

MUSIC FOR LIFE



***Music for Life* is a very successful and large outreach programme bringing live music performances and workshops to children in a mainly rural area. It was the brainchild of Martin Hooper and subsequently won a BT Innovation Award.**

What is *Music for Life*?

Sowerby Music's outreach programme for over 30 primary and special schools in the Hambleton District of North Yorkshire originated with the society's aspiration 'to encourage a life long love of music within our young people'.

Rationale

It began in 1997 when nationally driven curriculum and financial pressures were conspiring to minimise music in schools. Many of the local primary schools are relatively small and seldom have access to a part-time specialist music teacher. They are often located in rural communities with no easy access to live music performances. In this situation, head teachers enthusiastically responded to our *Music for Life* initiative whereby Sowerby Music has organised and funded annual participative concerts of mainly classical music and workshops in schools.

Continuous development

The scheme began in 13 primary schools involving approximately 1000 children between the ages of 7 and 11 with smaller schools coming together to make a viable event. Now, *Music for Life* supported approximately 3,200 children in 30 primary and 2 special schools. Younger children between the ages of 4 and 7 are now included in the sessions. Each session consists of an hour's participative concert for the whole school followed by workshops for smaller groups of children culminating in a sharing session for other pupils. In 2007 we will have reached the position when every school, even the smallest, hosts a *Music for Life* session for either a half day or full day according to its total number of pupils.

During the past 3 years we have endeavoured to help teachers build on the visits by providing concert programmes listing learning objectives and follow up activities.

A more recent development has been the organisation of two workshops for school staff to help them gain confidence and skills when working with their classes. A total of 88 staff have participated in a percussion or vocal workshop. It is hoped that similar workshops will be organised annually.

Performers

The careful choice of professional performers has been crucial to the success of *Music for Life*, most of whom are well known to us in our network of performing artists. As well as being accomplished musicians, they are all excellent communicators with children. Newcomers are inducted into *Music for Life*, whilst longer established artistes are encouraged to adapt their contributions to the needs and interests of individual schools. We endeavour to bring to each school a range of instruments and vocalists as the programme evolves - such as percussion, saxophone, flute, clarinet, oboe, guitar, harp, all of the string and brass families, piano, accordion, as well as electronic music.

Evaluation

At least one member of Sowerby Music represents the society at each school session so that there is a visible and supportive partnership between the performers, school and the society. These representatives also monitor the sessions and their comments complement evaluation visits made to a sample of schools each year. All of this focused feedback helps to develop the programme for the following year.

Funding

Initially, *Music for Life* was mainly funded by grants from charitable organisations. Now the Patrons who are Society members donate on a regular (monthly/quarterly/annual) basis usually by gift aided standing order. Their generous support of this £10,500 programme enables planning for future developments to proceed with more financial security and confidence. Schools make a donation of 70p a child attending a concert and £1.20 for each pupil attending a concert and workshop. They consider this to be excellent value for money.

Benefits to the community and Sowerby Music Society

1. *Music for Life* provides the Society's members with an opportunity to share their love of music with over 3,000 young people in our locality each year, thus investing in a future generation of adults with an interest in music.
2. The school sessions also generate interest amongst teachers about Sowerby Music when they learn that many of the *Music for Life* artistes have featured in our monthly concerts programme.
3. *Music for Life* gives members an additional interest in and promotes a loyalty to their Society fostered both through their first hand experience of inspirational school sessions and by their appreciation of the schools' high regard for our outreach programme.

Would you like to know more?

We receive many appreciative comments each year from pupils and teachers about the inspirational concerts and workshops which promote a wider musical experience for children. More information about the benefits of *Music for Life* can be found in the annual report for 2006.

If you would like to find out more about the organisation of *Music for Life* contact the organiser through the email link on the website www.SowerbyMusic.org.uk.