

MUSIC FOR LIFE

Evaluation Report 2009



To encourage a life long love of music within our young people

sowerby
music

(Registered Charity No. 1061719)

www.sowerbymusic.org.uk

MUSIC FOR LIFE 2009

A review of Sowerby Music's 13th annual programme for schools

SETTING THE SCENE

Sowerby Music sustains the largest outreach music programme for schools in the country organised by a music society. Unlike many other music initiatives, the society continues to introduce professional musicians into 37 schools each year so that *Music for Life* is an established and eagerly anticipated feature of each school's annual calendar of events. During 2009 approximately 3,600 children have been involved attending the following primary & special schools in the Hambleton District of North Yorkshire:-

Ainderby Steeple, Aiskew Leeing Bar, Alanbrooke, All Saints, Applegarth, Baldersby St James, Brafferton, Brompton, Broomfield, Bullamoor, Carlton Miniott, Crayke, The Dales, Dishforth, Dishforth Airfield, East Cowton, Great Smeaton, Husthwaite, Huby, Kirby Hill, Knayton, Leeming RAF, Mill Hill, Mowbray, Osmotherley, Pickhill, Romanby, Sacred Heart, Sessay, Snape, Swainby & Potto, South Otterington, Sowerby, Thirsk, Topcliffe, West Tanfield.

The continuing support of the Patrons of Sowerby Music financed approximately 75% of the total cost of this year's programme which enables us to plan confidently for future years. Schools donate the remaining part of our income at the same rates as for the last five years and regard these as excellent value (70p for each pupil attending a concert and £1.20 for those also attending a workshop).

This report of our voluntary support for schools is based on feedback from performers, detailed interviews with staff from 8 schools and the monitoring forms completed by 27 Sowerby Music representatives who between them attended each *Music for Life* session.

MAIN DEVELOPMENTS

- We have welcomed 2 additional schools and 2 new ensemble groups including a jazz trio for the first time.
- Our annual subsidised workshop for school staff to be held in September will focus on the use of symbol notation scores.
- Two groups of performers have provided encouragement to pupils learning brass instruments under the Local Authority's Wider Opportunities scheme.
- Another group played background music for a Mother's Day school lunch so that mothers could share in something of what their children had enjoyed.
- Knayton CE Primary School took part in a memorable day visit to The Sage Gateshead where the Key Stage 2 pupils (7-11 years) attended clog dancing and concertina workshops led by members of Folkworks. The children were thrilled with the opportunity to visit this fantastic music venue. They particularly enjoyed a tour of the building including the backstage facilities and attended part of a rehearsal in Hall One. We intend to offer a similar opportunity to other schools in future years.

THE PERFORMERS

Janet Fulton (percussion)

Barbara Grunthal (cello), **Tim Chatterton** (trombone)

6pac Jazz Trio

Gavin Barras (bass guitar), Ben Gray (drums), Andy Stamatakis-Brown (piano)

Rachel Jones (viola), **Amina Hussain** (flute)

Majestic Brass

Craig Burnett (trumpet), Chris Cotter (trumpet), Jocelyn Lightfoot (French horn),
Mike Poyser (tuba), Jonathan Stokes (trombone)

Music Explorers

Naomi Atherton (French horn), Dan Whibley (double bass)

Steve Ridley (piano), **Alexandra Thorneloe** (bassoon)

Two of a Kind

Louise Evans (flute), Georgina Wells (harp)

Voice Matters

David Howard (tenor), Frances Brock and Julia Haigh (sopranos)

One of the memorable features of this year's programme has been the performers' promotion of a 'can do' attitude amongst children. This has culminated in some amazing end of session sharing with the whole school, parents and governors. Excellent communication skills have encouraged youngsters to relax, have fun and participate securely in making music well beyond the boundaries of their previous experiences. The emphasis on listening, seeing and doing during the concerts and workshops has done much to develop children's musical intelligence.

Schools feel that the performers' introduction of technical vocabulary was well judged and frequently repeated to reinforce learning. Mnemonics were used to teach new vocabulary such as 'leg & toe' for legato as were analogies to help understanding of music concepts for example 'a musical phrase is like a sentence'.

The management of pupil responses, questions and behaviour was outstanding with judicious use of praise and encouragement. Performers were alert to the needs of individual pupils who were initially diffident about participating, or having difficulty in maintaining their part or when the level of concentration was flagging. They also competently assessed when they should increase the level of challenge with specific schools or groups. Language and rapport were highly appropriate to the ages, abilities, needs and interests of children.

Performers continue to expect high standards during the workshops. They insist that pupils should improve individual and group contributions. Groups are helped to supportively appraise the work of others so that the children begin to appreciate the importance of rehearsal effort required to achieve a satisfying outcome.

The concert programmes have introduced children to different genres of music. Some pieces have helped them to understand the capabilities of the instruments as well as the power of music to evoke emotions or images. Also included were pieces which illustrated some Italian terms which the performers were asked to introduce. The children's experience of excellent live professional performance of music continues to be highly valued by schools. As one school commented, "This was music education at its best – fun, informative and completely engaging".

