MUSIC AND ABILITY
Evaluation Report

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

‘Ros Hawley is a sensitive and versatile musician who has developed specialist skills around the use of music in healthcare and disability settings.’

She has worked extensively as a lead artist and trainer for Jessie’s Fund, Live Music Now and the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM). As Music for Health Training Officer at the RNCM she played a significant role in the development of its innovative Music for Health Programme, training and mentoring both undergraduates and graduate musicians through accredited action learning placements in paediatric hospital, adult hospice and SEN settings. This has helped young musicians at the start of their careers to cultivate the skills required to play in healthcare settings, to engage and connect with patients and to deal with the unpredictable environment of a hospital, and in addition open up opportunities for students to consider new career possibilities involving music, health and disability. Ros’ training work focuses on using practical and simple musical ideas and exercises as starting points to develop group awareness, interaction and communication, generating and identifying the skills and awareness needed for interacting with people of different ages and cultural backgrounds in hospital settings. Ros is in now sharing her expertise with practitioners and researchers, making an invaluable contribution to the evaluation and dissemination of this work. Ros works with a team of musicians at LIME Music for Health in Manchester who were awarded the NHS in the North Excellence in Supply Patient Experience Award 2018; this work also forms the basis for her PhD studies at SOAS, London.

Ros’s European career in Music and Health began with an appointment in 2005 to lead a group of three UK musicians for the first Musique et Santé European Music in Hospitals Exchange funded by Culture 2000/Arts Council England. This provided a unique opportunity to work alongside the musicians of Musique et Santé (Paris), one of the leading organisations to develop music work in healthcare settings, and to participate in hospital residencies with musicians from France, Ireland and the UK. Since the Exchange, Ros has devised and delivered musical residencies in a variety of UK healthcare settings including the Gypsy Foces Unit at Wythenshawe Hospital, Wiglan and Leigh Hospice and Robin House Children’s Hospice in Scotland, and at Waterford Healing Arts Trust in Ireland. She has undertaken further training and development with Musique et Santé and has delivered training and participated in exchanges with the RNCM and Musique et Santé on several European programmes.

In 2016 her specialist music programme, Songbirds, at Royal Manchester Children’s Hospital, working alongside Mark Fisher, was highlighted as an example of good practice in ‘Listening to the Individual Child’ by the Council for Disabled Children and The National Children’s Bureau.

Alongside her career in Music and Health Ros is also known for her work as a klezmer musician and teacher. Described by The Guardian as ‘one of the UK’s leading klezmer clarinetists’, Ros was supported in 2008-11 by the Jewish Music Institute to further develop her studies in Jewish music by receiving support to undertake a master’s degree in performance, specialising in klezmer music, for which she was awarded distinction; this included researching the repertoire of the Moron tradition, a unique klezmer repertoire that incorporates Arabic and Eastern Mediterranean influences alongside traditional Jewish and Hasidic traditions. Her interest in the process of learning music of another culture through her Masters Degree research and subsequent study led to her involvement as co-founder and ensemble tutor for the University of Manchester Klezmer ensemble, named after the late Manchester violinist Michael Kahn.

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Introduction

This CBSO has a long history of providing creative music making activities for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and this report highlights the impact that our work has on the lives of the young people, their families, teachers and musicians involved in these activities.

Over the last five years the CBSO has been developing our approach to SEND provision, and were fortunate to receive funding to be able to undertake a period of pilot activity between 2013 and 2016 to test our ideas, develop the skills or our musicians, and increase the level of training and support for those musicians delivering activities. This pilot activity, with two schools, informed our programme from 2016, and thanks to the support of Youth Music we have not only been able to further hone our approach and expand the number of pupils benefitting from our work, but also increase the number of orchestral musicians involved in this activity; embed CPD and reflective practice across all aspects of our activity, and better demonstrate the impact of our work.

Our learning from this project will not only continue to inform our SEND offer for young people through our school programmes and our Relaxed Concerts, but this report will also contribute to the growing, and compelling, bank of evidence that demonstrates how engagement with live music has incredible benefits for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Lucy Galliard
CBSO Director of Learning and Engagement

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For some of the pupils in a group — their life doesn’t have these opportunities, it’s an ‘one-off’, it’s a really unique project... There’s something about the playing element — proper instruments, played by people who can play them — the quality of the sounds. If you’re expecting a child with PMLD to make a responsive gesture — because it is so hard, and takes effort and control, the rewards have to be great.”

PMLD Teacher

1. CONTEXT FOR THE PROJECT

UK Department of Education figures (Jan 2018) state that 2.9% of the pupil population (253,680 pupils) have a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan; a further 1,022,535 pupils are on SEN support. Children with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) are often seen as the hardest-to-reach members of this pupil population, with many facing challenges of health inequality, disability and socio-economic disadvantage (Marmot Review 2010); children experiencing health inequality may have also experienced periods of long-term hospitalisation, resulting in periods of isolation and reduced opportunities to develop their natural communicative musicality (Hawley 2018). Recent research identified that the needs of this population of children are changing, as they face more complex combinations of intellectual and physical disability (CLDD) of this population of children are changing, as they face more complex combinations of intellectual and physical disability (CLDD) and called for a rethink in teaching methods to meet the learning needs of these pupils more effectively (Carpenter et al, 2011). Cling engagement as the key connection between a pupil and their learning outcome, Carpenter outlines the process of engagement as a multi-dimensional experience, with seven engagement indicators — awareness, curiosity, investigation, discovery, anticipation, persistence and initiation — forming the basis of the Engagement Profile and Scale resource for schools (Revisiting Engagement, 2016).

