

# Living Programme Notes project: The Multi Story Orchestra and East Riding Youth Orchestra



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## June-July 2019 Evaluation report by Orchestras Live



It was a completely different way of performing that was refreshing in a sense. Members of MSO were encouraging and supportive. I think that in the future I'll try to engage more in unusual and different styles of performing.



Participant

## PROJECT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND AIMS

This project aimed to enable young musicians from the East Riding Youth Orchestra (ERYO), supported by players from the Multi-Story Orchestra (MSO) through a series of workshops, to create a public concert that included Living Programme Notes (LPN), a unique concept developed by MSO that engages audiences in a new way. This involved creating an interactive performance to illustrate elements of the minimalist masterpiece *In C* by Terry Riley, followed by a public concert featuring two versions of *In C*, one co-created by members of the ERYO alongside MSO musicians and one by the Multi Story Orchestra. The performance took place in Flemington Shopping Centre multi-story car park in Beverley on Sunday 7 July 2019 and formed part of East Riding of Yorkshire Council's Classically Yours programme.

## PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Young musicians co-created, presented and performed a unique site-specific music event with professional orchestral musicians.
- Young musicians learnt how to present orchestral music in new ways for new audiences.
- Young people continued to have input into, and have a platform in, the wider Classically Yours programme.
- New audiences continued to be attracted to concert events in non-traditional spaces.
- Orchestras Live's relationship with partners was strengthened.
- Valuable learning was gained by MSO through co-creating LPN with young people for the first time, which will go on to influence the orchestra's practice in delivery of similar projects in the future.
- An 11-year-old thinking of giving up learning an instrument, on hearing ERYO and seeing what they could achieve, was inspired to continue.

## LEGACY PLANS

East Riding Music Education Hub (ERMEH) are considering using the LPN concept in future concerts. The project has stimulated them to think how they might engage with their ensembles in different ways such as workshopping pieces, including more contemporary works and involving the young musicians in the choice of repertoire and presentation of concerts. They already perform music composed by members of their senior ensembles in concerts but will consider giving young musicians and composers more opportunities to do so. They are keen to develop this style of working with their junior ensembles too.

Orchestras Live would like to develop the work of ERMEH's ensembles in Withernsea where the take up of music is low and where young musicians from the youth orchestras could serve as inspiring role models, encouraging the establishment of ensembles where none exist at present. This could be supported by Manchester Camerata who are part of the Classically Yours programme in Withernsea.

MSO are exploring how to develop and refine this model of working with participants for their future work with partners across the country.

## PARTNERSHIP

This project was part of the wider Classically Yours programme in East Riding. Produced by Orchestras Live and achieved in partnership with East Riding Music Education Hub and East Riding of Yorkshire Council with funding from Arts Council England and Foyle Foundation.

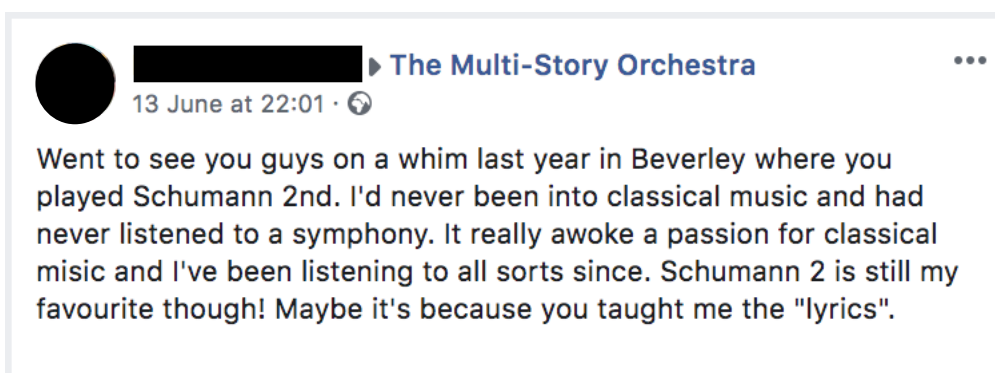
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## Project details

The Living Programme Notes project involved East Riding County Youth Orchestra (ERYO) working with The Multi-Story Orchestra (MSO) – in partnership with East Riding Music Education Hub and East Riding Council – to enable young musicians from ERYO, supported by MSO players, to create a public concert which included Living Programme Notes (LPN), a unique concept developed by MSO that engages audiences in a new way.

