

# NIROSHINI

## Interview

TRAILBLAZING  
MUSIC EXEC, ARTS  
ADVOCATE AND  
PRIMADONNA  
FESTIVAL FOUNDER!

# JANE DYBALL

[www.niroshini360.com](http://www.niroshini360.com)

PRIMADONNA  
LITERARY  
FESTIVAL

FRIDAY 26 –  
SUNDAY 28 JULY  
2024

FOOD MUSEUM

STOWMARKET,  
SUFFOLK

MINI MAGAZINE

# JANE DYBALL IS A DISTINGUISHED MUSIC INDUSTRY LEADER, KNOWN FOR HER WORK IN MUSIC PUBLISHING AT VIRGIN MUSIC AND WARNER/CHAPPELL, HER ROLE AS CEO OF IP COLLECTION SOCIETIES, HER ADVOCACY FOR ARTS ACCESS AND INNOVATION AND HER FOUNDING OF THE INCLUSIVE PRIMADONNA LITERARY FESTIVAL.

Jane Dyball is a distinguished figure in the music industry, embodying the spirit of the Top of The Pops and Smash Hits generation. With a law degree from Bristol University in hand, she embarked on her career in music publishing at Virgin Music, a company renowned for its association with iconic bands like Culture Club and The Police. Her trajectory at Virgin saw her evolve from basic administrative roles, to the specialised field of synch licensing and international copyright, experiences that laid a solid foundation for her future endeavours.

When Virgin Music was acquired by EMI, Jane transitioned to Warner/Chappell, where she started as a paralegal and eventually rose to Senior Vice President of International Legal & Business Affairs. During her tenure, she worked with legendary artists such as Eric Clapton and Madonna and played a pivotal role in the innovative licensing strategy for Radiohead's "In Rainbows" project. Her responsibilities at Warner/Chappell were extensive, covering litigation, digital licensing and public policy, among other areas.

Jane's leadership and vision were further recognised when she became CEO of IP collection societies MCPS, PMLL and IMPEL in 2014. Under her leadership, she streamlined operations, negotiated significant deals and introduced numerous initiatives aimed at nurturing talent in the music publishing industry.

Her contributions have earned her multiple accolades, including the Outstanding Contribution award at the Music Week Women In Music Awards and recognition from the Ivors Academy and the Music Publishers Association.

Beyond her executive roles, Jane is a passionate advocate for access to opportunities in the arts. She co-chairs Attitude is Everything, co-founded several festivals including Primadonna Festival CIC and serves as a trustee and mentor for various organisations. Her consultancy business, Laffittes Ltd and her involvement in tech music incubators like Abbey Road Red, underscore her commitment to innovation in music and technology.

Primadonna, her inclusive literary weekend festival, taking place on Friday 26th July 2024, not only features renowned names but also provides emerging writers with invaluable industry insights and opportunities, exemplifying Jane's dedication to fostering new talent.





# PRIMADONNA

*A weekend to express yourself*



*Primadonna Festival*

*Food museum, Stowmarket, Suffolk*

*26 - 28 July 2024*



*Join us for a weekend of books, big ideas & festival fun*

*Book tickets online at [primadonnafestival.com](https://primadonnafestival.com) or scan the QR code*

# *I wouldn't say boo to a goose*

I was born in Elmswell, Suffolk and was the youngest of four siblings. My dad was a farmer – he had a milk herd and then a beef herd but he tried to stay ahead of the curve and ended up just doing arable.

Me and my siblings were close in age. We would make our own packed lunch in the summer holidays and get chucked outside and wouldn't be welcome back until teatime. We'd go off on our bicycles and were told not to talk to strangers.

I remember one day a man came up to us and asked if we'd like some sweets. He said, "it's okay, I'm a friend of your dad's, I'm Mr Savage, you'll remember that name". We all cycled back home to ask if it was okay to have sweets from Mr Savage. Mum said yes so we all cycled back to Mr Savage to get our sweets!

At primary school, it's a big age difference when you're 5 and your sisters are 9 or 10. They used to cycle really fast so they could lose me. I used to peddle as hard as I could to try to catch up. As the youngest, you feel as if everyone hates you. My siblings would sing to me "nobody loves me, everybody hates me, I'm going to go and eat worms". My siblings now say "Jane, you're 62, it's time to get over it".

