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The Wish 2019

Evaluation Report by Orchestras Live

April-May 2019

Central Bedfordshire Bedford Luton Milton Keynes



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

The Wish 2019 – inspiring the next generation of orchestral musicians

Designed to introduce orchestral instruments in a vivid and relevant way, The Wish was created by composer John K Miles and specialist music leader Claire Henry, bringing together their different experience and skills from orchestral projects they had achieved over many years with Orchestras Live.

The Wish 2019 was performed on 30 April and 7, 8 and 9 May by Sinfonia Verdi (an orchestra of 30 players, conducted by John K Miles), with two performances in each of the following locations: The Grove Theatre, Dunstable; Bedford Corn Exchange; The Ridgeway Centre, Milton Keynes. Three performances were given at UK Centre for Carnival Arts, Luton. The performances were attended by a total of 3,258 children and staff from primary schools across Luton, Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes.

In an additional strand of skill-sharing, five young instrumentalists from Bedford Borough and Milton Keynes were invited to rehearse and perform The Wish with Sinfonia Verdi.

In the weeks leading up to the performances, Claire and John held workshops at 8 primary schools in Luton, 7 primary schools in Bedford, 8 primary schools in Central Bedfordshire and 9 primary schools in Milton Keynes, where young children had the opportunity to meet the presenters, hear about the narrative of The Wish and learn the song and 'musical keys' for the interactive elements of the concerts. Online resources were created by Claire and John to help schools prepare for the concerts, and several twilight sessions were facilitated by Music Hub personnel to prepare teachers for the workshops and concerts.



It was like being inside an adventure!



Primary school audience feedback

PROJECT AIMS

- To produce an orchestral tour for Key Stage 1 audiences through a partnership between Orchestras Live, Sinfonia Verdi and the music education hubs for Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes.
- To hold workshops and performances for young children from primary schools in the four areas.
- To inspire children to take up orchestral instruments, with learning pathways provided by each music education hub.
- To involve older student musicians in the project through 'side by side' rehearsal and performance alongside Sinfonia Verdi players.

THE STORY OF THE WISH

The composer's greatest wish is to hear his song 'If you have a dream' played by the orchestra. Unfortunately, the orchestral 'machine' keeps breaking. The 'fixer' (presenter) checks through the sections one by one to find out what's wrong. It turns out that the brass have forgotten their melody (pitch), the strings are too sad and can only play in a minor key (tonality), the wind keep 'flying off' and need to calm down so that they can play slowly as well as fast (tempo), and the percussion have completely 'lost' the beat (pulse). The presenter has a musical key (motif sung by the audience) to fix each of these problems. Eventually all the sections are fixed and the machine is tested by slowly turning up the volume (dynamics). The orchestra plays a reprise of all the music used to fix the orchestra and the concert ends with the Finale song 'If you have a dream' sung by the audience.

SONGS

Key song

Can we find all the keys to fix the music machine?
When it plays there's a feeling of magic.
Percussion, wind, brass and strings will need to work as a team
When they do it will sound so fantastic.

Fixing the brass

Fix the brass with their key
Find the right melody
Fix the brass with their key
Find the right melody

Finale song – If you have a dream

If you have a dream
Follow the light in your heart
It will guide you up
Up to the stars, through the universe

Dreams can come true
For me and you
If you try you can achieve
just believe, and your wish will shine through.



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PROJECT TEAM

John K Miles	Composer, Conductor and Workshop Leader
Claire Henry	Animateur and Workshop Leader
Esther Jackson	Administrator, Sinfonia Verdi
David Murphy	Artistic Director, Sinfonia Verdi
Stuart Bruce	Senior Creative Producer, Orchestras Live
Kerry Watson	Manager, Luton Music Service
Charlotte Payne	Music Director, Inspiring Music (Central Beds)
Diane Love	Primary Link Teacher, Music for Bedford Borough
David Rose	Music Service Manager, Music for Bedford Borough
Sue Wakley	Music Faculty and Hub Manager, Milton Keynes Music Hub



The educational impact and careful crafting of the experience swept the children along in a joyful ride, allowing them to experience and manipulate the tempo, dynamics, pulse, tonality and mood of the music, with a bit of conducting thrown in!

