

Darlington Hippodrome Orchestral Series 2019/20

Creative projects with young people by
London Mozart Players and the Hallé



© Becky West

Evaluation report by Orchestras Live



I loved taking part in a big project and I definitely want to do it again.



Participant



PROJECT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND AIMS

As part of the Darlington Hippodrome Orchestral Series co-produced by Orchestras Live and Darlington Hippodrome, each visiting orchestra delivers a creative project for young people. Creative projects were delivered by the London Mozart Players (Oct 2019) and Hallé Orchestra (Jan 2020), supported by Durham Music Service (DMS), lead partner of Durham & Darlington Music Education Hub.

The creative projects aim to provide opportunities to engage young people across the town with each visiting orchestra and attract new audiences to orchestral performances through targeted ticket offers to their families. The projects aim to develop young people's creative musical skills and confidence and give them the opportunity to showcase their work together with the professional orchestra as part of the public concert.

Orchestras Live's first Spitalfields Music Leader Trainee for the north, Alice Phelps, took part in these projects as placements for her traineeship, and led a morning workshop as part of the Hallé's *Glorious Guitars* project delivery.

London Mozart Players, October 2019: *String Serenade*

Young musicians from DMS' Darlington String Orchestra (DSO) worked with music leader Sarah Freestone and members of the London Mozart Players to devise and perform a new piece inspired by the 'serenade' theme of the concert programme. The London Mozart Players Quartet delivered an assembly workshop to 90 Key Stage 2 children at St Augustine's RC Primary School and 5 young string players from Carmel College.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- 42 young musicians performed the DSO's new *Darlington Serenade* on stage alongside the music leaders and a quartet from London Mozart Players as a curtain raiser at the London Mozart Players' concert on 14 October 2019. Following their performance, the young musicians joined the audience for the rest of the LMP concert.
- The DSO performed their *Darlington Serenade* again as part of their Christmas concert.
- Retention of DSO orchestra membership has improved following the project.

Hallé, January 2020: *Glorious Guitars*

In December 2019 and January 2020, young musicians from Longfield and Haughton Academies worked with musicians from the Hallé Orchestra to devise and perform a new piece inspired by Rodrigo's *Concierto De Aranjuez*. Guitar soloist Craig Ogden joined the ensemble on the performance day, rehearsing and performing alongside the young musicians. He talked and performed to the young musicians as part of their workshop, providing an inspirational opportunity for them to hear and see an international soloist perform close up.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- 15 young musicians performed their new piece, '*Tocamos en Español*', as a curtain raiser on stage alongside soloist Craig Ogden, Hallé musicians and the Music Leader Trainee at the Halle concert on 9th January 2020.
- Young guitarists came together on this project to work as an ensemble for the first time, developing their ensemble skills and knowledge of the classical guitar.
- 2 new secondary schools in Darlington, Haughton and Longfield Academies, were engaged in the project, supporting their music department's continued development.
- The Hallé went on to successfully deliver a similar guitar project based on the Darlington model at Craig Ogden's next performance with them in Stoke-on-Trent.



© Becky West

CONTENTS

London Mozart Players – String Serenade project.....	4
Project summary.....	4
Participants	4
Evaluation.....	5
The Hallé – Glorious Guitars project	9
Project summary.....	9
Participants	9
Evaluation.....	9
General Evaluation.....	12
Spitalfields Music Leader Trainee	13
Audience development.....	15
Improvements.....	16
Further information	16

London Mozart Players – String Serenade project

Project summary

The London Mozart Players delivered creative workshops led by music leader Sarah Freestone over three of the DSO's regular rehearsals in September/October 2019, with a final rehearsal on the day of the concert. The workshops explored the theme of serenades and used music from the concert programme as inspiration to create their own string serenade. As well as working through improvisation, the creative team focused on developing and enhancing the DSO's ensemble playing.

The DSO performed their new string serenade as a curtain raiser at the LMP's concert on 14 October 2019 at Darlington Hippodrome. The young people were all provided with a free ticket to attend the rest of the LMP concert following their performance and their families were given a discounted ticket offer to attend the concert.

The LMP string quartet also delivered an afternoon assembly for Key Stage 2 at St Augustine's Primary School, along with some students from Carmel College during their visit to Darlington. The school hosts the DSO's weekly rehearsals and the visit from the Quartet aimed to inspire more of the children to learn an instrument and join the DSO.



I've enjoyed working with a proper orchestra.

Participant



Participants

Darlington String Orchestra is the district string ensemble provided by DMS and led by string teachers Katie Hibbard and Becky Howard. They rehearse weekly in term times and bring together string players from across the Darlington area to develop ensemble and performance experience. Members of the orchestra range from ages 9-18 and from beginner to Grade 4/5 standard.