Childhood though was very idyllic. Mum used to cook a lot and we used to have a lot of teas in the fields in harvest. The combine harvesters were much smaller then but the weather just as unpredictable! When it was dry enough to combine, they'd work way into the night and so dad would want something to eat at 4pm. That was one of our jobs as children, cycling with his lunch. However, mum would usually take him cake and we'd all have a ride on the combine. Harvest teas were a big part of childhood.

As a child I wouldn't say boo to a goose. You would always have a salesman coming down to the farm, looking to sell grain, fertilizer or tractor parts. I was very shy and would hide behind my dad's leg. As I got older, I grew fast, I was a foot taller than anyone around me and very thin so became very self-conscious and tried to take up as little space as possible.



# *VIRGIN MUSIC (PUBLISHERS) LTD*

Between 1986 and 1992, Jane played a pivotal role at VIRGIN MUSIC (PUBLISHERS) LTD during a transformative period marked by rapid expansion and strategic investments under the leadership of Richard Branson.

As a key team member, she contributed significantly to the company's growth which saw it triple in size before ultimately being sold to EMI. Jane's expertise and dedication were instrumental in setting up essential tools and protocols that streamlined operations and enhanced productivity.

Jane's responsibilities were diverse and impactful. She efficiently managed the licensing of music for television and film, a critical area that required meticulous attention to detail and a deep understanding of both the creative and legal aspects of the industry. Her work ensured that VIRGIN MUSIC's extensive catalogue reached broader audiences, thereby increasing revenue streams and fostering new opportunities for artists.

Additionally, Jane oversaw international copyright matters, ensuring that the company's intellectual property was protected and leveraged across global markets.

Beyond her administrative and legal duties, Jane also demonstrated her organisational prowess by hosting and organising conferences that brought together industry professionals and stakeholders.

She was also responsible for producing all sheet music, ensuring that musicians had access to high-quality, accurate transcriptions of VIRGIN MUSIC's works.

Jane's multifaceted role was crucial in driving the company's success during a period of significant change and growth, leaving a lasting impact on its operations and legacy.

# *I invented a job for myself there...*

I put off getting a job for as long as possible. I was directionless. I travelled and was a nanny before I worked it out. I loved music and business – I nearly did a business degree. I thought there must be an organisation somewhere that combined both. In my day, for our career's advice options, it was usually to either become a nurse or fireman. I therefore had to find out for myself what was out there.

While working for a book publisher, Foyles bookshop, I applied for a role at Virgin. I got rejected but got invited back for another job.

My arrival coincided with the company growing very quickly. We had lots of hits and expanded internationally.

I invented a job for myself there by saying, "wouldn't it be useful if we had x, y or z". For example, "wouldn't it be useful if we had a release schedule, showing all of the records that come out featuring the writers that are signed to us" – because music publishing was all about songwriting and you can have bits of tracks released by numbers of different artists, that are signed to a company not related to you. I would be told "yes" and then I'd complain about working too hard and only on £5k per year.

I said to my daughter the other day when she was complaining about not getting a pay rise, "I never got a pay rise that I didn't ask for. People don't just give you pay rises..."

I'm friends with all the people I worked with there. My boss Steve at the time, said (last time we saw each other), "god, you were always in my office moaning and I'd be thinking here she is again asking for money". I would always have a lot of evidence for them to give it to me!

## THAT WAS ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS THAT CHANGES YOU A LITTLE BIT...

Steve was very spikey, yet also funny and a decent person and boss. In my interview his spikiness came out. His interview style was "I'm going to trip you up with the interview questions and if you pass, I might hire you".

He said, "you've got a law degree and you're applying for a £5k job, all of your friends are going to earn a fortune, you'll get fed up". I replied "no, I don't want to be a lawyer, this is what I want to do". Steve replied, "so you're obviously not ambitious, you'll leave and have babies". As a Taurus, I'm slow to anger but the red mist will come down. I however saw this opportunity going away and I said to him, "I'm fed up with people telling me what I want to do. This is what I want to do. I'd do it for nothing". That was one of those moments that changes you a little bit.