Diane Love, Bedford Music Hub



EVALUATION

- **To produce an orchestral tour for Key Stage 1 audiences through a partnership between Orchestras Live, Sinfonia Verdi and the music education hubs for Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes.**

The partnership proved effective, with each partner contributing time and resources to plan and achieve the project. Orchestras Live was the lead producer, facilitating the partnership and contributing financial support from its own resources. Sinfonia Verdi and the Music Education Hub partners co-ordinated the school workshops, mentoring strand and concert audiences, and the Hubs contributed financial support. The total budget of £49,545 also included financial support from Arts Council England. 'In kind' support for venue hire was committed by Music for Bedford Borough and Inspiring Music.

Feedback from Inspiring Music (Central Beds)

Project objectives achieved	★★★★
Orchestras Live had positive impact on practice	★★★★
Reached new audiences?	YES

“Once again another fantastic project produced by Orchestras Live. It was wonderful to work with Claire Henry and John K Miles again and for their musical creation to engage and inspire so many children and young people. The children were totally onboard with the interactive elements of the project ensuring that they fixed the ‘broken’ Sinfonia Verdi. After the previous project the numbers of students interested in learning an orchestral instrument soared and we are very excited to see a similar level of impact in September.

It has been really great working with a high calibre of musicians again and I am interested in seeing where else we can take this.”

(Charlotte Payne, Inspiring Music)



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Feedback from Music for Bedford Borough

Project objectives achieved	★ ★ ★
Orchestras Live had positive impact on practice	★ ★ ★
Reached new audiences?	SOMEWHAT

“For children who have never seen a live orchestra or been to a professional venue before this project was truly inspiring and for me the sheer joy and engagement of the children was very moving. The educational impact and careful crafting of the experience swept the children along in a joyful ride, allowing them to experience and manipulate the tempo, dynamics, pulse, tonality and mood of the music, with a bit of conducting thrown in! The Wish was fun, engaging, interactive and thoroughly enjoyable for everyone.”

(Diane Love, Music for Bedford Borough)



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Feedback from Luton Music Service

Project objectives achieved	★ ★ ★ ★
Orchestras Live had positive impact on practice	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Reached new audiences?	YES

“I would just like to say that even though this is the third year that we have been involved in the project, the magic of The Wish never diminishes. It is full of spectacle and wonder and is totally inspirational for the children of our diverse community who would never have the opportunity to participate in a concert with a professional orchestra.”

(Kerry Watson, Luton Music Service)

Feedback from Milton Keynes Music Hub

Project objectives achieved	★★★★
Orchestras Live had positive impact on practice	★★★★★
Reached new audiences?	YES

"This was our first engagement with Orchestras Live and The Wish. What a fantastic performance from the orchestra and the children loved it."

(Sue Wakley, Milton Keynes Music Hub)

- **To hold workshops and performances for young children from primary schools in the four areas.**

2,227 Key Stage 1 children attended 32 workshops led by Claire Henry and John K Miles. The nine performances were attended by 3,258 young people and their teachers. A full schedule of activity can be found in Appendix A. In advance, 35 teachers attended preparation sessions delivered by music hub staff. An additional 138 children attended preparatory sessions run by music hub staff in Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes, utilising the pre-concert resources available to schools.

The response from children and schools was overwhelmingly positive.

Primary school children's feedback from concerts:

"I thought it was funny when the trumpet made a funny noise but it was best when the machine was fixed."

"I loved the golden harp because it made beautiful, peaceful music."

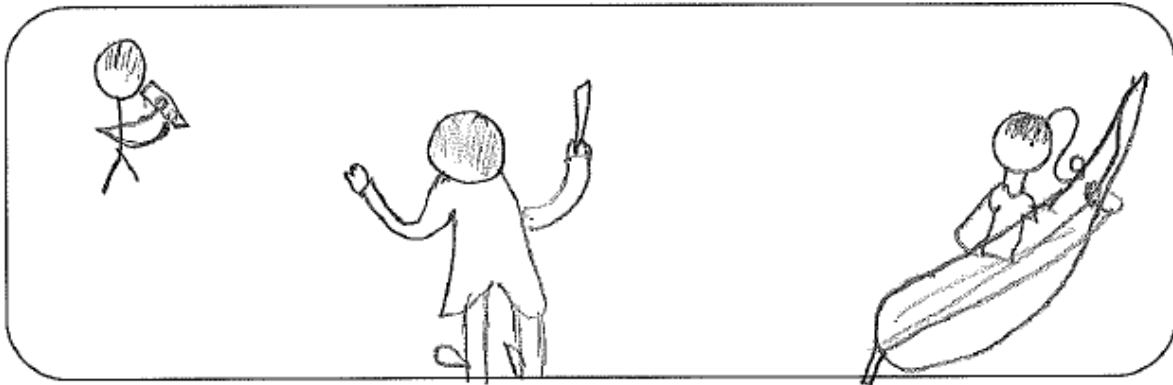


"I liked that the orchestra did exactly the same as us and we all sang together."