42 young people attended the LMP project, with workshops delivered on 25 September, 2 October, 9 October and 14 October. In addition, on 9 October the LMP quartet and music leader delivered a school assembly performance to 95 pupils for St Augustine's RC Primary School.



© Becky West

Evaluation

Orchestras Live attended two of the LMP workshops, the final rehearsal and concert.

Workshops were structured to focus on different elements of creating the serenade e.g. devising a melody and rhythmic sections, so that at the end of each workshop the young people had created and learnt a section of the new piece. Time was also spent working on developing listening and ensemble skills. In the final workshop, the music leader was joined by a string quartet from LMP who played alongside the group and took sectionals to work on performance skills. The players could have been more proactive in their engagement with the young people, as they very much took a supportive role to the music leadership team. However, the sectionals they took made a real difference to the overall ensemble performance.

“

The presence of orchestral musicians had a profound effect on the group, the quality of their sound-making really blossomed in the latter half of the project, and the feedback I got from the young musicians was really enthusiastic.

”

Alice Phelps, Music Leader Trainee

The young people presented their new piece in a different way to their normal concerts, walking on stage one at a time, moving around the stage during the performance and performing everything from memory.

“

The opening of the whole piece involved some of the youngest members (9 years old) walking on to the stage at the start of the performance improvising ... I found seeing/hearing the first workshop and then the final performance inspirational as a teacher.

”

Shaune Eland, Durham Music Service

DMS staff were really pleased with this approach as the older students gained in confidence and the younger ones were stretched without realising it.

“

We've put ourselves out of our comfort zone and done [different] things that you might not do in an exam.

”

Participant

LMP worked with music leader Sarah Freestone for the first time, which proved a positive experience for the players involved. They felt that the inclusion of the creative project and having the young people perform as part of the concert worked well and the project achieved everything that they wanted it to within the timeframe. This is a format they would consider using again.

“

This was the first collaborative composition project I have ever worked on, so I came in not knowing what to expect, and came away with tons of new ideas for creative music-making, some of which I have already started implementing in my own workshops.

”

Alice Phelps, Trainee Music Leader

The school assembly performance presented by the music leader and LMP string quartet effectively engaged the young people, who enjoyed the repertoire presented and the opportunities to take part. Sarah Freestone was an engaging presenter and the young people responded well to the opportunities to participate she gave them. The Headteacher was extremely pleased to have been offered the opportunity to host LMP and the reaction of staff and children present was positive.

“

I loved it when we worked together to learn and make the piece. I also loved playing it.

”

Participant



© Becky West

Participants on the whole were very positive about their experience of the project and working with Sarah, Alice and the London Mozart Players. The project has clearly been successful in enhancing the DSO's teamwork and confidence in their own creativity. It has also positively impacted on their opinion of orchestras and likelihood of attending orchestral concerts in future. DMS have also reported that retention of members has improved since the project which demonstrates the longer-term impact of this creative musical experience on the young musicians involved.

Participants were asked about their experience of the project in a post-performance survey...

96% said they were amazed by what they achieved

89% said they were likely to attend orchestral concert in future

86% said they felt part of a team

85% said they had a good time

85% felt they were treated as an equal

85% felt comfortable trying new things

85% said they feel motivated to do more creative things in future

78% said their view of orchestral music had changed positively as a result of taking part in the project

74% felt their artistic skills improved

74% felt like their opinion mattered

70% agreed their ideas were taken seriously

62% said they did something they didn't know they were capable of

The Hallé – Glorious Guitars project

Project summary

The Hallé delivered 2 days of creative workshops led by Hallé violinist Hannah Smith on 1 December 2019 and 7 January 2020 with a group of young musicians from Haughton Academy and Longfield Academy. They formed a new ensemble for the project and developing ensemble skills in a group of young musicians who had not played in such a group before formed a core part of the work. The young musicians explored themes from *Concierto De Aranjuez* and created their own response to the piece.

The new Guitar Ensemble performed their new piece '*Tocamos en Español*' with soloist Craig Ogden as a curtain raiser at the Hallé concert on 9 January 2020. The young people were all provided with a free ticket to attend the rest of the Hallé concert following their performance, and their families were given a discounted ticket offer to attend the concert.

Participants

The ensemble was brought together for the project and the Hallé worked alongside the DMS guitar teacher in both schools, Shaun Henderson. Students were mostly guitarists and one school also involved 3 string players. They ranged from those who were beginners to more advanced players.

12 young people attended Hallé workshop on 1 December 2019 and 15 young people attended the workshops on 7 and 9 January 2020.