Engaged musical experiences form the basis of the Sounds of Intent Framework (ISO) developed in 2002 under Professor Adam Ockelford, which seeks to investigate and promote the musical development of children and young people with learning difficulties. SOI supports a wide range of professionals in being able to contextualise reactions of pupils within a musical framework, and to build on these responses with all pupils, regardless of need or disability. Whilst the framework is not used by all special needs schools in the UK, its development has done much to raise awareness of best practice musical provision for children in special education schools today, and to highlight the musical abilities of learners in special needs education in the UK.

Existing studies of orchestral musicians participating in community-based education programmes in schools show that such experiences impact on states of professional and personal wellbeing, career perception and professional development. Abeles and Haffli (2014) reported that orchestral musicians working on a school’s programme in the US had opportunities to express creativity, develop meaningful relationships with schools and pupils, become aware of the potential impact on individual students’ lives, and to serve the community. They also stated that ‘Orchestra musicians’ perspectives of their career paths appear to be enhanced by providing opportunities for them to work closely with students, particularly in under-resourced schools in their communities’. In the UK, these findings are echoed in recent research commissioned by London Music Masters where musicians working in primary school settings reported on the development of professional and interpersonal skills, and musical, cognitive and teaching skills. Ascero (2015) argues that community engagement offers orchestral musicians’ unique opportunities to develop these skills, and that such participation impacts on a musician’s sense of identity, in making meaningful creative contributions and on feelings of wellbeing.

The majority of opportunities for special schools to engage with orchestral musicians in the UK are currently presented in concert format, either as relaxed/inclusive performances in arts venues or as schools performances, providing much valued – and much needed – opportunities for special school communities to engage with international orchestral artists (Sound Around 2016-18). Programmes that enable specifically PMLD and CLDD pupil populations in the UK to develop impactful, longer-term relationships with orchestras and orchestral musicians are limited and not widely documented. These programmes however can offer mutually beneficial learning and artistic experiences: the CBSO’s Music & Ability Project has aimed to act as a catalyst in developing new musically, mutually-creative, educational opportunities for pupils, schools and orchestral musicians. Identifying a programme that is of benefit to special schools who serve children with the most complex needs within their populations and producing a valuable specialised learning legacy to be shared within the orchestral sector.

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The CBSO’s Music & Ability Project partnered with three Special Educational Needs schools within Birmingham, Solihull and Worcestershire over a five-term period between 2017-2018, funded by Youth Music, with the support of an additional thirteen funders, the project aimed to develop positive relationships with these schools in supporting the musical development of their PMLD (profound and multiple learning difficulties) pupils, whilst simultaneously increasing the workforce and delivery skills of CBSO musicians in working with children and young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities in special educational needs school settings.

The project was developed in response to an initial phase of project work delivered between 2014 and 2017 with two of the schools who held existing longstanding relationships with the CBSO. Initial aims at this stage were to:

• Evaluate the potential for further developing a model of practice between CBSO musicians and schools which increased pupils’ access to high-quality live music experiences.
• Developing opportunities for CBSO musicians already working in the schools to gain further skills competency in this field as part of structured, ongoing professional development.

For additional CBSO musicians, new to this area of work, to be able to gain practical experience through supported learning and development pathways, working alongside their more experienced peers in the schools.

From the findings of this initial phase, the Music & Ability Project was formed to enable three teams (three to four musicians per team) of CBSO musicians to work over a period of five terms in three schools (one team per school). Each school would suggest a class group to work with the musicians for the duration of the project (five terms); in addition, each term the players would work with a second class for one term only, again suggested by the school. This structure would mean that CBSO musicians would have the opportunity to experience working with a wide range of class groups and teachers, whilst also developing their skills, knowledge and understanding of a specific class group over a significant length of time. Where possible, music co-ordinators and music specialists would be consulted in the planning of class involvement, and in supporting musicians when on site in the schools from week to week, as well as during initial musician/class familiarisation sessions at the start of each term.

Five outcomes were set for the project:

• To increase the musical understanding and musical decision-making of children and young people with PMLD through live performance.
• To enable children and young people with PMLD to develop their skills to become confident musical communicators.
• To enable children and young people with PMLD to develop transferable social and communicative skills for life through high-quality live music-making experiences.
• To develop orchestral musicians’ ability to deliver sustained, creative music-making activities for PMLD pupils.
• To increase the skills and confidence of school staff to empower them to embed quality musical provision within the ongoing education and development of pupils.