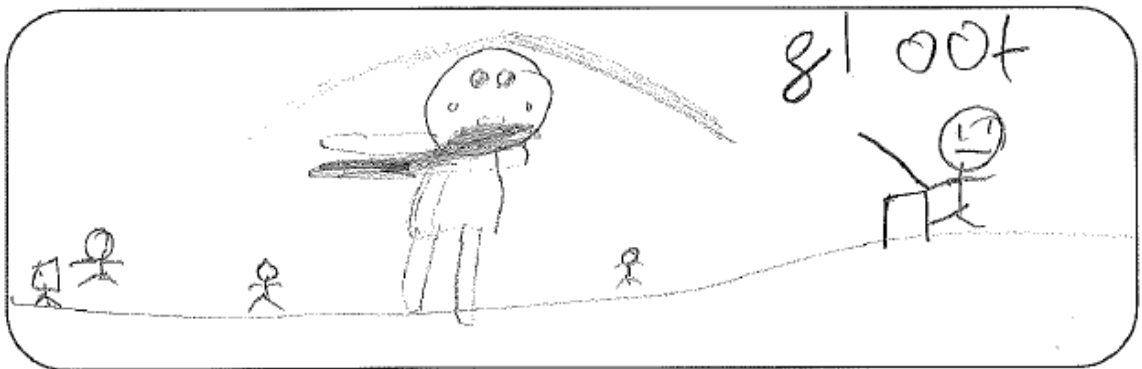
"My favourite was when we sang the fix it song to make the musicians go in time because it wasn't working before."

"I enjoyed going on stage to conduct the orchestra."

"[My favourite things was] when we made John's wish come true."

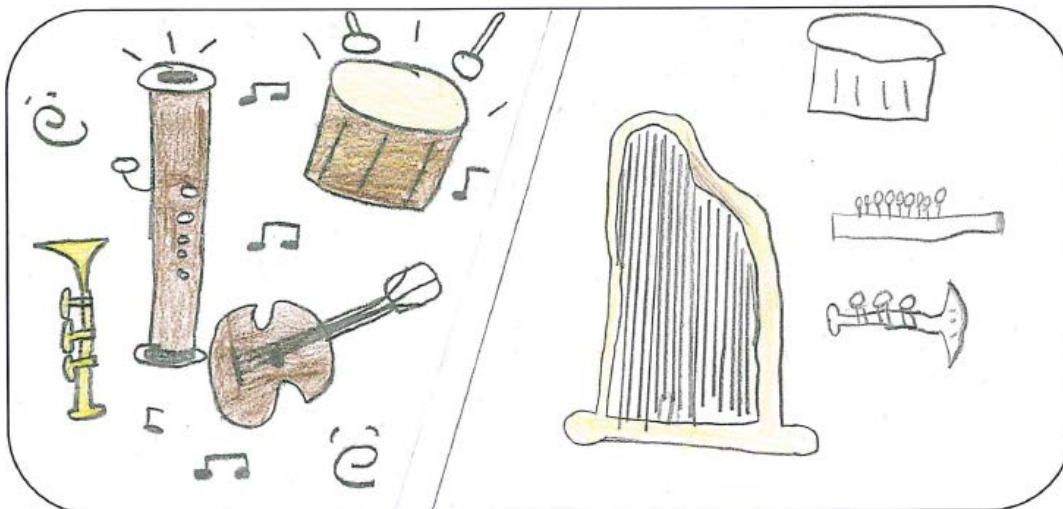


"Pupils remembered particularly the 'dramatic' part when the strings were sad as the presenter cried and tickled performers, however they sang spontaneously to me the short brass family instructions which used specific musical vocabulary. One of the children already played the flute and was really pleased to see three flutes (two were the 'younger' side by side musicians)." (Debbie Nicholls, Inspiring Music)



"Our favourite thing was the melody and the way it all came together!"

