

## Music Nation website blurb

### 30 words

***What the River Sings*** assembles a large and extraordinarily diverse collection of performers of all ages, professional and amateur, reflecting all the cultures and musical character of East London today.

### 400 words

***What the River Sings*** expresses the musical character of London's East End in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century through the people who live there, and the varied cultural traditions they have been born or brought up in. It also celebrates the long history of this fascinating part of London – gateway to Britain – and its waterways.

The programme is built around music from *The Golden Road*, *The Unforgiving Sea* – commissioned from Tony Haynes by the BBC for the combined forces of the BBC Concert Orchestra and the Grand Union Orchestra, broadcast on Radio 3 in March 2011 – together with works celebrating centuries of sea-borne trade, travel and migration, specially created for this extraordinary collection of performers.

The Grand Union Orchestra comprises professional musicians from all major musical cultures worldwide, and is also renowned for its spectacular cross-cultural participatory shows under its composer/director Tony Haynes; its unique Youth Orchestra features a similarly diverse range of young musicians. The Water City Festival Orchestra, led by the internationally-acclaimed violin virtuoso Michael Boehmann and conducted by Rupert Bond, brings together students, music teachers and amateur musicians of all ages; and the East London World Choir, originally set up by Newham Council, includes singers from the many local cultural communities.

Between them, these ensembles represent an astonishing range of instrumental and singing traditions, from European classical and folk to jazz and various forms of world music. All those involved (whether professional or amateur) live or work locally, and their instruments are equally varied – from orchestral brass, wind and strings, Latin percussion and jazz rhythm section to gu zheng, erhu, bamboo flutes, sitar, sarangi, tabla, dhol, baglama (saz), oud, djembe, congas and steel pans – and a wide range of vocal styles.

Together, these performers create a wholly original musical portrait of East London and its history, viewed from the river. The East End has always been a magnet for migrants and those fleeing persecution; ***What the River Sings*** tells their stories, exploring creatively the way those who have settled here have contributed to contemporary British culture and how they have enriched our musical life.

And what better place to celebrate the diversity of our music nation than this iconic location which, over the centuries, has seen thousands of ships and millions of people come and go, as it keeps watch on this historic waterway and ensures a safe passage to the heart of our great city?