Virgin ended when Richard Branson sold the company. It was a huge shock because it felt very much like we were part of his family. It was on the morning news before we were told and if I knew then what I know about HR now, I may have asked a few more questions. One day I was working and then suddenly I was unemployed. My dreams came crashing down.

# *Warner/Chappell Music Ltd (WCM)*

Jane's tenure at Warner/Chappell Music Ltd (WCM) from 1992 to 2013 is a testament to her expertise and dedication in the music publishing industry. Starting her career as a paralegal, Jane's relentless work ethic and deep understanding of both legal and business affairs led to her promotion to the position of Senior Vice President of International Legal & Business Affairs. Her 20-year journey at WCM saw her navigating the company through various ownerships, including Time Warner, AOL, Edgar Bronfman and Len Blavatnik's Access Industries, showcasing her adaptability and strategic acumen.

Throughout her career at WCM, Jane played an instrumental role in shaping the company's digital licensing strategy. She directly negotiated pivotal deals with major digital platforms such as Spotify, Amazon, Apple, Google, YouTube and Deezer, ensuring that WCM stayed at the forefront of the rapidly evolving digital music landscape. Additionally, she was responsible for developing WCM's strategy for emerging markets internationally which involved extensive travel and the selection and management of international sub-publishing licensees outside of North and South America. Her leadership extended to running business affairs teams outside of North America, including a seven-person team in London and managing all litigation and external lawyer instructions.

Jane's influence was not confined to her immediate responsibilities. She represented WCM and Warner Music Group in refinancing presentations and strategic reviews during three different ownership changes. Her expertise in mergers and acquisitions, competition reviews and liaising with DG Competition was crucial for the company's growth and compliance.

Jane also handled or supervised negotiations with high-profile clients, including Radiohead, George Michael, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Guns N' Roses, the Smiths and the estates of Irving Berlin and the Gershwins.

Beyond her corporate duties, Jane significantly impacted the music industry by participating in legislation drafting, working on directives and representing the industry on various panels and think tanks. She also championed initiatives like the Creative Apprenticeship scheme and the Copyright Licensing Hub and created a leaders' network for women in the music industry, underscoring her commitment to fostering talent and promoting diversity.



# *They were enemy no. 1*

I saw Andrew Gummer who used to work for Virgin at a gig. I complained to him that I'd sent out 200 CVs but got rejected from all of them and told him that all of the rejections had come from the Business Affairs Department, as someone had told me to put my law degree at the top of the CV. He said, "you'd make a good lawyer, we've got a vacancy at WCM". He offered me a junior paralegal role and I said "no, I don't think that's what I want to do". He then pointed out I hadn't got a job... He likes to say I went to WCM kicking and screaming.

WCM was a bigger company and a less cool company. Virgin was a cool place to work – the ethos and the people. WCM was very corporate – there were Bugs Bunny cartoons everywhere. To Virgin, they were enemy no. 1.

When I started, I was surprised at the level of work Andrew was giving me. Andrew had an unwavering belief in me, yet at the time, I would have seen it as him having too much work to do and fobbing it off on me...

For example, Andrew said to me, "can you draft an Eric Clapton extension agreement?". It was millions of pounds. I said "no, I don't think I can". He stopped and looked at me and then said, "I'm not asking you if you're able to do it, I'm asking you to do it". I said, "I really don't think I can". He replied, "here are the terms, just write it out, it'll be fine".

He was very generous in marking up the work I did.

We had an office with a sliding door; I would listen to him negotiating with big music industry lawyers and from eavesdropping learnt what to do!

ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS IT'D BE LILT AND RUM!

A&R in those days would find acts to sign by going to gigs. I'd go through offers with them, type them up and send them out via fax. I noticed two things that made the experience unrewarding. They'd come in late on a Friday, they'd probably promised an offer "by the end of the week" but hadn't done anything about it and probably on Friday thought "geez, it's Friday" and then they'd come to me. I'd then be there at 6pm faxing the offer over and they'd be down the pub so I thought, I'm not going to do this!