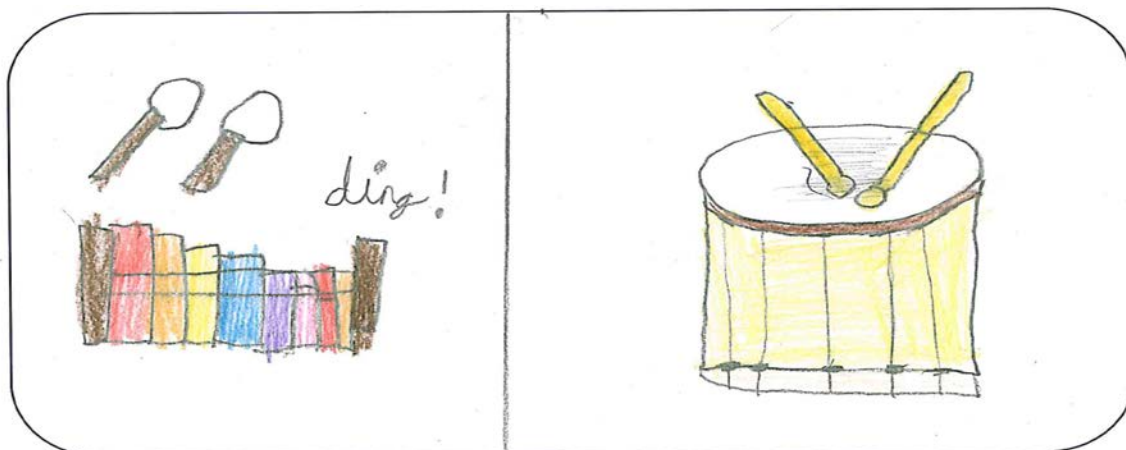
"My favourite thing was that nothing was boring."



"A very well organized and enjoyable experience for both adults and children. One I would highly recommend." (MK school)

"The quality of the performance was stunning. The acting skills of the orchestra was excellent and really added to the performance. All of the children were engaged and enjoyed the performance. We liked the engagement before the session. We have also done a week planning after to develop music further in our school." (Luton school)

"I felt it was pitched well, the music was inspiring for the children. The length was just right and it was presented in a way that involved all children." (MK school)



"Thank you for inviting us. We gained a rich musical experience through participating the event." (Luton school)



"Four year 3 pupils had attended last year when they were in year 2 and these children were bursting with excitement about their experiences. They were proud to be able to help the younger children to learn. One said, "It was like being on an adventure with lots of parts being put together so that they would work."" (Debbie Nicholls, Inspiring Music)

"I felt that the children were involved with everything as [the project] included a workshop visit helping to introduce all the children to the musical vocabulary and the songs. For me this gave the opportunity to involve many Pupil Premium children who wouldn't normally enjoy this type of cultural event." (Vanessa Pearce, Headteacher at Beaudesert Lower School, Central Beds)

"Their understanding was improved by seeing these elements [the orchestra and instruments] as part of a story." (Bedford school)

“Great introduction to instruments of the orchestra. Well explained and I like how vocab was used correctly. The workshop was great. Definitely boosted children’s understanding of the concert.” (Bedford school)

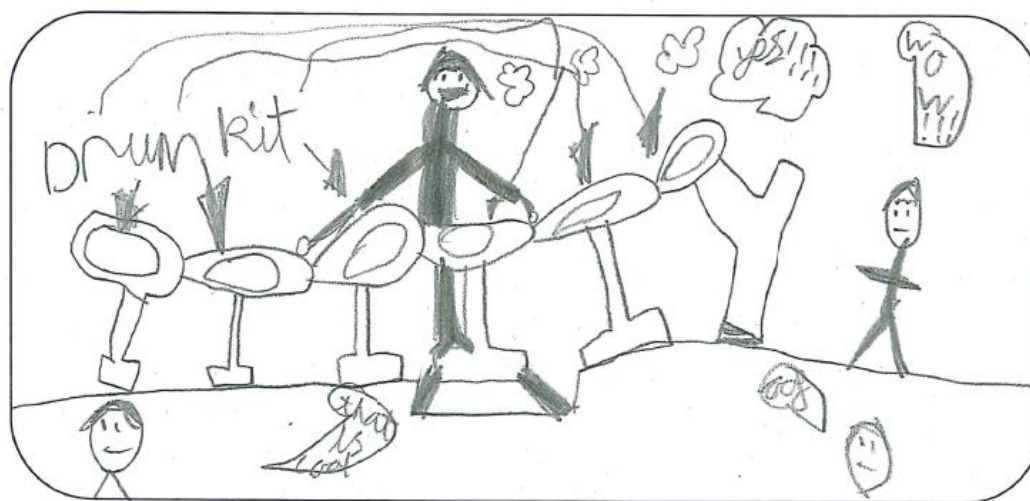


Emma Thorpe, a student at Cardiff University attended workshops and performances of The Wish, as part of her placement with Orchestras Live for her ‘Business of Music’ course. Emma’s reflections can be read in full in Appendix B.



