support to create [00:12:00] and also promote this album. Can you tell us about your experience of yeah, like creating the album and how the funding helped make it happen specifically? Absolutely.

Yeah, so I applied I actually applied for below 5,000 pounds. I think it was about 3,200. I don't know if that put me in a better position. You'd be able to answer that question. But it was to cover mixing, mastering, and a contribution to PR costs. I found the application to be fairly straightforward actually.

Only 200 words for each of the questions, which they're of, they're about four or five. That took quite a while. But it's less than some grant applications that I've applied for. I, I think arts council grant applications are usually more around like a thousand words per question. So you're writing a thesis.

So that's a good thing. And I, [00:13:00] it was basically essential that I got this funding because I was applying on maternity leave. I wanted something tangible to come back to when I started working again because At the time when you're in the thick of it I didn't even know if I'd ever be a musician again.

I really thought how is this going to work? But you do, you get your stuff back. So it was essential that I got the funding because at the time I was on maternity, the government maternity allowance, which is 600 a month. a month to live on. A month. So it was absolutely crucial.

And I think without this funding, I wouldn't have been able to get my debut album out or certainly not to the standards that I wanted. I, with this funding, I was absolutely able to record it to the higher standard that I could. And It [00:14:00] was absolutely amazing recording it, and it's been a huge joy and life affirming, and yeah, it's been brilliant.

Yeah, that's amazing to hear. And we really want to support projects where our grant support is going to be absolutely crucial. So it's really great to hear that this has been the kind of make or break for you. And in terms of the grant amount you apply for, it's just best to be actually realistic in terms of, you go in and research your costs.

And. Apply for a number relative to that. Of course, we can't fund projects to 100%. So there would need to be some other income in there, whether that's in kind support, maybe you've got like a mates rate on a studio or something like that. That's absolutely fine. But. We'll just look at your budget and expenditure.

And if, say, for example, you come in for 5, 000, and that's all really well accounted for, and we can see where all the money is going, and that's crucial, that's absolutely fine. But also if you don't [00:15:00] need the full five That's, yeah, that's also great. So it's just about being realistic to your project and researching those costs rather than one amount is going to be more likely to be funded than the other.

But it is a good, it's a good question. Yeah, so what have you been up to since the release of the album, and has the funding led to any other opportunities for you? Yes. I, the biggest thing is the recent announcement of a Welsh Music Prize nomination. So I can't believe that. I found that out the other day and it was announced this week.

Thank you. I actually can't believe it. Suddenly being a mother is quite punk. But thank you. There were over 200 albums released during the period in Wales. To be one of 15 shortlisted albums is absolutely incredible. And I can't believe that considering where I've come from, like being in [00:16:00] maternity leave thinking I'd never play music again to this is just.

I can't even explain how much how proud I feel of of Angharad, the mother musician. But I've also had quite a lot of radio play. I've been really lucky to have two singles on the BBC Radio Wales A list. which that I think has bought me quite a lot of royalties, which I've been able to feed into this project and hopefully to another album.

So I've been really encouraged by the response and and it's working well around me. managing my life as a mum as well. That's amazing. Yeah. We were so excited to hear about the Welsh Music Prize and we'll be keeping our eye on that. So just to go into the theme of the album, which we have spoken about throughout the chat, which has been really nice.

[00:17:00] So yeah, obviously it's centered around the theme of motherhood and new motherhood. So I was wondering if you had anything to say to music creators who are mothers or anything you want to generally highlight around that topic. Yes, so I think the biggest advice I would say is just be true and honest to yourself and where you are and what you want to achieve and what's viable and what isn't anymore.

For me, touring internationally for weeks on end was no longer possible at the moment, who knows, maybe in the future, but just be clear about that and what will work for you as an artist. And the other thing I would say is don't be afraid to tell people that you have children. So many musicians I know actually still [00:18:00] choose not to tell people or that they have children because they think it's going to have a negative impact on their career.

They think they won't be offered gigs. They think it might give a certain image to people. But if we keep it secret that we're mothers and we're working mothers in music, then nothing is going to change. It's hard. It is hard to be a freelance musician mother. Let's not hide that fact.

There are things that need to change. The industry needs to change. Society in general needs to change, childcare costs. That's across the board. That's not a musician problem, but if we don't speak about it, if we keep it secret, nothing is going to change. And I would say if there's ever a time to be a musician and a mother, It's [00:19:00] now, we're in a time where there's a sort of a general feeling to make everything more accessible and more variety, the variety and women's voices at this stage in life haven't really been heard before.

So what an opportunity to speak and sing our story. to open the conversation, to make changes, and to make this world a more colorful, varied place, an interesting place to be. Exactly. Fight the stigma, yes. We've got to, we've got to talk about these things. It's really important. Be bold. Yeah, I'm really glad we could give you this platform to speak about it as well.

Yeah, one of our kind of aims as a funder is to remove barriers. So we're really happy to hear that it's helped spread this message in a way. [00:20:00] To close out, what would you say to anyone who is considering applying to the Open? Anyone at all? Yeah, I'd say go for it. What's stopping you?

Look at my story, like mom at home, feeling completely lost and unhelpful about her future as a musician. But I got the funding and I've been able to fulfill my dream at this stage in life. Just Apply, look, go through the guidelines and be really clear and honest and go for it.

What's stopping you? I'd say, what's stopping you? Just yeah. Amazing. Thank you very much for joining us for this chat, and following on from what's stopping you. If you're watching live, the [00:21:00] Open Fund is now open for applications, so that there is nothing stopping you. The deadline is the 30th of September, 6pm.

And if you're not watching live and it's after that point, we've got two deadlines, every year. And just to signpost as well, we've got other online resources to help. So since 2022 we've started to do online how to apply webinars, which are just on our YouTube channel for anyone to watch at any time.

So I did one earlier in the year and I go through all my top tips. And I actually go through the form section by section as well. So definitely check it out. It's on the PRS Foundation YouTube channel. Yeah, thank you so much for joining us. It's been really lovely having this chat with you and hearing more about the themes of your album and how the funding has helped you.

And yeah, we'll be watching out for that Welsh music prize. Thank you very much. Thank you, Becca. All right.