

MUSIC FOR LIFE

Annual Report 2011



6pac Jazz Trio in session at Thirsk Primary School

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

sowerby
music

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www.sowerbymusic.org.uk

MUSIC FOR LIFE 2011

A review of Sowerby Music's 15th annual programme for primary aged pupils

INTRODUCTION

Music for Life is the largest and longest running music programme for young people in the country organised by a music society. This year we have been able to continue the development of a number of activities made possible by the ongoing commitment of Patrons which funds approximately 75% of the budget. Our chairman, Martin Hooper, innovated *Music for Life* in 1997 when nationally driven curriculum and financial pressures were minimising music in schools. Sadly, little has changed fifteen years on as opportunities for youngsters to access live music making are continuing to be jeopardised during the protracted recession. Subsequently schools have grown to rely even more on our annual visits and professional development sessions as evidenced during our evaluation interviews with headteachers.

SCHOOL CONCERTS and WORKSHOPS

These remain the most substantial element of *Music for Life* involving 3,800 young pupils in a unique musical experience from the following 34 primary and special schools in the Hambleton District of North Yorkshire:-

Ainderby Steeple, Aiskew Leeming Bar, Alanbrooke, All Saints, Alverton, Applegarth, Baldersby St James, Brafferton, Brompton, Broomfield, Carlton Miniott, Crayke, The Dales, Dishforth, Dishforth Airfield, Greystones, Huby, Kirby Hill, Knayton, Leeming RAF, Mill Hill, Mowbray, Osmotherley, Pickhill, Romanby, Sacred Heart, Sessay, Snape, South Kilvington, South Otterington, Sowerby, Swainby & Potto, Thirsk, Topcliffe.

Laura Connolly (clog dancer), Stewart Hardy (fiddle)

These first time contributors opened the *Music for Life* season. Their winter theme concert introduced children to a range of traditional folk music, story telling and clog dancing. Well judged communication skills, a brisk pace of delivery and an infectious enjoyment of making music, held all of the pupils' attention for an hour. The concert concluded with the youngest children joining Laura in a chain dance.

During the workshops, the older pupils used clogs hired from The Sage Gateshead. They were surprised how light these are and that banana skins are used to protect the leather. They and their teachers were soon learning steps with intense concentration and devising clog rhythms for their names. Each small group had the confidence to share its own dance with the rest of the school in between 2 whole group dances.

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

Long standing contributors for 9 years, Voice Matters always bring something fresh to their programme as they meticulously review their input. They are adept at responding to the ages, needs and abilities of workshop groups, an example being to introduce a 3 part harmony song 'Viva Musica!' to a gifted and more able group of 7-11 year olds. Younger pupils have great fun learning action songs which can easily be remembered and introduced to other pupils.

The concert combines a variety of songs with many teaching points such as musical terms and the importance of good posture and breathing. Children particularly enjoy 'The Cats Duet' and 'I Wanna be Like You' when they appreciate that singing expressively through animal sounds is great fun. Other favourites include partner songs such as 'This Old Man' and 'Michael Finnegan'.

Tickled Pink - Hannah Marcinowicz (saxophone), Abigail Burrows (flute)

The younger children's attention was stimulated by the duo's pink costumes, props and instruments. The older pupils were particularly interested in the parts of the flute and saxophone and the range of sounds which can be produced.

There were opportunities for pupils to be actively involved during the concert for example an interactive game where blowing was important. The Composing Cockerel game allowed children to create their own piece of music which was then played by the performers. Another favourite was a Basque mountain dance when the use of a baton was introduced and tempo changes explored. Even some of the more diffident youngsters grew in confidence as they conducted Tickled Pink.

Janet Fulton - percussion

Janet holds the record for long service with *Music for Life* over 12 successive years. Her workshop sessions are unique to each school and linked to current school topics.

One example was 'Commotion in the Sea' when the children produced excellent atmospheric sounds. Over 30 parents and grandparents attended the end of day sharing component during which children's self discipline watching and responding to other groups and Janet was very evident.

In another school one group was introduced to the musical alphabet and gained an understanding of sharps and flats as well as learning that some notes have 2 names. They also learnt the bass part of 'Match of the Day' signature tune including modulation into another key.

Youngsters are thrilled with the hour's demonstration of 100 or so instruments at the start of the day ranging from simple hand held shakers to the largest orchestral items such as the tuned timpani and keyboard instruments. An even bigger thrill is when some play these expensive instruments in the workshops.

Music Explorers - Naomi Atherton (French horn),

Dan Whibley (double bass)

Very occasionally, performers are faced with 200+ pupils who feel the need to chatter at every opportunity during the concert when the lack of quick intervention from staff exacerbates the situation. Naomi and Dan faced this scenario in one school when they excelled in finding the right balance between enthusing children whilst containing over-excitement by digging deep into their toolkit of strategies.

At the beginning of the workshop they invited youngsters to ask questions which quickly had the effect of enabling the group to focus thereafter. During question time the pupils learnt that the highly rated sight reading skills of musicians in our major orchestras result in numerous contracts to record film music. They also gained an awareness of the itinerant life of freelance musicians, the extensive range of their repertoire and the ability to perform as members of small ensembles, jazz groups and prestigious orchestras.