PUPILS' RESPONSE

Pupils were inspired by all of the concerts particularly enjoying lively pieces such as marches, humorous songs, jazz numbers, The Flight of the Bumble Bee & Milda's Tarantella. They listened intently to pieces which demonstrated teaching points for example the virtuosity of instruments, the use of silence to create suspense and to 'Koto in the Temple' which exemplified how harp playing techniques can suggest atmospheric scenes. Children were amazed to realise the extent to which brass instruments are descriptively used in film music and even more surprised that tunes can be produced with a hosepipe, home-made bucket bass or tea pot (Tea for Two!)

Staff commented that pupils were totally enthralled by the hour's concert with many of the youngest children spontaneously swaying, humming or conducting – even the usual restive individuals listened intently. This was mainly due to the brisk pace adopted by the enthusiastic performers and opportunities for pupils to participate. Having a go on a drum kit, trying to make a sound on the didgeridoo or animal horns, singing along to the catchy 'Zoo Blues' melody and feeling vibrations on the double bass' strings all sustained interest.

Children learnt much information about the origins of instruments, their specific roles in an orchestra or band and how different parts contribute to the production of sound. The purpose of the vibraphone discs, trombone slide or bassoon's double reed was understood as was the action of the piano hammers and the larynx. They also grasped the meaning of Italian terms relating to pitch, tempo, dynamics which were subsequently used in workshops.

Here the pupils usually achieved so much in a short time. They learnt several action songs, or how to play rhythms in small groups using pictorial, symbol or simple music notation. Some used large orchestral percussion instruments to depict themes such as African animals or the seaside whilst others used unfamiliar smaller tuned percussion instruments introduced by the performers to create spine tingling music. Some workshop groups created their music using very effective body percussion. Others incorporated the children's own instruments like individual improvisation for 4 bars supported by the jazz trio's backing music.

The *Music for Life* visits help to promote pupils' listening skills, self esteem and discipline and respect for others, as well as an appreciation that being involved in music is 'cool'.

SCHOOL ORGANISATION

Nearly all schools ensure that their organisation makes a positive contribution to a happy and productive *Music for Life* visit for pupils and performers. On a small number of occasions, late starts to sessions inevitably constrain the quality of experiences for children.

Preparations for the visits have included familiarising pupils with illustrations of the instruments and listening to recordings of pieces in the concert programme or others which showcase the instruments. One school had featured information about the visiting percussionist on its PowerPoint presentation of events before daily assemblies.

Performers appreciate the active involvement of staff during their workshops particularly helping with small groups. Some good examples of this include supporting individuals to maintain a simple rhythm or gradating sound or speed, and providing reassurance or early intervention with individual pupils.

SUPPORT FOR STAFF

Following the successful percussion workshop last autumn a further workshop is arranged for September 2009 with a focus on devising and using a symbol notation score. These practical and user-friendly sessions are designed to introduce manageable strategies for staff with little or no music training to use in the classroom. There appears to be a great demand for Sowerby Music to make a commitment to offer further similar workshop opportunities.

Most schools recognise that *Music for Life* visits offer valuable in house training opportunities for staff particularly when non-specialists are chosen to attend the pupil workshops. Here they are able to pick up tips about managing children in fresh music activities as well as gaining confidence to 'have a go' with their own classes. Some ideas which are now being developed include introducing more complicated rhythm structures, incorporating the genre of jazz to scat music, using action songs as a memory aid and making sound pictures.

Headteachers have commented favourably on the value of follow-up activities provided by the performers. Several suggestions have been realised by using these in the wider curriculum such as model making of instruments in design technology, using 'Waddy Archer' duck song to publicise a new school pond and using rhythm stick tapping during a multi-cultural week. By the time of the evaluation visits, three schools had already used the *Music for Life* experience to good effect in literacy lessons. One of these outcomes was the production of a DVD (c/f back cover) and another was a whole class writing, addressing and posting letters to the performers.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2010

- Continue to invite high calibre performers who can inspire youngsters.
- Review the level of school contributions due to the impact of the recession.

This year's report is dedicated to the memory of the late Fred Tye CBE whose wisdom and discernment greatly contributed to the development of 'Music for Life'.

Front cover photograph: A close encounter with Dan Whibley's double bass at Aiskew Leeming Bar CE School.

*We learned all about different rhythms,
we learned all about different beats,
we learned all about different sounds,
we learned all about how to sing.*

*Thank you, thank you,
thank you for bringing the music to us,
thank you, thank you,
thank you from class 1 and class 2.*

*We changed all the words to this song,
to tell you a big thank you,
for coming to Kirby Hill,
and singing such beautiful songs.*

*Thank you, thank you,
thank you for bringing the music to us,
thank you, thank you.*

Back cover: Following a visit from 'Voice Matters', a 'thank you' DVD song from Kirby Hill CE School (see & hear them on our website singing to 'My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean' tune)

For further information: Pat Elton
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<http://www.sowerbymusic.org.uk/mfl/mfl.htm>