The Wish is changing the preconceptions that the children have about orchestral music being boring and dull, instead showing them how wonderful it can sound and how exciting it can be. The project is also giving children the opportunity to learn about music and the orchestra, something that they may not normally get to learn in their everyday school life. It was a heart-warming experience for me to see the children thoroughly enjoying the music and being inspired to learn even more about it. The children involved spoke about the workshops and the concerts with enthusiasm showing just what an impact it has had on them and in the future of their music education too.

Emma Thorpe, university student placement with Orchestras Live



Luton Music Service commissioned local film-maker Judith Chapman to produce a short, animated film trailer to help the four music education hubs promote the concerts, and it was projected in the venues to set the scene whilst the young audiences arrived and left. The animated trailer can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2W7HoMIWcJk>

Presenter Claire Henry and Charlotte Payne from Inspiring Music (Central Beds) spoke to BBC Three Counties Radio the day before the Dunstable performances, to help promote the project work taking place. A recording of the interview is no longer available online.

- **To inspire children to take up orchestral instruments, with learning pathways provided by each music education hub.**

Each Music Hub partner is building on the project through promotional activity with schools, including events where children can try out a range of acoustic instruments, enhancing their ability to make informed choices following the inspiration of The Wish. At the end of each concert, Hub staff provided schools with a resource pack of information about music-making opportunities available through their Hub.

Staff at Inspiring Music reported a 103% increase in pupils taking up an orchestral instrument following the project in 2018.

“The children in all six schools were very receptive to the workshops, and were enthusiastic to get involved with conducting, singing and dancing as they learned the songs and story for the show. Many of the teachers said that the online resources for the project were very useful, as it meant that the children had the chance learn the songs before the workshops and practice them afterwards as well.” (Emma Thorpe, university student placement with Orchestras Live)

- **To involve older student musicians in the project through ‘side by side’ rehearsal and performance alongside Sinfonia Verdi players.**

Five young instrumentalists (Key Stage 4 and 5) took part in a rehearsal with John K Miles, the pre-concert rehearsal with Sinfonia Verdi and all nine performances, gaining skills through desk-sharing with Sinfonia Verdi musicians.

All the young musicians really entered into the spirit of the performances, joining in with the theatrical aspects and interaction with audiences.

“I’ve really enjoyed being a part of it and introducing the orchestra to lots of primary school children and it’s been a really enjoyable experience being with the Sinfonia Verdi and I feel as if I’ve learned a lot.” (Josh, viola)

“They really helped me out in my flute skill they helped me to improve my sound and they told me a lot of helpful tips that allowed me to do that. And I hope to do well in my grade 8 soon.” (Freddie, flute)

"[I've learned] just how much fun professional orchestras can be. Because you kind of have this stigma about ooh its really serious and stuff but I think something like this is really enjoyable and I'm so glad I've done it because I've enjoyed every moment of it, and being part of an experience like this and just seeing kind of seeing professionals, a different side to them."
(Emily, violin)



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Feedback from lead artists

"Graphics great, I thought the use of the images and film worked fantastically in the concert.

Music service intros in workshops fantastic and links it all up. It made sense to deliver the workshops alongside the brilliant music service staff. I introduced Diane Love to the children and she explained how they could get a real instrument. Really linked it all together.

Delighted with the show and how musicians adapted and grew confident. I was a little worried that a new orchestra with new players would not be so adept at participating with all the interactive moments in the show. The percussion player Donna really built herself an impressive role with her wild running around. This will be slotted into the exciting narrative.

Only a one or two players seemed to find the participatory elements too challenging.

Organisation was fab. Esther's [Sinfonia Verdi] organisation of the schools and informing them of the project was brilliantly done as were her impressive schedule, maps and timings.

Wide age ranges and huge groups?! In one school there was a group of over 100 students with half being Year 1 and half Year 4. They had no awareness of the story and seemed to be unfamiliar with each other. Perhaps larger groups need to be assisted with extra prep or reassurance from the schools that all the material will be covered?

It would be great to repeat in the same schools to embed the legacy of the project.

Variety of venues: all tech staff were great and the sound was very reliable. I particularly like the space in Milton Keynes and the capacity capability.

The repeating of the project creates greater quality in terms of refining the narrative."

(Claire Henry)



© Stuart Bruce

“Regarding development of a new group of players, it felt as if the structure of the show allowed them to understand what needed to be done.

To an extent the thespian element could be achieved in some form with any given group of players over 9 performances, which has always been one of the attendant objectives behind the piece.