James Stretton - World of Brass

James is very much a 'one man show'. As well as operating copious electronic equipment and playing the piano he introduces 17 different brass instruments to the pupils. In the smaller village schools every child was invited to play an instrument during the participative concerts which were highly entertaining and educative.

Technical vocabulary was introduced such as embouchure, vibration, valve, bell which were revisited at the beginning of the workshops. These were carefully structured by using animal pictures to illustrate note values, clapping the length of notes and then adding a melody. Children learnt the importance of listening, following peer group leaders and that it is O.K. to make a mistake when exploring new music making.

Barbara Grunthal (cello), Phil Goodwin (trombone)

The duo quickly established a positive rapport with their audiences which gave youngsters confidence to explore and express ideas.

Their programme consisted of appropriate short classical excerpts and more familiar pieces to illustrate each musical term introduced such as timbre, texture, tempo as well as the importance of silence in music. The structure of a rondo was explained and demonstrated as was the idea of an accompaniment illustrated on a bass staff.

The workshops, designed around a folk tune collected by Bartok, were carefully structured so that the layering of activities led to a meaningful conclusion. These pupils could scarcely believe how much they achieved during the end of day sharing with the whole school.

6 pac Jazz Trio - Gavin Barrass (bass guitar), Ben Gray (drums), Andrew Stamatakis-Brown (piano)

After visiting 2 large town schools the trio moved on to support our 2 special schools. The trio's great energy, sense of fun and their well judged pace of delivery ensured that the pupils' attention never wavered throughout the session. Mike Sissons, a senior member of staff at The Dales School, described some notable individual responses which illustrate the powerful stimulus of music for young people with very special needs.

L., who has profound learning difficulties, watched with great anticipation as the amp was brought around the group and as it came to him began vocalising in a way I had not heard before. He reached out his hand, and with a big smile, laid it on the surface of the amp feeling the vibration of the bass and drums.

B., a much younger pupil, put her hand on the amp and looked back and forth from her hand to the musicians showing an understanding that the two were related.

M., an older student with very low self-esteem who finds it very difficult to interact with others, willingly reached out to the banjo when it was offered to him and strummed the strings.

None of the pupils wanted to leave at the end. Neither did the 74 youngsters at Mowbray School who took part in the jazz dance finale!

CALLING ALL KIDS!

Started as an experiment three years ago, these afternoon concerts give primary aged children an opportunity to enjoy an hour of live music with their parents. The concerts are audience participative and are held on Saturday or Sunday afternoons in Sowerby Parochial Hall with free admission for the youngsters. In the main, they are delivered by artists who perform later in the day at one of Sowerby Music monthly concerts and who can motivate a wide age range of children.

This year Calling All Kids! concerts have been led by Matthew Barley (cello), Tim Barber (trumpet), Hannah Marcinowicz and Abigail Burrows (saxophone and flute), Alexandra Dariescu (piano) and the Eden Stell Guitar duo.

VISIT TO THE SAGE GATESHEAD

Mill Hill Community Primary School was invited to make an educational visit to The Sage Gateshead. 53 pupils aged 9-11 years experienced an intensive day's programme superbly organised by The Sage. The children took part in two workshops (tin whistle and clog dancing) led by members of Folkworks. They attended a power point presentation about this world class music venue followed by a tour of the building when they could appreciate many of its unique features

at first hand. In addition they were able to sample rehearsals in Hall One for two performances by Tyneside schools to celebrate their achievements in music and dance. An exhilarating, memorable and exhausting day!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Following the workshop led by James Stretton last autumn attended by 42 school staff, a sixth annual workshop will be held in October 2011. Looking ahead to next year's Olympic Games, Janet Fulton will introduce a range of suggestions of how to incorporate vocal and percussion activities into the schools' celebrations of the Olympics. Staff should leave with plenty of ideas which can quickly be implemented across the curriculum together with more confidence about organising simple composition with children.

The *Music for Life* visits provide staff with a chance to consolidate their own learning of rhythm, pitch and tempo, many ideas for teaching techniques and new instruments to buy. Performers prepare follow up activities for staff to use with their own classes.

Some schools have been stimulated to develop class performance to share with the rest of the school, dance activities or creating non-verbal and body music in groups. Children from one school used literacy and IT skills to prepare an illustrated report of the *Music for Life* session in their school's weekly newsletter.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

Overall, 2011 has been a further successful year for *Music for Life* thanks to the thoughtful co-operation of school staff, numerous voluntary helpers from Sowerby Music and the fervent commitment of the artists.

We will continue to provide quality, inclusive experiences for all young people so that they will have similar feelings about live music as an 11 year old from Snape School.

“This was my last time for *Music for Life* and it was the best morning anyone could have. Thank you for coming, you definitely brought music to life.”



Janet Fulton's visit to Ainderby Steeple CE Primary School: an artist's impression by Josephine Sykes, a patron of Sowerby Music

**For further information: Support for Schools
Pat Elton via www.SowerbyMusic.org.uk**

**Calling All Kids!
Graham Merriam via www.SowerbyMusic.org.uk**