The Living Programmes Notes concept involves an interactive pre-concert experience for audience members, in which elements of the pieces programmed in the concert are broken down and explained to the audience through demonstrations, action and movement. It is an innovative approach that has attracted a wider range of audiences to engage in orchestral repertoire that new audiences might otherwise find difficult to relate to.



Audience feedback from MSO's Living Programme Notes performance in 2018.

Six workshops took place over two weekends in June 2019 at the Hexagon Centre, Beverley, and a rehearsal and performance on 7 July 2019 in Flemingate Car Park, Beverley. Workshops were led by music leader Fraser Trainer with six musicians from MSO facilitating the activities with the young people. Three instrumental teachers from ERMEH supported the young musicians throughout.

## The orchestra and music leader

Celebrated as one of the most exciting young orchestras to emerge in recent years, MSO is made up of outstanding young professional musicians who share a commitment to widening accessibility to classical music. The orchestra's performances in car parks around the country attract huge, diverse audiences. They tour local school halls and playgrounds and run choir projects that bring together hundreds of young people to perform alongside the orchestra.

Fraser Trainer is a composer and workshop leader with over twenty years' experience working with some of the world's leading arts organisations in a wide variety of creative contexts. He has led many projects for Orchestras Live and originated the Living Programme Notes concept with MSO.



Developing ideas for the Living Programme notes © Jan Ford

## Participants

28 participants from ERYO took part in the project, the level of playing was mostly Grade 7 and above and covering most orchestral instruments. Participants were between the ages of 14 and 18. All were used to playing in an orchestra and at least one has composed music for the orchestra. Participants were surveyed at the start and end of the project. 23 pre-project and 13 post-project surveys were completed.

## Workshops

Six workshops took place over two weekends in the lead up to the concert. Fraser Trainer and six musicians from MSO worked with the young musicians, exploring Terry Riley's piece, *In C*. Participants learnt about the piece and how to perform it and were introduced to the concept of Living Programme Notes.

Terry Riley's *In C* consists of 53 short, numbered musical phrases, lasting from half a beat to 32 beats. Each phrase may be repeated an arbitrary number of times with the musicians having control over which phrase they play. Players are encouraged to play the phrases starting at different times, even if they are playing the same phrase. In this way, although the melodic content of each part is predetermined, *In C* has elements of randomness to it and therefore every performance will be different. This process required the young people to approach performance in a very different way to traditional repertoire where they play from set music.



## Performance

196 people attended the concert with MSO and ERYO on level 4 of Flemingate Shopping Centre Car Park on Sunday 7 July 2019. The event began with musicians formed into three groups spread across level 4 of the car park for the Living Programme Notes that had been devised by ERYO musicians supported by Fraser Trainer. Each group presented a short participatory workshop that demonstrated an element of Terry Riley's *In C*. The audience were able to sample 2 out of the 3 groups before taking their seats for two performances of *In C*, the one devised by ERYO and supported by MSO musicians, and a second version by MSO musicians alone.



The interactive part was a great surprise, me and my girlfriend came to see something different and that was fun.

Audience member



ERYO leading Living Programme Notes in Flemingate Car Park © Jan Ford

# Evaluation

## Workshop evaluation

Orchestras Live attended two out of six of the workshops and the final concert. Observations included:

- It was evident as they explored *In C* for the first time that the participants began to understand the piece and grow in confidence in their approach to playing it, with the orchestral sound improving throughout the workshop.
- More could have been explained about the process of the project so that everyone was clear from the start about what the expectations and aims were.
- Occasionally, the MSO musicians seemed a little unclear as to the task they had to work on and more prior direction would have aided this, particularly as this was a new way of working for MSO.
- There was some “what we think” and “what ‘they’ could do” language from the leader and MSO musicians. Young people’s voices were not always encouraged or heard.
- There was little evidence that the young people had received information about the piece, as they seemed unaware of the provenance of the music. The leader and MSO musicians appear not to have conveyed this. The young people felt that information about the context of the piece might have been useful at the start of the project.
- There was variation between groups in how active MSO musicians’ roles were in the final delivery of the LPN. With some groups participants more clearly took the lead than others.