I had to re-train them to come in earlier. I said, "I'm not going to do offers unless you bring me the music – I love music and it's meaningless if it's just the name of a band on a bit of paper – I came into this job because I like music".

The way to do it was to have a drinks cabinet. I invested in spirits and we already had fridges in the office with soft drinks.

You'd drink the first centimetre of the can of coke or ginger beer and fill it with rum and listen to the music. I'd then do the offer in the morning and leave with everyone else, rather than having to stay late. On special occasions it'd be lilt and rum!

# *Fear it's your one chance and you'll be fired...*

I went in as a junior paralegal in 1992. In 1995, I was head of Business Affairs. I ran the Business Affairs team but reported to Andrew. He left in 1997 and I got promoted to his position – Director of Business Affairs.

I was eight months pregnant with twins, it was a very unusual promotion. It was unheard of for someone who was pregnant, to be offered this in the music industry at that time. I later found out, that I was being paid about 40% less than what Andrew was being paid so maybe that had something to do with it.

There was a fairly new lawyer on the team who was qualified for the position. He had been there for 6 months but had it in his head that he'd be promoted and so when he found out I had, he resigned.

My job was empty. I was head of a department that didn't exist.

I worked through my maternity leave and was back at work pretty quick. This was partly due to my work ethic, not wanting to let people down but also fear it's your one chance and you'll be fired.

## GRAND CANYONS

When I was Director of Business Affairs, it was all about really big negotiations. Litigation for acts like Madonna, Radiohead and George Michael. Our saying was "where there's a hit there's a writ". We had a big piece of litigation for example on "Believe" by Cher which was really interesting.

In the early 2000s I was promoted to SVP International Legal and Business Affairs so moved from day-to-day legal stuff to growing the international business. It was the beginning of the digital revolution so I was doing all the digital licensing and Collection Society work because songwriters depend a lot on companies like PRS.

We helped to launch iTunes in India. Copyright is a national law – different in each country and with different business practices. Apple found it difficult to launch in multiple territories at the same time. Some infrastructures don't exist in developing countries. We also went to Africa to help iTunes launch there. I spent a lot of time in America explaining to the money guys about music publishing – it's a hidden part of the music industry. I also spent a lot of time in Westminster and Brussels talking about copyright.

In terms of the money in music publishing, you're collecting "micro nickel and dime" amounts multiplied by trillions of different actions i.e. listening on the radio, downloading or playing it in a bar.

A lot of money is collected through Collection Societies. They collect for everybody – they represent all the music in the world so with any music played, they then work out how to distribute it to songwriters – they're very powerful.

They're nearly all monopolies. Some are government agents – so there's a lot of power around them politically.

Publishing started as sheet music, then to mechanical discs, then pianolas (holes through music which trigger tiny levers to create musical notes), then records, radio, TV, film and then the first digitisation was the ringtone, then master phones where you could download Madonna for example.

One of the problems with digital licensing of music was the way you had to license it through a Collection Society because of how rights are moved within the music publishing world. Collection Societies in those days were working very nationally not internationally. Each law is different in each country so multi-territory licensing is very difficult to do. In the ringtone market, the money would just get lost. I used to picture all the territory borders between territories as if on a map, with all the borders like Grand Canyons, where the money would just roll off and disappear.

# Radiohead

English rock band Radiohead significantly influenced the music landscape since its formation in 1985. The band, consisting of Thom Yorke (vocals, guitar, piano), Jonny Greenwood (lead guitar, keyboards), Colin Greenwood (bass), Ed O'Brien (guitar, backing vocals) and Phil Selway (drums), initially gained popularity with their 1992 single "Creep". Despite its initial lukewarm reception, "Creep" became a global hit, setting the stage for Radiohead's rise to fame. Their debut album, "Pablo Honey", released in 1993, showcased their grunge influences but hinted at the experimental nature that would come to define their sound.

Radiohead's third album, "OK Computer" (1997), is often cited as a landmark in modern rock music. It marked a departure from their earlier work, incorporating more complex song structures, abstract lyrics and a broader range of instruments and electronic sounds. The album's exploration of themes such as alienation, technology and dystopia resonated with a wide audience, earning critical acclaim and solidifying Radiohead's reputation as pioneers in the alternative rock genre. Tracks like "Paranoid Android", "Karma Police" and "No Surprises" are emblematic of their innovative approach and have left a lasting impact on both fans and fellow musicians.