Evaluation

Orchestras Live attended the workshops, final rehearsal and concert. The workshops were led by Hallé musicians, with support from Orchestras Live's Music Leader Trainee.



Young guitarists rarely have the opportunity to play together, and this project gave them a rare chance to develop their ensemble skills, such as listening, blending, and keeping in time.



Alice Phelps, Music Leader Trainee

The young people were provided with a skeleton structure by the Hallé to use as a springboard for creating their new piece. This, combined with the emphasis on developing ensemble skills with a group of young musicians who had not performed in a large ensemble before, and the addition of some young people to the group for the second workshop day, meant that not as

much time was spent on the creative aspects of the project as had been planned. The time on ensemble skills was well spent, however, as with the breadth of ability within the group this contributed to a more secure performance.

The more advanced players were given the opportunity to have solo spots within the piece, which they clearly relished and worked to improve their improvisations each time they played them. DMS staff reported observing the student's confidence grow throughout, and Shaun Henderson has since reported increased engagement during lessons as "they now get it". The project has had a particularly positive outcome for one young musician who, from being a quiet personality, became very animated as the project developed and has since opened up and talked a lot about how much they enjoyed the experience.



I enjoyed the renewed energy and engagement that the students showed throughout this whole process.



Shaun Henderson, DMS guitar teacher



© Becky West

Craig Ogden, the soloist, joined the ensemble for their rehearsal, talked to them about their instrument, different techniques and also performed a short piece. Being able to hear and watch an international soloist play close up in a relaxed environment provided inspiration and opened their ears to the possibilities of their instrument. It also made the young people feel their performance was an important part of the concert. Craig then introduced and performed with the ensemble in the concert.



Craig's involvement in the rehearsal was amazing. It was priceless to see a young guitarist turn around to his friend with his jaw dropping as he heard the sounds that Craig could produce from the guitar.



Orchestras Live Trustee

Orchestras Live's Board attended the workshop and performance in Darlington, and Trustees were impressed with the way the devised piece was fully integrated into the concert, giving a large number of young musicians a unique experience of performing in a professional theatre alongside world class musicians, with opportunities to improvise, play solos and contribute to the entire piece for participants at all levels of technical proficiency.

Although both schools were asked to get the young people to complete surveys on their experience, only a very few were returned. From this small sample, young people reported that their view of orchestral music had changed positively as a result of the project and all strongly agreed that they had a good time. All agreed that they felt their contribution mattered, were treated as an equal and felt part of a team. They had enjoyed performing at the Hippodrome and learning more techniques for the guitar.

The Hallé were pleased with the format of the creative project and the success of the young people's performance and used it again at a concert of the same programme with a longstanding promoter partner in Stoke-on-Trent.

General Evaluation

For all participants, these creative projects provide an opportunity to develop their musical skills working in a different way to their regular music-making at school and in ensembles. The focus is on creatively responding to musical ideas through improvisation and giving the young people agency in shaping the new piece. Both projects encouraged the young musicians to discuss and make decisions about the musical ideas and structure that they want to use in the new piece and how they wish to perform it. Students are challenged to work away from written music and develop their listening and creative skills.

“

I loved how all of our ideas were included.

”

LMP project participant

Performing with professional musicians on stage at Darlington Hippodrome can be a daunting experience, particularly when young people are not always used to performing to such large audiences. Overcoming nerves and experiencing a feeling of achievement after the performance engenders valuable learning and confidence-building in themselves as musicians. One young guitarist confided how nervous and apprehensive they were before the performance and at the interval then said how amazing they felt coming off stage.

“

The project allowed students to experience and work with top class performers and soloists. It gave them an understanding of other opportunities within the music industry, but most of all gave them the confidence to perform on stage in front of a large audience and be proud of their contribution.

”

Mr Nick Trenholm, Music Teacher at Longfield Academy

All participants were able to sit and listen to the professional orchestra perform. Having got to know some of the musicians on stage, this enables the young musicians to experience the performance differently. Staff from DSO commented on how the young people were noticing and discussing the professional players using the performance techniques they had practised in their workshops. This reinforced the young people's learning and set a positive example of how they can improve as musicians by working on their technique.

“

I thought the sound they made and how they worked together was amazing.

”

Participant

Integrating the DMS teaching staff into the project delivery team allowed them to provide effective support to the visiting musicians and to observe their students working in a different environment. This ensured teaching staff can reinforce and build on the skills their students have developed as part of the project to embed the impacts over the longer term. For instance, the DSO staff created an opportunity to perform their new piece again in the Christmas concert later that term.

Spitalfields Music Leader Trainee

Orchestras Live has been working with Spitalfields Festival to provide a traineeship opportunity in the north during 2019/20. The traineeship forms part of Orchestras Live's talent development strand where we aim to support the development of, and provide opportunities for, emerging music leaders, particularly in the north of England, to gain vital orchestral experience as part of their freelance portfolio careers.