Obviously the participatory aesthetic is down to individual players and had its own unique character this time around, much as a piece of written music would be performed in a range of ways with different orchestras.

There’s an argument to say that any practice/development of performance presentation, audience connection and confidence beyond the music itself is positive for player development.

I think we possibly pushed it a bit far after performance 6 or 7 at the expense of the music - the crying in the sad strings for example.

This is perhaps a point of learning for Claire and I as leaders.

That said, on the whole the music and participation from the orchestra grew positively from the first rehearsal and blossomed into a really entertaining interactive experience.”

(John K Miles)



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Sinfonia Verdi player feedback:

"My wish is that all kids have access to free music lessons!"

"Perfectly done for the age group that came. A great way to inspire them to take up an instrument."

"Children were very well versed and had all the songs well under their belt. Would be interesting to have a follow up to see if any of the children have asked about starting up an instrument."

"Wonder if, in order to get orchestra more into 'acting' it would be an idea to give ideas of reactions/gestures and moments where they can join in. We've had 4 concerts to get into it but if you've only got 1 or 2 it's harder to get in the groove, as it were!"

"Some kids don't manage to find the 1,2,3,4, conducting pattern. Maybe it would help to refer to the strong down beat on "1". And make the analogy of a boat? Mast, deck, hull, sail."

"Take care not to inadvertently intimidate a child who is not singing out lustily - could be he/she is struggling with pitch and being discreet or can't remember the words."

"I loved it that the children were so completely involved in the concert, because of careful organisation. Good for them to "fix" the orchestra & them to feel the joy of making music all together when they sang. Thanks!"



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LEARNING POINTS

Young musicians

Music Hub partners really valued this mentoring strand, not least because advanced standard students are sometimes overlooked. The Sinfonia Verdi players enjoyed the desk-sharing experience too. In a future project there should be more clarity regarding the

responsibilities of different Music Hubs for duty of care of the young musicians, bearing in mind GDPR and issues around sharing information between different organisations.

Teacher planning sessions

These proved worthwhile in helping teachers understand the project and prepare their students, as well as providing useful contact between the Music Hubs and schools.

Workshops

Whilst these were well delivered and enjoyed at numerous schools, some partners felt sessions could have been improved by being more varied and interactive, using visual aids such as a PowerPoint presentation with pictures of instruments, or by having a selection of real instruments for children to see. Music Hubs have stocks of instruments that could be provided.

A case could be made for holding the workshops in the period following the concerts, supporting practical learning about orchestral instruments following the inspiration of the concerts.

Preparation by schools was very variable, with some having done a lot of work on the songs and related activity, whilst at other schools the children appeared to know nothing. Some schools attended a concert without having received a workshop and still gained a very positive experience. This suggests it might not be essential to have preliminary workshops in order for there to be positive outcomes for schools, especially if the budget is limited.

Concerts

These were very effective and enjoyed by the large audiences. Whilst the initial concerts were less polished than subsequent ones, they still provided an exciting experience for the children.

After a cautious start, the Sinfonia Verdi players increasingly threw themselves into the theatrical narrative led by the presenters. This was an important outcome for Orchestras Live in terms of sector development.

Primary school audience feedback:

- “The first song is confusing because there were lots of long words in it. Please can it be less confusing?”
- “Didn’t like the crying.”
- “We sang the Fixit song too many times.”

Teacher feedback:

- “Have percussion on more of a tiered stage so we can see the snare etc better. For some it needed to have a faster pace.”

Some partners felt The Wish as a piece could be improved slightly, such as the strings section being shorter. The conducting by a young audience member at each concert was handled very well, and it would be worth exploring further opportunities for audience children

to have practical interaction with the orchestra, such as musicians roving through the venue and playing to the audience groups as they arrive.

It was commendable that Sinfonia Verdi and the presenters delivered an additional performance in Luton at very short notice in order to accommodate a large school group that had arrived at the venue at the wrong time. This was important in maintaining a positive relationship between the Music Hub and the school.

A small number of schools dropped at short notice, for various reasons.

Special Schools involvement

Hub staff from Central Bedfordshire visited two special schools in advance of the concerts to help run preparatory sessions, which involved meeting the children and general musical preparation. Resources were also introduced to class teachers, and staff produced worksheets that were later used by the children. The Grove Theatre made arrangements for seating pupils from the special schools in a way that made it easy for staff to take pupils out if they became anxious, as well as arranging wheelchair access and parking for the minibuses. Both schools appreciated these additional arrangements.