Continuing to push boundaries, Radiohead has embraced a variety of musical styles over the years, from the electronic-infused "Kid A" (2000) and "Amnesiac" (2001) to the more intimate, acoustic-driven "In Rainbows" (2007). Their willingness to experiment and evolve has kept their music fresh and relevant, attracting new listeners while maintaining a devoted fan base.

Beyond their musical contributions, Radiohead has also been noted for their environmental activism and innovative approaches to music distribution, such as the pay-what-you-want model they employed for "In Rainbows". These efforts reflect the band's commitment to challenging the status quo, both artistically and socially.



# *I was the first person in the world to download In Rainbows*

After the ringtone market, we had  
downloads...

I thought, if all the money is going down the virtual Grand Canyon, I'm going to look at how we can licence digital companies directly ourselves, rather than via the Collection Societies. I started thinking about who would take their rights out of PRS and approached Radiohead. They said "that's the missing part of our jigsaw. We wanted to release an album for fans that is unannounced and couldn't do it because our rights are locked in at PRS. To add to the fun, we're going to add "pay what you want".

They couldn't get a pay what you want license from PRS and they were peeved they even had to ask PRS to release their own songs.

We were preparing for the album release and only 20 people knew about it – it was a circle of secrecy. I knew it was going to be released at midnight – I was going to download it straight away – because firstly I was so excited at the prospect and secondly, to show management I was really behind it. I was the first person in the world to download it and I have a plaque confirming it!



IN/ RAINBOWS  
IN RAIN/ BOWS  
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RADIOHEAD  
\_RAD IO HEA D

Presented to  
**JANE DYBALL**  
in recognition of her help in achieving  
more than 3 million sales of the

**RADIOHEAD**  
album  
**'IN RAINBOWS'**  
2011

*This is also to certify that Jane Dyball  
was the first person in the world to  
purchase an 'In Rainbows' discbox*

# *Madonna*

We'd signed Stuart Price, a very young DJ and record producer – he was only 17 years old. He had an alter ego called Jacques le Conte.

Madonna had previously worked with Mirwais who was French and had released the album "Music" with him. I'd worked a bit on that album. She didn't want to work with Mirwais again but had liked working with a Frenchman.

Madonna thought Stuart was French due to his alter ego name! She found out he was a teenager – she ended up making "Confessions on a Dance Floor" in his bedsit.

Stuart is very funny. I was talking to him about what it was like to have Madonna come to his bedsit. He said a neighbour saw Madonna walking in and said, "you know, that woman who keeps coming round looks a bit like Madonna". Stuart replied "oh, yeah...".

Stuart phoned up one day and said, "we've got a bit of a problem with one of the tracks called Hung Up – it samples ABBA and I've tried to clear it with them but they've come back with a straight no". ABBA is known for never agreeing to use samples on songs.

I asked Stuart what financial offer would be fair. Then I came up with a plan... I said "it's such a great track Stuart, you have to get Madonna herself to phone up ABBA and get her to say to them: this is a great track with or without the ABBA bit in it. We would like to include it in the song and we think an equal split is fair but we can easily take it out". I was asking Madonna to call their bluff because it was an integral part of the song. ABBA agreed and the deal was done.





# MPA

Jane's tenure as the Chief Executive Officer of the MPA Group of Companies from 2014 to 2019 stands as a remarkable chapter in the music industry, notably because she was one of the first and few women to reach such a high executive level.

During her time at MPA, Jane showcased exceptional leadership and strategic prowess in managing three commercial intellectual property collection societies: MCPS, IMPEL and PMLL, all under the umbrella of the not-for-profit trade association, MPA.

Her role involved overseeing a joint turnover of £150 million, conducting monthly Board meetings and coordinating multiple stakeholder committees with over 100 executives from across the music publishing industry.

Under her stewardship, the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society (MCPS) was revitalised despite challenges posed by the declining CD market. Jane managed to return the society to profitability and reduce a substantial £20 million balance sheet deficit.