The LMP creative project was the first opportunity for Orchestras Live's new trainee music leader, Alice Phelps, to observe and work alongside an orchestral team. She then returned to Darlington to support the Hallé project and had the opportunity to lead a morning session.



© Becky West

“ Although the premise of the “Glorious Guitars” and “Serenade” projects were similar, I was fascinated to see how different approaches to facilitation can shape the participants' creative engagement in distinctive ways. While the London Mozart Players brought in Sarah Freestone, a freelance music leader, to run the sessions for “Serenade”, the Hallé encourage their own players to lead the workshops. By putting orchestral players at the helm, the young musicians develop a much closer link with the orchestra over the course of the project. To provide a framework and springboard for the collaborative composition, Steve Pickett [Hallé Education Director] had arranged the main themes and motifs from the first movement of the Rodrigo concerto into a score with parts for three guitars, double bass (for me!) and the Hallé players on violin, cello and French horn. Whereas Sarah encouraged the string orchestra to create all their own music by ear, using abstract ideas and scales as a starting point. ”

Alice Phelps, Music Leader Trainee

Alice Phelps has written about her experiences of her traineeship, including both Darlington projects, which you can read here:

<https://www.orchestraslive.org.uk/news/alice-phelps-trainee-music-leader-blog>

<https://www.orchestraslive.org.uk/news/alice-phelps-trainee-music-leader-blog-2>



© Becky West

Audience development

As part of their audience development plans, Darlington Hippodrome experimented with a number of different offers for the Series:

- Discounted tickets for participants' families
- Buy a ticket for the price of a standing Prom (£6) at the Royal Albert Hall for LMP, capped at 75 tickets
- 'Festive Friday' Black Friday event offer (£10 tickets) for the Hallé, capped at 50 tickets

Concert	Audience	Participant/School Family Ticket Offer Take Up	Ticket Offer take up	% audience new attendees at orchestral concerts
London Mozart Players 14 October 2019	377	61 tickets	23 bookings with 64 tickets	n/a
Hallé 9 January 2020	668	44 tickets	6 bookings with 13 tickets	18

Both creative projects received coverage in the Northern Echo and Darlington & Stockton Times.

In analysis of booking data from the start of the partnership in 2016/17, the majority of customers, 70% of tickets sold, only attended one concert, indicating that the series is continuing to attract a new audience with each event.

Darlington Hippodrome felt the curtain raiser and introduction broke down barriers between audience/performers and created a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. There was evident pride in the achievement of the young people.

“

The curtain raiser with the young participants from the local academies was a wonderfully relaxed and uplifting way to start a concert. It was very generous of Craig to have done an introduction and to have rehearsed and performed with the students. The concert itself included a wonderful programme of music which we have received some wonderful feedback on. The volume of tickets sold shows how thrilled our audiences were to have the Hallé return to the Hippodrome. I'm looking forward to harnessing the success of this concert to attract this audience to our next concert in the series.

”

Heather Tarran-Jones, Darlington Hippodrome



It was great and a big influence for what I could achieve.



Participant

Improvements

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

Many participants said they would have liked more time to develop their devised work and practice what they had created. These projects by their nature are intensive and working with a larger ensemble such as the DSO added the challenge of working with greater numbers of young people. This underlines the importance of music leaders proactively planning throughout to ensure a good balance between creating and rehearsing time within the workshops available.

The need was highlighted for the workshop leadership team to ensure all teachers and young musicians present in sessions were fully and proactively engaged in the creative activity. There were times in both projects where the enthusiasm for working creatively with young people was not as evident as it might have been from the entire artistic team.

As well as creating music and performing it on stage, some participants should be encouraged to help introduce their piece to the audience, adding another layer of experience for the young people whilst enhancing the audiences understanding and enjoyment of the new piece. Where technically and financially possible, a short film about the creative process would add further to the audience's appreciation of the young people's achievements.

Projects could be further improved by ensuring there is time for the young musicians to meet the leader of the orchestra, soloist, and other players so they feel more connected with the orchestra and get greater insight into the lives of professional musicians.

Further information

More information about **Orchestras Live** and our projects can be found on our website:
www.orchestraslive.org.uk

London Mozart Players website: www.londonmozartplayers.com

The Hallé website: www.halle.co.uk

Darlington Hippodrome website: www.darlingtonhippodrome.co.uk

Durham Music Service website: www.durhammusic.org.uk

For more information about this project, please contact:

Becky West, Regional Producer – North
Orchestras Live
becky@orchestraslive.org.uk