Timing

Central Beds schools reported that the timing of the event (near the start of the summer term) was better than the previous year where the later date clashed with sports days and end of year trips. A comment from one school was that it really needed to go into the calendar at the start of September as funding for coaches needs to be included in planning at the start of the academic year.

Outcomes

The importance of engaging with parents and carers as well as their children is significant in order for there to be a supportive environment for instrumental learning at home. Holding one or more concerts in the early evening would enable families to attend together, and the messaging about instrumental pathways could be tailored for adults as well as children. This will be done in future Orchestras Live projects featuring The Wish.

Take-up of orchestral instruments across different Music Hubs has varied, with a significant increase in Central Beds compared with a much more modest increase at Luton. All Music Hub partners will monitor progress over the coming year.

“Many of our teaching staff have musical skills across a range of instruments, but few of our parents, in my opinion, recognise the value of accessing instrumental tuition. It would be great if funding allowed for the parents to be invited to experience this as well.”

Teacher feedback

LEGACY PLANS

One of the Music Hubs involved in this project, Milton Keynes, is committed to repeating the project in 2020. The others will build on the project in other ways, such as touring small-scale groups of instrumentalists to schools and investing in locally-based musicians to deliver family events. Orchestras Live will collaborate with Milton Keynes and Sinfonia Verdi to produce a new consortium project based on The Wish in 2020.

EXTERNAL LINKS

Find out more about The Wish on Orchestras Live's website:

<http://www.orchestraslive.org.uk/featured-projects/the-wish/>

Visit **The Wish official website** here: <https://www.thewishorchestra.com/>

Watch the video documentary of The Wish premiere performances in July 2017 via

YouTube: <http://bit.ly/thewishfilm>

Orchestras Live website: www.orchestraslive.org.uk

Sinfonia Verdi website: <https://www.sinfoniaverdi.org/>

Luton Music Service website: www.thelutonmusicmix.com/

Inspiring Music (Central Beds) website: www.inspiringmusic.co.uk/

Music for Bedford Borough website:

https://www.bedford.gov.uk/education_and_learning/schools_and_colleges/music_for_bedford_borough.aspx

Milton Keynes Music Hub website: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/musicmk>

For further information contact Stuart Bruce, Senior Creative Producer
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stuart@orchestraslive.org.uk

APPENDIX A: SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITY

Tuesday 23 April	Central Bedfordshire workshops	Aspley Guise Lower School The Mary Bassett Lower School
Wednesday 24 April	Central Bedfordshire workshops	Hadrian Academy Beecroft Academy Tithe Farm Primary School
	Milton Keynes workshops	Greenleys Infant School Brooksward Primary School Wyvern Infant School
	Rehearsal	With young musicians, Rivers Centre
Thursday 25 April	Central Bedfordshire workshops	Beaudesert Lower School Clipstone Brook Lower School Toddington St Georges
	Milton Keynes workshops	Merebrook Infant School Kents Hill Park School Knowles Primary School
Friday 26 April	Milton Keynes workshops	Stanton School / Pepper Hill School Moorland Primary School Caroline Haslett Primary School
Monday 29 April	Bedford Borough workshops	Edith Cavell Primary School Westfield School Springfield Primary School
Tuesday 30 April	Performances x2	Grove Theatre, Dunstable
Wednesday 1 May	Bedford Borough workshops	Scott Primary School Priory Primary School
Thursday 2 May	Bedford Borough workshops	Cauldwell Primary School The Hills Academy
	Luton workshops	Riverbank Primary School William Austin Junior School Ramridge Primary
Friday 3 May	Luton workshops	Whipperley Infants Wenlock Junior School Warden Hill Junior School Putteridge Primary School Beech Hill Primary School
Tuesday 7 May	Performances x2	Bedford Corn Exchange
Wednesday 8 May	Performances x3	UK Centre for Carnival Arts, Luton
Thursday 9 May	Performances x2	Ridgeway Centre, Milton Keynes

APPENDIX B: GUEST BLOG BY EMMA THORPE

Cardiff University student Emma Thorpe joined Orchestras Live on a placement as part of her 'Business of Music' course, where she observed workshops and performance during The Wish.