Meanwhile, her efforts with the Independent Music Publishers e-Licensing Ltd (IMPEL) were equally impressive. She tripled both membership and turnover, implemented a new governance structure and played a critical role in negotiating deals with major digital services like Apple, Spotify and YouTube. Her oversight extended to handling complex technical issues related to royalty collections and distributions.

In addition to her success with MCPS and IMPEL, Jane also established and grew the Printed Music Licensing Ltd (PMLL), a new entity focused on licensing the photocopying of sheet music in schools. She generated multiple new income streams, set distribution policies and reviewed governance structures.

Furthermore, as the head of the Music Publishers Association (MPA), Jane spearheaded an ambitious lobbying programme, established key industry relationships, organised large-scale events and launched new training and mentoring programmes. Her efforts significantly raised the profile of the music publishing industry and solidified her legacy as a trailblazing executive in a predominantly male-dominated field.

# *When I took it over, it had £20m debt attached to it with £150m turnover*

Part of my role was to create relationships directly in Westminster and Brussels. This relationship building had already begun when I worked for WCM so I took advantage of the relationships I'd built previously.

I was initially hired to run MCPS, a Collection Society owned by the Music Publishers Association. MCPS's income came mainly from CD sales and the market for CDs had tanked. Consequently the company's cost exceeded their revenue.

They had a big cash-flow with a lot of money passing through it so had the ability to keep the company going but at the same time was building debt.

When I took it over, it had £20m debt attached to it with £150m turnover. It had to pay out 90% of that to the publishers and its costs were around 12% which meant it was getting further and further into debt. I developed a recovery plan paying down £20m debt by re-tendering the business which attracted multiple offers and a very competitive bid. By improving our outsourcing agreement and increasing revenues, we returned the company to profit. It was a radical thing to do but it really transformed MCPS.

# *Strictly*

Our emotions are so connected to music. You can create a playlist to cheer you up, that makes you excited and that calms you down – I've just put together a happiness playlist for Primadonna, as I'm DJing on Saturday night!

Live music particularly does that. Just sharing that audience space with the musicians, makes you fall in love with the band when you see them live.

At WCM we had debenture seats at the Royal Albert Hall. I've seen people such as Liza Minnelli and Tony Bennett to name a few.

I was invited to Strictly because the BBC is MCPS's biggest customer. I love dancing and used to watch the old version "Come Dancing" before the celebrity Strictly aired.

When I went to Strictly, I was surprised to realise I was looking at the band, rather than the dancers. I then met Dave Arch (the MD) at a party. I did that usual thing of recognising someone and said, "oh hi, we've met before". He replied, "no". Then I said, "oh my god, you're the band leader off Strictly. God that must be hard work with the arrangements and the number you have to do each week". I think he could see that I really understood the achievement of putting that together each and every week and we ended up having a great chat about the band on Strictly.

Music gets in your whole being. The Strictly band brought me to tears – I felt them rolling down my cheeks. I had so much gratitude to Strictly for making the show happen after lockdown.





# *Who has got a right to earn a living from music*

The music industry is a difficult place to be in at the moment. It needs to re-invent itself yet again in response to technical challenges. The technical challenge is AI in terms of how music is created and manipulated – and how it's delivered to an audience and how the audience is manipulated by it, for example, through algorithms – and how to capture value to reinvest back into the music ecosystem.

The gatekeepers are gone. I could write and create a song and have it online that same day. There are no barriers to cost (recording studios) and no barriers to audience (Youtube, TikTok etc).

The music industry is a complicated world. “Who has got a right to earn a living from music” – that’s a question not asked in those terms but it’s the hidden question underneath most industry issues at the moment.

More and more people call themselves musicians but if you look at every successful musician, they have a burning ambition, a phenomenal work ethic and talent such as Taylor Swift and Ed Sheeran.

I met Ed’s parents and said that we tried to sign him and that I could see how hard he is working. They said, “people don’t understand how much work is involved in being successful”.

Ed maybe did 300 shows a year when he was getting known. He would book a support slot in Ipswich so that he could travel to London that same day to headline another show.

