



**BISHOPSGATE  
INSTITUTE**

# Lunchtime Concerts Lyle Barton

22 October 2021



## Introduction



**Watch our  
summer series  
of concerts**

Our free Friday lunchtime concerts at Bishopsgate Institute are back. Join us to hear explorative jazz pianist Lyle Barton, who will use our collections on Bernie Grant and the Labour Party Black Sections as a framework for his original jazz compositions.

Follow us on a journey through ten concerts taking in a range of musical genres, from the traditional to the unexpected. Over the course of the series, you will hear three groups of instruments - woodwind, piano and the human body as an instrument - presented and combined in different ways.

At the heart of this series are our well-known archives and each week we ask our performers to respond to a theme suggested by the collections in our Library and curate their programme around it.

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# Programme

## Dan is the Man in the Van (The Mighty Sparrow)

This is a song I've arranged from the popular calypso artist The Mighty Sparrow. Apparently this was one of Bernie Grant's favourite songs growing up in Guyana. The lyrics make a mockery of the British colonial education system that was present in the West Indies at the time, and how nursery rhymes/stories that were taught in books like "The West Indian Readers" (J.O. Cutteridge), were stupid and made little sense. Throughout the song, the artist criticises Cutteridge and suggests that his educational material was a deliberate attempt to miseducate its readers - "Cutteridge wanted to keep us in ignorance!"

## ACTION (Lyle Barton)

Action over (hollow) rhetoric. So often politicians are characterised for endless rhetoric, lies, empty promises and their inability to effect real change. However, Bernie was not interested in 'playing politics' and would often take on contentious issues that other politicians might be too afraid of. He was willing to receive backlash and go against the party line if he believed it could benefit people. As his father writes, "He was an 'action' man, a pragmatist who knew that actions, not ideas, would resolve the plight of the marginalised and oppressed. Consequently, he always sought tangible ways in which to solve problems and his many projects are evidence of his commitment to effect change."

## REPARATIONS (Lyle Barton)

"The colonisation and exploitation of Africa and the enslavement of African people must be the biggest crime in history and one from which we still suffer." - Bernie Grant

This track pays homage to those that have given so much and received such little acknowledgement in building both the material and cultural wealth of this country. "In 1993 [Bernie] helped to found the Africa Reparations Movement UK (ARM) and became its chairman. The organisation believed that 'people of African origin have an historic task to perform, that is to ensure that the truth of what happened to people of African origin is exposed and that reparations are made to African people'".

## PROGRESSION (Lyle Barton)

It is easy to forget how much has changed in such a short space of time. The Black Lives Matter uprisings in the summer of 2020 have shown how much work we still have to undertake to end racism. However, as we continue to move forward we must remember and celebrate the achievements that have allowed us to get where we are now. It is easy to forget that before 1987 there were no Black elected MPs in the UK. Bernie helped change that and paved the way for the growing diversity we see amongst elected representatives in the British parliament.

## Retrospection (Duke Ellington)

A nod to the American jazz great and the critical role that jazz played in the American civil rights movement and African American history.

Bernie was considered an international politician. "During his many overseas travels, Bernie always took an interest in the Black and minority ethnic communities in those countries and sought to establish contacts with their leaders and politicians. One such leader was Reverend Jesse Jackson, Baptist minister and Civil Rights activist. Bernie formed a friendship with Jackson in the mid-eighties while on visit to the USA and later invited him to the UK to meet local politicians and community leaders. Both men went to South Africa in 1990 to greet Nelson Mandela on his release from prison."

## Nicole (Lyle Barton)

A reflection on Bernie's legacy; a great and truly compassionate man that was loved by many all over the world.

\* Quotes pulled from "Dawn to Dusk: A Biography of Bernie Grant MP" - Eric A. Grant



Image from the Bernie Grant Archive

## Inspired by our archives

This week's concert was inspired by a flyer from the Labour Party Black Sections archive. The Labour Party Black Sections was established in Britain in 1983. Part of a wider trend towards political realisation among post-war immigrant communities, the Black Sections aimed to increase minority ethnic representation. There was an important intervention, since Britain had not seen a Black or Asian MP elected for more than half a century.

In 1987, four Black Sections members were returned to Parliament, including Bernie Grant. Born in Guyana in 1944, Grant represented Tottenham in north London as a Labour MP until his death in 2000. Bernie Grant was particularly outspoken on issues of race and inequality, highlighting institutional racism in healthcare, housing, policing, and education long before it was fashionable to do so.

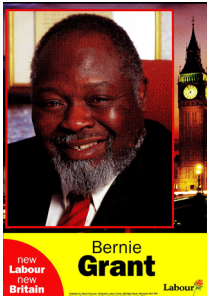


Image from the Bernie Grant Archive

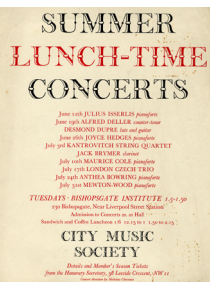
Both the Bernie Grant archive and the Labour Party Black Sections collection form part of our Labour and Socialist History special collections. Why not book a visit to our library to view the letters, flyers, speeches, press cuttings, and pamphlets held in these two thought-provoking political collections?

## Meet the artist

Lyle Barton is a composer and jazz pianist based in London, regularly playing and recording with a range of talented artists including Emma-Jean Thackray, Golden Mean, Matters Unknown, Free Movement Ensemble and 10:32. He also presents his own ensemble at selected venues, including Ronnie Scott's, where he's described as "one of the UK's leading jazz pianists".



Lyle is a frequently called upon session musician, musical director, and recording artist, performing nationally and internationally with other artists including Gary Bartz, Poppy Ajudha, Nubiyan Twist, Riz Ahmed, Maisha, ZFEX, Rosie Turton, Rae Morris and Ricky Martin. He graduated with a First Class Jazz Bachelors w/ Honours and was awarded the concert recital diploma from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.



Bishopsgate Institute Archive

## History of the lunchtime concerts

Our concerts have been a tradition since the Second World War, when Dame Myra Hess instigated them at the National Gallery to bring people together at a time of hardship.

Lunchtime Concerts began at the Institute in 1948 and Dame Myra's Steinway piano now lives at the Institute and is often played at our concerts.

## Support our free concerts

Our lunchtime concerts have been a tradition since 1948, providing inspiration and respite from the world outside for an hour a week in a relaxed performance environment. We always pay our musicians for these performances, but the concerts are free to audiences.

Help support these concerts by donating [here](#).