MSO reflected that the workshops could have been structured better and been more efficient with time, which would have made the process more rewarding and engaging for the young people.

## Performance evaluation

Kate Whitley, Artistic Director of MSO thought the young people were extremely engaged in the LPN and enjoyed the performance. The orchestra hadn’t expected the level of ownership and confidence in the LPN delivery that they saw from the participants.

Orchestras Live will investigate further an apparent disconnect between LPN delivery and performance.

*“I thought they were less engaged in the performance of the new piece but still it was a positive experience.”* (Orchestra feedback)

There were some logistical issues with only being able to use half of the car park level which meant there were active cars very close to the performance and it should have clarified that MSO needed the entire level of the car park. The orchestra found Flemingate staff to be very helpful. MSO were pleased with the reaction from the audience.



The audience were very engaged in the living programme note and attentive and focused during the orchestral performances.

Kate Whitley, MSO Artistic Director



From observing the participants in the first workshop and then delivering the Living Programme Notes and performance in the concert, Orchestras Live saw a positive change in the participants' confidence and level of performance. For members of the audience, it would have been difficult to know who was from MSO and ERYO as each LPN came across as an effective ensemble performance, with everyone performing their role with conviction.



Performance of Terry Riley's In C in Flemingate Car Park © Becky West

## Audience feedback

35 people completed an audience survey and key responses were:

- A positive response to both the Living Programme Notes and the performance with **91% saying that they had enjoyed the performance.**
- **57% of respondents said their perception of orchestras had changed positively/very positively** as a result of attending the concert.

*"Great venue and idea to perform in the car park & play music around Terry Riley's work."*



*“Wonderful to see/hear young musicians connecting with the early experiments from the 1980s.”*

*“The musicianship was amazing.”*

*“Enjoyed the sound & obviously super performers but not my sort of music.”*

*“Very much enjoyed the live programme notes and the participation opportunities.”*

Further information about audience was collected, to build knowledge of the audience demographics that are being reached through the wider Classically Yours programme in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Key findings were:

- 85% were over 35 years old.
- Over 50% had walked or used public transport to get to the event and were from the HU17 postcode area – Beverley.
- Posters and being associated with the youth orchestra were the main ways of finding out about the concert.
- The main reason for attending was because it was a local event, followed by the choice of music and the orchestra.
- 31% had attended a Classically Yours concert previously
- 17% had attended the previous MSO concert in 2018.
- In addition, the promoter reported that 62 audience members were new bookers who had not booked a Classically Yours event before.

## What participants thought about the project

Participant feedback was collected through a post-project survey. The young people thought the project was well organized with 86% saying that they “had a good time”, that their ideas were taken seriously and that they got to know people outside of their usual social group. All the participants felt that they had been treated like equals, that people in the group supported each other and there was a strong feeling of being part of a team. High levels of motivation to keep being creative were also noted. More than 50% of the participants thought the project had provided new opportunities for them to develop their music.

The young musicians taking part in the project were asked what they had got out of participating in the project. More than 75% reported feeling more confident in their performing, composition, improvisation and general musicianship skills as a result of taking part. They enjoyed working with professional musicians and valued being treated as equals by them. The opportunity to compose in a minimalist style was highlighted by many of the participants as was the chance to experiment with new techniques:

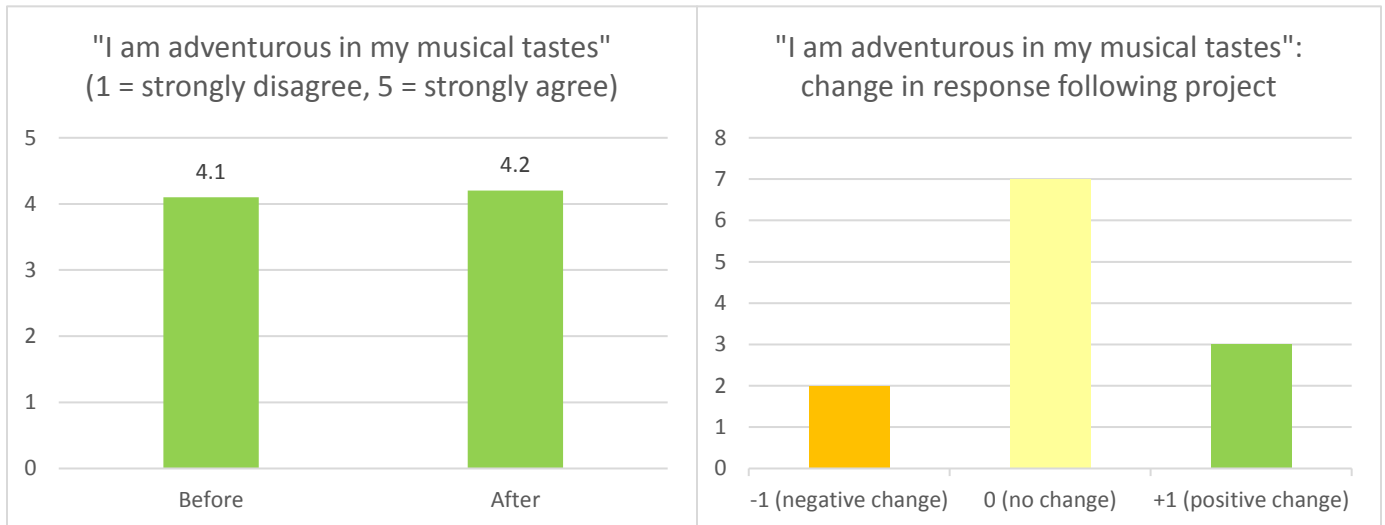
*“I have improved my creative and composition skills in a different genre to what I would usually compose in. I have learnt lots about how minimalism is created and performed as I have never performed in this style of music.”*

*“It was a completely different way of performing that was refreshing in a sense. Members of MSO were encouraging and supportive. I think that in the future I'll try to engage more in unusual and different styles of performing.”*

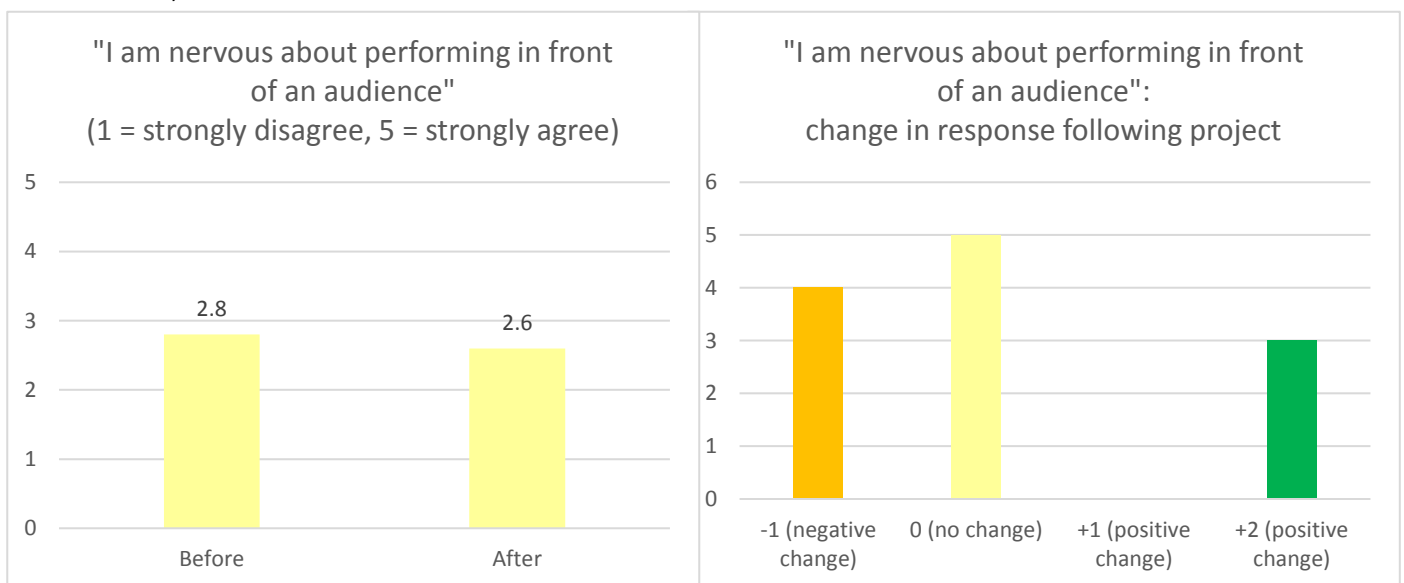
*“Increasing creativity, on the spot improvisation skills, thinking out of the box, using my musical knowledge and listening skills to play something new but related to the people around me.”*