Now you can write lyrics and they can be enhanced by AI software, that can make the track sound really special. AI can equally be viewed as a terrible thing, as songwriters may feel their career might be gone if AI can write songs.

To me a successful musician is defined by their work ethic and ambition.



# *I've rarely regretted making a brave decision*

It's not a scarce commodity in the music industry but I do think my commonsense has been the only thing that has helped my career progress through the industry, as well as my work ethic and "getting things done" approach.

I tried my best and built a career on commonsense. From day one when I was at Virgin, I was suggesting solutions to problems (e.g. the release schedule idea) – to then being at WCM and coming up with the groundbreaking strategy for Radiohead. That's how I've made a career, by coming up with constructive ideas that solve problems.

My advice – be risk forward in terms of decision making but don't dither. I've rarely regretted making a brave decision.

## *Favourite quote*

Fortune favours the brave. ~ a Latin proverb made popular by Pliny



# *Primadonna Literary Festival 2024: A Celebration of Diversity and Creativity*

Get ready for an exhilarating weekend at the Primadonna Literary Festival, taking place from Friday 26th July 2024, in the picturesque surroundings of The Food Museum in Stowmarket.

This inclusive festival is a haven for book lovers, writers and creative minds, featuring a diverse lineup of celebrated authors and emerging talents.

Primadonna offers a unique platform for aspiring writers to gain invaluable industry experience through workshops, advice surgeries, pitching sessions and a creative writing "Masters" programme.

The festival promises a rich tapestry of experiences that extend beyond the literary realm. Attendees can immerse themselves in a variety of activities including music, comedy and wellness experiences, all set against the backdrop of the museum's rolling meadows.

Highlights of the event include a talk by Kate Mosse with the Feminist Book Society on her gripping queer pirate story, "The Ghost Ship" and an exclusive preview of her forthcoming novel, "The Map of Bones". Sinéad Gleeson will delve into folklore and femininity with her haunting debut novel, "Hagstone", while legendary music PR Jane Savidge will reflect on the Britpop era and its disillusionments in her discussion on Pulp and fame.

Festival-goers can also look forward to engaging sessions with Irenosen Okojie on her captivating new novel, "Curandera" and Ela Lee (author of "Jaded") alongside Chimene Suleyman (author of "The Chain") as they explore the themes of gaslighting and reclaiming control. Comedy enthusiasts will be thrilled by Helen Lederer's insights into the world of comedy, shared in her lively talk, "Not That I'm Bitter".

The festival caters to all interests with dedicated itineraries, ensuring something for everyone – whether it's up-close industry opportunities for writers, the best in comedy or a plethora of storytelling – these activities and festival experiences are for children and families.

Join Primadonna for a weekend of inspiration, creativity and community, where every voice is celebrated and new stories are born.

[www.primadonnafestival.com](http://www.primadonnafestival.com)















# *The world as it should be for one weekend*

I was talking to a friend called Sonia Purnell in 2018 who had written a Sunday Times Bestseller about Boris Johnson. She couldn't get programmed at festivals – well known white male biographers were getting the biographer slots.

I spoke with another friend Catherine Mayer about this. Catherine is an author, feminist and co-founder of the Women's Equality Party. I asked her if this was a "thing" and she said "yes, it's a problem".

We have in the past held festivals at our home, as we have the space and the infrastructure to do it. Catherine had asked me if I was going to do any more festivals and I told her that I actually really enjoyed the spoken word parts of the festivals we had put on before. I said to Catherine, "maybe we should put on a feminist literary festival here" and Catherine said, "I thought you'd never ask". Catherine has an extensive contact list and everyone brought in to form "The Primadonna's", came from her extensive network. Our first Primadonna Literary Festival took place in 2019. In 2021, it was voted "East Anglian Festival of the Year".

## **I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO PUT OUR MISSION STATEMENT INTO TWO SENTENCES!**

I've never been able to put our mission statement into two sentences! We said it's not just for women, it's for anyone that doesn't get platformed from different communities i.e. LGBTIQ+, ethnic minorities, disabled people and the working class who are not necessarily part of networks that can give them access.

