

# Press Release



18 August 2011

For Immediate Release

## Fund steps in to help musician left homeless by London riots

- Grant given to vocalist Eva-Maria Hess after home was burned to the ground during the riots
- Eva-Maria's future and career in music left unclear
- The Fund and music world also rallies round to show support to flautist Carla Rees

Eva-Maria Hess has been left devastated after her worldly possessions, including her violin, piano, guitars, other equipment, archives and recording work were destroyed when her flat in Tottenham was burned to the ground during the riots in London.

Originally from Potsdam, Germany, Eva started to show an interest in music at the age of 5. Whilst at school she played recorder, saxophone and flute and sang in the choir. She came to London in 2009 to further her studies at the London Centre of Contemporary Music and is now part of a successful duo called Vocal Instinct, providing backing vocals for many well known artists across all genres of music. Eva also writes her own music and was hoping to concentrate on this in the coming months but recent events have left her future very unclear.

She recalls the day's occurrences. "I left my house at 4pm to meet with a friend and on returning later that night, the road where I live was blocked off by police. I had heard from a lady on the bus that riots were taking place, apparently it was all over Facebook, but I really had no idea how bad it was. All we were told was to stay somewhere else for the evening so I got in contact with a friend."

When she returned the next day she still had no idea what had happened and could not get to her road. In fact, Eva did not find out that her flat had been burned down until she saw it on the news. She says "It was utter shock and after being told by my landlord that my flat was being demolished, I suddenly realised that all I had was my handbag, phone, Macbook and the clothes on my back."

After the initial shock, Eva says she got busy with organising what she could. "In crazy situations you develop powers that you didn't think you had." She had advice from the police and Council and was able to get food and other essential amenities from various crisis centres but she had little else. It was her friend who suggested that she get in touch with the Musicians Benevolent Fund. After contacting the Fund, Eva came to the office to meet with Vicky Jones, Welfare and Advice Manager.

Following the disappointment of having little support from the German Embassy, due to her identification and bank statements being lost in the fire, she was grateful that the Fund could help. She says "There was very little fuss and I was made to feel very comfortable. When I was told I could have an immediate grant I cried and hugged Vicky for a long time. It was the first real support I had received since everything happened."

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Eva is currently living with a friend and after getting in touch with the demolition company, has been able to salvage a few of her belongings but she still does not know what the future holds. Miraculously though, she is staying positive. When asked by Sky News what she would do if she met the rioters she said "At first I would cry, but then I would hug them. I want to understand why they did it. Having gone through the experience and seeing the aftermath, I also want to help people be more socially tolerant." She has even considered setting up a choir with some of those who have been detained for rioting. She feels that music may help them be integrated into society again and that society in turn will see that they can create something good. "The support shown to me by the Musicians Benevolent Fund has made me not give up on my dream."

Eva is not the only musician to have been affected by the London riots. The music world has also rallied around to show its support to flautist Carla Rees. Carla was recently featured in the press after losing an irreplaceable collection of flutes when rioters burned down her Croydon flat. The Fund has been talking to Carla and will be looking at offering support and advice. The Carla Rees Collection Fund has been set up: [justflutes.com/fund-for-carla-rees-page66.htm](http://justflutes.com/fund-for-carla-rees-page66.htm)

David Sulkin, Chief Executive of the Musicians Benevolent Fund says "If any more professional musicians have been affected by the riots, come to us as a first port-of-call."

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#### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **About the Musicians Benevolent Fund**

The Musicians Benevolent Fund is a unique charity which provides essential help to musicians of all ages across a range of genres. The Fund supports music professionals throughout their working lives when a crisis such as an accident or illness can have a devastating impact and in later life, with the challenges that disability or growing older can bring. It also supports young aspiring musicians to help them enter the profession with the best chance of success.

For more information, please visit [helpmusicians.org.uk](http://helpmusicians.org.uk)

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