



## Music and Film Project, Darlington Summer 2018

Report by Orchestras Live



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## Overview

In summer 2018, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (OAE) started a creative film composition project in which young musicians from Wyvern Academy, Darlington, composed a live musical soundtrack for a short film. The original plan for the project was that through a series of workshops with renowned music leader James Redwood, several OAE players and a trainee music leader, the participants would devise music complementary to the visual images, exploring the creative approach of the film composer...

*"We had initially thought that we would create music in response to a film but in fact it became clear that this group needed to be free to make the piece that they needed to make and so we ended up having a film made to go with our music. Watching this film on our rehearsal/performance day was really exciting and lifted our performance to match the quality of the film."*

James Redwood, Project Leader

*"The idea was - as always - to use their ideas a hundred percent, and provide only guidance, rather than tuition. We also wanted to make sure that they felt personally invested as well as part of a wider community. Our aim was achieved with the help of OAE's amazing filmmaker, Zen, who created a film that was based entirely on their ideas, filmed at locations they suggested, and set to the music they created and performed."*

Dominika Fehrer, OAE Violin

The created soundtrack was orchestrated so that additional members of the OAE could join the young musicians for a pre-concert performance of the new music together with the projected film at Theatre Hullabaloo on 10 September 2018. This was followed by the OAE concert at the adjacent Darlington Hippodrome, featuring the orchestra performing Richard Strauss' 1925 score of *Der Rosenkavalier*, performed live with the original silent film. The audience were invited to arrive early to attend the 'curtain-raiser' event, in which they could enjoy the contemporary film music work of local young people.

## Project objectives

- Creative and performance skills gained by up to 30 young people through working with world class musicians
- Original cross-artform work presented by young people in a professional venue
- New film score recorded as legacy for the participants and their school
- Greater awareness of the work and talent of young people amongst the Hippodrome audience
- Regional and national profile gained through the networks of Creative Darlington, Durham & Darlington Music Hub, Orchestras Live and OAE

## **Evaluation**

Considering that this project had a relatively short amount of contact time between the OAE team and the student participants, with the added complication of the summer holiday occurring between the initial workshops and the culmination event, the outcomes were very positive. Music at Wyvern Academy was ready for some rejuvenation, and the students came to the project lacking confidence and motivation. Their comments below reflect how positively they found the experience of originating ideas for the film, creating music and performing it alongside the OAE at a professional venue, where it was very well received by the audience. Feedback from teachers underlined the transformative effect of the project on the students. Similarly, the OAE team saw very positive developments amongst the participants. The involvement of Ben Newton in assisting James Redwood was another positive outcome in terms of helping to cultivate emerging music leaders based in the north of the country.

A legacy of the project will see the participants receive a DVD of the film and soundtrack. The intention is for Wyvern Academy to be involved in a subsequent OAE creative project being held in County Durham in spring 2019.

### **Feedback from OAE Team**

“The level of engagement and focus on the whole project, but especially the final day was striking. The group worked hard at all times and delivered a performance which far exceeded what I had thought would be possible on the morning of our first session. I'm really excited about going back to work with the school again and hope that this project will provide a strong foundation on which to build some really great music making.”

James Redwood, Project Leader

“Soon we learnt that these young people did not just care immensely about each other, but also had huge amounts of creativity and concentration, and a great sense of rhythm, as well as impressive ensemble skills - when it came to keeping a steady beat, they just did not rush! (Which is a lot more difficult than it sounds.)

It was very gratifying to see the transformation they had gone through since the start of the project. By bringing a valuable project to them, they learnt about the values each of them had brought to the project. Some of them had never even seen a violin in real life before and now they can say they have performed alongside professional musicians.

I truly believe it was a life changing experience for at least some of these young people, which makes it one of the most meaningful educational projects I have ever done. It would have never been possible without the enthusiasm, and positive attitude of their teachers, or the financial support we received.”

Dominika Feher, OAE Violin

“For the performance itself the students were focussed and purposeful, and were able to deliver a deeply committed performance which I am grateful to have been a part of. From watching the progress of the students, it was clear this project brought value not only to their musicianship but also impacted areas of confidence, teamwork, discipline, arithmetic, decision making, and abstract thinking.”

John Henry Baker, OAE Double Bass

“It was an utter pleasure to take part. Most of all, it felt like we were able to make a significant impact on the lives of those students and give them an opportunity they may never have had before. I liked the workflow particularly: performing music to a film is always fun, but that the film was devised around a piece of music written by the students made the day feel particularly special. Was really organic and is definitely something I’d like to do again.”

Ben Newton, Trainee Music Leader

### **Feedback from Students**

“I enjoyed composing music and learning how to increase my skills in my instrument”

“Throughout this project I mostly enjoyed the friendliness and the help”

“It was fun. My favourite part was practising on my guitar while making new pieces of music “

“During this project my favourite part was discovering others’ talents”

“I enjoyed being able to be creative and make music with other people”

“I loved playing power chords on the guitar. It’s been great fun, a great experience and a great time”

“It was surprisingly fun”

“I’ve had fun making music”

“I enjoyed working with professional artists”

“I have developed my general musicianship and performing in a different genre that I originally never saw myself doing”



### **Feedback from Wyvern Academy staff**

“This project built up the self-esteem of every student who was involved. Your team took some extremely reluctant learners and gave them the confidence to compose their own music, to create and express their own ideas. Students who were terrified of performing in front of people were given the self-belief to play in front of an audience and the smiles on their faces were a testament as to how much that experience has enriched their lives.

I now have a group of budding musicians who are raring to go and looking for the next project. You have awoken their musical aspirations and given me a fantastic foundation to build upon.

Other teachers who were present have commented that they were amazed at the quality of music that the students had produced, and so proud of the students involved. Another said that he had thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the experience and had been very impressed by their creativity and enthusiasm.”

Kristen Peacock, Teacher at Wyvern Academy

### **External links**

Video recording of the finished composition: <https://youtu.be/xHDt3qqE6gU>

Orchestras Live website: <http://www.orchestraslive.org.uk>

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment website: <http://www.oae.co.uk/>