Our idea for Primadonna was to remove the gatekeepers of the book publishing industry, as it's quite inaccessible for everyday people and many people don't know how to get published. In a world full of rejection letters or "no acknowledgement" from a publisher on receiving a draft – we wanted to make publishing accessible. At Primadonna you have access to agents, book publishers and other writers.

## **SOMETHING I'M VERY PROUD OF**

As a result of Primadonna, several authors have been published which is something I'm very proud of. This happened as a result of them being able to present their work in person. You can find more details here: [www.primadonnafestival.com/prize/previous-winners](http://www.primadonnafestival.com/prize/previous-winners)

We also have a "writers' prize" and part of the prize is for the winner to get an agent which then leads to publication.

## **THAT'S WHEN I REALISED WE WERE DOING SOMETHING QUITE IMPORTANT**

Primadonna isn't just for people who want to become writers. We also have people talking about their area of expertise which seems to be a rarity for our panellists. For example, in our first year, our panel lineup was travel writers all of whom were from an ethnic background. At one point on the panel discussion, they said how amazing it was to be on a panel, where no one's asking what it's like to be a writer of colour talking about travel. They said they're normally the "token" people brought onto a panel, to bring a different lived experience to a discussion. That's when I realised we were doing something quite important.

# *Primadonna has taught me a lot*

I've learnt a lot. I think like many "do good" middle class white women, I thought I knew a lot about what it meant to be a good ally...

I think that one of the things that really hit me on the head, was a discussion about a tweet. In my mind I didn't think the tweet was that bad and I said, "I don't understand that, can someone explain where I'm going wrong on my mind of thinking". A colleague said, "well, fundamentally Jane, it's an abuse of immense white privilege asking a brown person about a tweet, that a white person has written that has racial connotations". What my colleague was basically saying was – do the work in understanding what white privilege is – a brown person doesn't have to tell you. What I had overlooked was that I was relying on other people to educate me, in a world where there are endless books to read.

I now acknowledge my privilege. I never thought I had a privileged background because all of my material possessions have been earned but I did and I do.

## MAKING PRIMADONNA FINANCIALLY ACCESSIBLE...

We wanted to make Primadonna accessible – a ticket for the entire weekend is £60. However, those from disadvantaged backgrounds can gain access to join the festival, through volunteering a certain number of hours. We also work with local communities and charities to allocate free tickets quietly. There's also a "pay it forward" programme, where you buy a ticket for you and someone else. Additionally, those living locally in the IP14 postcode gain free access on Sunday.



## *Note from founder of Níroshíní Míni Magazine, Melissa Day...*

Jane Dyball is indeed a remarkable figure in the music industry and her journey is nothing short of inspiring. Her down-to-earth personality and sense of humour make her both relatable and engaging. She's a true joy to be in the company of.

With a law degree from Bristol University as her foundation, Jane embarked on her career at Virgin Music, where she quickly demonstrated a fearless approach to stepping out of her comfort zone and embracing new challenges. Her tenure at Warner/Chappell, where she ascended to the role of Senior Vice President, highlighted her adeptness at navigating complex issues such as litigation and digital licensing, all while showcasing her unique blend of creativity and common sense.

As the CEO of MCPS (Mechanical-Copyright Protection Society), PMLL (Printed Music Licensing Limited) and IMPEL (Independent Music Publishers European Licensing), Jane's leadership was marked by significant deals and innovative initiatives that propelled the organisations forward.

Her passion for fostering talent and inclusivity is evident in her various roles beyond the executive suite, including co-chairing Attitude is Everything an organisation dedicated to improving access to live music for deaf and disabled people and co-founding the Primadonna Festival CIC which champions emerging artists and writers.

Jane's commitment to innovation in the realms of music and technology is further underscored by her consultancy, Laffittes Ltd and her involvement with Abbey Road Red and The Rattle, music technology incubators. These ventures reflect her forward-thinking mindset and her dedication to pushing the boundaries of what is possible within the industry.

Her resilience, creativity and “give-it-a-go” spirit have left an indelible mark on the music world, making her a true trailblazer and an inspirational figure for aspiring professionals in the field.

# N NIROSHINI

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[www.niroshini360.com](http://www.niroshini360.com)

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