We surveyed participants at the start and end of the project to see what change the project had brought about in four areas: musical adventurousness, performing in front of an audience, enjoying improvisation and playing contemporary (recently composed) music. 12 participants responded to both surveys and the results were as follows:

**Musically Adventurous** – average response improved following the project.



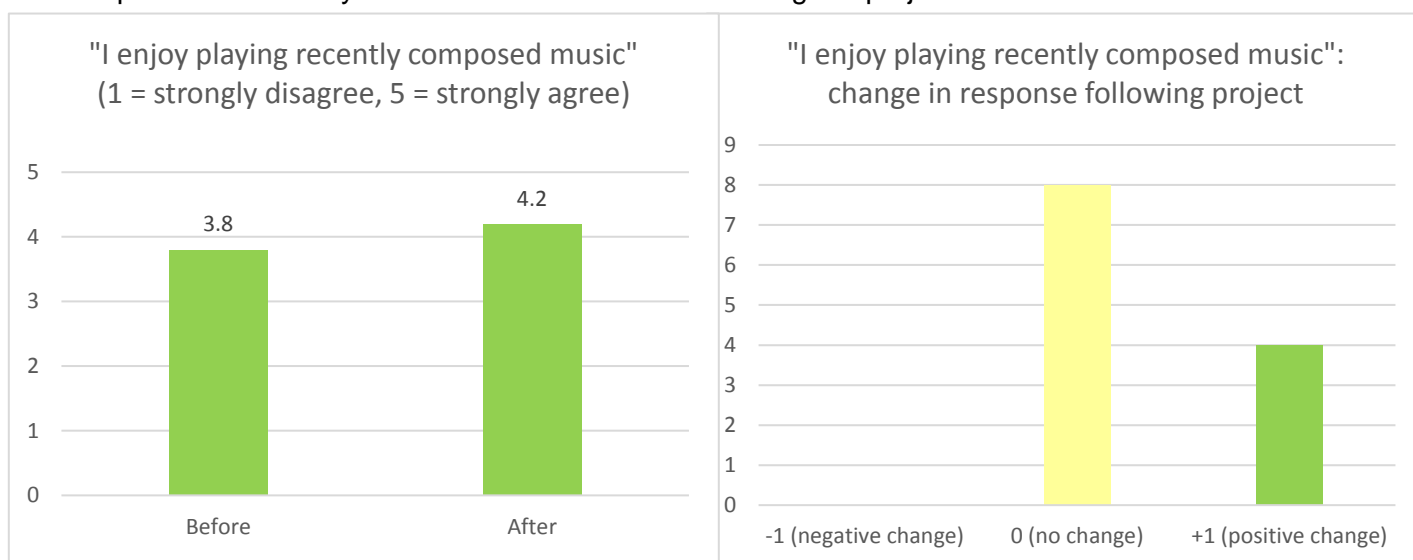
**Confidence in performing in front of an audience** – average response improved following the project (note that the lower score following the project indicates that participants were less nervous).