As a second-year music undergraduate, my days of school music lessons are still fresh in my memory. Due to living far from a city and my music teachers being restricted to a tight budget, we had to rely on recordings and videos to experience music rather than live performances. I felt at arms-length from the works we were studying, and it left me feeling bored and disinterested with orchestral music in general. Following my move to Cardiff for University, I found my love for it again through attending concerts and workshops, but I never will forget the preconceptions I had about orchestral music during my school years. Therefore, it has been refreshing for me to spend time on placement with Orchestras Live working on The Wish, which is aiming to change the way young people view orchestral music and encourage them to get involved by taking up an orchestral instrument. The project is giving primary school children the chance to learn about how an orchestra works and see them perform in an interactive and engaging concert specifically suited to their age range. The Wish is igniting a passion for orchestral music within primary school children in a new and exciting way, inspiring them to further their music education by showing them just how exciting it can be.

Before the concert, the schools involved in the project were visited by John K Miles or Claire Henry, the composer and presenter of The Wish respectively. I had the opportunity to shadow both John and Claire for a day, attending six schools across Milton Keynes and helping to deliver the workshops to the students. Visiting different schools and seeing the different standard of music education in each of them helped highlight for me just how important the project is in delivering music education in primary schools. Some schools had regular music lessons and specialist music teachers, but many of the others had little or no music input other than an occasional singing assembly, and the workshops with John and Claire were the first time they had been taught music theory and terminology. The workshops were designed so that they were accessible by children with no previous musical knowledge, but so that they were still engaging to children who were more advanced in their music education. The children in all six schools were very receptive to the workshops, and were enthusiastic to get involved with conducting, singing and dancing as they learned the songs and story for the show. Many of the teachers said that the online resources for the project were very useful, as it meant that the children had the chance learn the songs before the workshops and practice them afterwards as well.

I attended the concerts at the Grove Theatre in Dunstable on 30th April, and it was particularly interesting to see how the workshops tied into the performance. Some of the information from the workshops was repeated, consolidating the children's knowledge of tonality, melody, pulse and tempo, but there was much more focus on talking about the instruments themselves. Each instrument was introduced individually, enabling the children to learn about each of them, hear the sounds that they make and understand what their role in the orchestra is. The orchestra, Sinfonia Verdi, was quite a diverse orchestra with both male and female performers which provided a good mixture of role models for the audience, although I did feel as though there were strides still to be made in terms of ethnic diversity. Young musicians from the area who had been identified by their local music hub played alongside the professional musicians, which not only gave them experience of playing with an orchestra but showed the younger children what they can achieve by taking their own instrumental lessons.

After the performance, I was able to speak to some of the children who had attended about their experience and what they enjoyed. When I asked what their favourite part of the performance had been, a large number replied, 'All of it!', which shows just how enjoyable the overall experience was for them. Many of the children liked singing along to the orchestra, and lots of them remembered the 'Fix-it Song' as it was sung four times through the concert. When asked which instrument they liked, most of the children responded that they liked flute or violin, but drums were also a popular choice and one said even she liked the 'curly trumpet', meaning the French horn. I also asked some of the students if the show had lived up to their expectations, and one student excitedly told me that it was completely different to how she expected it to be because she thought orchestral music was boring, but the show was not. The children were all very keen to talk to me and tell me about what they had learned which I found very heartening, as the show clearly had a positive impact on them.

As well as speaking to the children about what they thought of the project, I also had the opportunity to speak to staff members from Inspiring Music, the music hub for Central Bedfordshire. The staff were delighted to be involved in the project again this year and were eager to tell me about the impact that The Wish has had on music education in their area. They said that following the project last year they had seen a 103% increase in children taking instrumental lessons, and that they had to recruit more instrumental tutors to cope with the demand. I was informed that two special schools took part in the concert, and that one school had made the show more accessible to their students by printing out the lyrics to the songs accompanied by Makaton signs for each word. It would be interesting to see if, in the future, resources like these could be made available alongside the other online resources so that the concert can be accessed equally by the children attending from special schools. Furthermore, this would benefit SEN/D children in mainstream schools too who might not normally have access to such resources.

The project had a huge impact on the children attending and their thoughts about orchestral music. The excitement of the children to share what they had learned, coupled with the figures following the 2018 concerts, shows that the project is very successful in its aim to inspire children to take up orchestral instruments. As well as fulfilling this aim, The Wish is changing the preconceptions that the children have about orchestral music being boring and dull, instead showing them how wonderful it can sound and how exciting it can be. The project is also giving children the opportunity to learn about music and the orchestra, something that they may not normally get to learn in their everyday school life. It was a heart-warming experience for me to see the children thoroughly enjoying the music and being inspired to learn even more about it. The children involved spoke about the workshops and the concerts with enthusiasm showing just what an impact it has had on them and in the future of their music education too.

Emma Thorpe, Cardiff University