**Enjoying improvisation** – average response improved significantly as a result of the project.



**Enjoying performing recently composed music** (i.e. late 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century music) – all responses either stayed the same or increased following the project.



We asked the young people if they had any new ideas about how ERYO concerts could be presented in the future. They were keen to play alongside professionals again, to develop Living Programme Notes for concerts (57% said 'yes'), and to have more engagement and communication with the audience. They suggested playing in different venues and in a less formal setting sometimes and that they would like a greater variety of music to be played such as "modern 21st century" music.

## Partners feedback

The project received a very positive review from the MEH staff and they were very pleased to see how positively the students approached the project. Peter Walker, Deputy Head of Schools' Music Service noted a real improvement in participants' level of confidence. A tangible increase in their acceptance of and involvement in the whole creative process was also observed.

“ Students went from being quite subdued at the start to having the confidence to lead the audience in activities through directing the living programme notes. I think there was some skepticism at the start of the project. After the students had spent time "workshopping" there was a much more enthusiastic and open approach. ”

Peter Walker

East Riding Council were pleased with the project; for the young people and the very different audience the performance in Flemingate attracted.

“ It gave many in the youth orchestra a lot more confidence and many interacted with not only members of their group who they hadn't done previously but also with the audience. ”

June Mitchell, Arts Development Officer, East Riding of Yorkshire Council



Performance of Terry Riley's In C in Flemingate Car Park © Jan Ford

The attendance for the concert was slightly less than the previous concert by MSO in 2018, which the promoter thinks this might have had something to do with the programme.

*“I am not convinced that the music was the ideal choice to encourage a family audience and we only had 20 children attending.”* (June Mitchell, Arts Development Officer, East Riding of Yorkshire Council.)

However, the concert had an immediate impact on one young member of the audience. An 11-year-old who came to the performance was thinking of giving up the instrument she played but on hearing ERYO and seeing what they could achieve, she has been inspired to continue.

## Improvements

We asked all participants and partners what improvements could have been made to the project to make it even better.

The young people were largely satisfied with everything:

*“I couldn't think of anything that needed improvement - everything was great.”*

*“I don't think this amazing experience could have been any better for me.”*

Some didn't feel challenged enough by the piece and felt they could have spent longer creating chords and motifs. Some didn't feel enough explanation was given of various harmonic elements of the piece:

*“We learned further about the different modes used within the piece... e.g. my group used the aeolian mode and played chords for another mode but we weren't told what it was or taught about it or what notes make up the mode.”*

Some of the participants would have liked to have performed their own pieces:

*“We could've done one or two of our own pieces, along with our version of “In C” and the living programme notes.”*

Peter Walker (Deputy Head of Schools' Music Service) thought that *“maybe a preliminary workshop earlier in the year so we could do some prep before the project begins”* would have been helpful.



It enabled us to expand our musicians' skill sets as well as expanding our work as an organisation.

Kate Whitley, MSO Artistic Director



For MSO, it was the first time that they had worked with young people to deliver LPN so there was considerable learning. Also, it was the first time MSO had delivered a project which co-created a piece with young people of this age group, so again there was invaluable learning in working in this way. A debrief with their support musicians at the end of each session would



have helped to make ongoing improvements to the project, particularly with regard to ensuring young people's voices were always heard. MSO identified several areas of improvement through the evaluation process and are now in a much stronger position to deliver these projects in the future and communicate the process and aims more clearly to the musicians and young people involved.

## Further information

More information about Orchestras Live and our projects can be found on our website:  
[www.orchestraslive.org.uk](http://www.orchestraslive.org.uk)

The Multi-Story Orchestra's website: [www.multi-story.org.uk](http://www.multi-story.org.uk)

Find out more about the wider Classically Yours programme:  
[www.orchestraslive.org.uk/featured-projects/classically-yours](http://www.orchestraslive.org.uk/featured-projects/classically-yours)

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