3. PROJECT STRUCTURE

Planning and Preparation

At the start of the project initial training was scheduled for the musicians as an introduction to working creatively in the classroom, and with non-verbal groups. The training explored a range of starting points for developing techniques in using music with PMLD pupils. Musician teams were built for the project so that new or less experienced musicians worked alongside more experienced colleagues. At the start of each term these groups of musicians attended an introductory familiarisation session with class groups to gain understanding of the school environment, observe class lessons and to meet pupils and staff. In some cases, groups arranged to work towards a set theme with the musicians, to support curriculum learning: in others these evolved as the sessions developed over time. Planning time was factored in for musicians outside of the delivery of sessions.

Delivery

Each school received eight 2-hour sessions per term, allowing for 24-minute delivery sessions to take place each visit, one with the long-term project class (five terms) and one with the one-term project class, where the aim was to change classes every term. A 15-minute group reflection session was embedded at the end of each 45-minute delivery session to enable pupils, staff and musicians to reflect on the session, and plan for the following week. Longer-term reflection meetings were scheduled for the middle and end of each term; end-of-term project sharings were scheduled as part of the eight-session structure, which were either open to the whole school or a section of the school (lower, upper), or to parents and family of the specific classes who had participated that term. At the end of the summer term these were extended to a day’s activity which included the project sharing and an afternoon concert delivered by an enhanced seven-piece ensemble, including additional members of the orchestra.

Training

Further training needs were identified as the project progressed, and in response to musician reports, these included focused sessions on communication (intensive interaction), music and early years, Makaton and signing and singing. In addition, each school received a staff CPD music session to support wider staff development within each school. Musicians had opportunities to request additional support or resources from the CBSO’s Learning & Participation (L&P) team, evaluator and staff at the schools if needed.

4. EVALUATION

Outcomes were assessed using a range of complementary methods. The evaluator held interviews with each musician at the start of the project which were used to provide a baseline assessment of confidence levels and skills development; offer emotional and practical support; and to identify areas for additional training needs. Sessional templates devised by the external evaluator, in consultation with the musicians, recorded pupils’ involvement and development during sessions, and acted as a focus for the musicians to develop their reflective, planning and creative processes from week to week.
Facilitated mid- and end-of-term reflection sessions (led by the external evaluator) provided a framework for musicians to increase their own personal reflection on practice and were an opportunity to gauge confidence levels in delivering sessions and increases in knowledge and understanding of the setting. These sessions became markers in showing the musicians’ development in using an increased breadth of techniques, in abilities to be adaptable in approach within the school environment; and as a means of identifying emerging training or support needs. Staff involvement in the reflection sessions also supported the development of the musicians’ knowledge and understanding of the SEND school environment and gave opportunities for shared discussion and learning to take place, assisting with problem-solving, addressing questions or concerns in an open and protected space, and providing opportunities for focused collaborative discussion regarding ways to support specific pupils with more challenging, or more complex social, learning or emotional needs. Group musician reflection sessions, held at CBSO Centre, enabled musicians to share their experiences to the wider team, feedback to the CBSO’s LAP team and evaluator, and learn from each other. Interim and end-of-term reports were compiled by the evaluator to monitor the progress of the project.

Baseline questionnaires were set for pupils and staff at the start of each term. Staff feedback – verbal, picture or video capturing – was key to monitoring the progress made by pupils. Observations made by staff also fed into existing monitoring methods used by each school, including Sounds of Intent, Asdan, and Solar frameworks, and in some instances, video was used in individual pupils’ annual reviews to show parents and wider professionals how their son/daughter had engaged with the sessions and the musicians. Where possible, weekly sessions included time for musicians to lead a reflective discussion with the class group and staff, so that observations could be shared, and pupils could contribute to the discussion. This time was very important to allow pupils’ achievements during sessions to be acknowledged.

Feedback from family members was encouraged and interviews were undertaken by the evaluator with family members at end-of-term sharing events in the schools in the second year of the project. As part of school CPD sessions in Year 2, staff were invited to present case study examples from sessions to their colleagues to share learning on music practice across non-music specialist staff teams.

Teachers gave feedback to the evaluator during the project as to how their confidence had developed, relationships developed with staff so that, where possible, the visiting musicians supported teachers to carry out their own sessions beyond CBSO activities.

**THE RESIDENCIES**

**Chadsgrove School, Bromsgrove:**
- **Age range:** 2–19
- **Student count:** 138
- **Gender:** Mixed
- **Admission policy:** Non-selective
- **School type:** Community Special School
- **Local authority:** Worcestershire

**Project Participants:**
- **52 pupils and 30 staff**
- (music and non-music specialist teachers and support staff)

**School Information**

**Reynolds Cross School, Solihull:**
- **Age range:** 2–19
- **Student count:** 98
- **Gender:** Mixed
- **Admission policy:** Non-selective
- **School type:** Community Special School
- **Local authority:** Solihull

**Project Participants:**
- **35 pupils and 15 staff**
- (non-music specialist teachers and support staff)

**Victoria Specialist School and Arts College:**
- **Age range:** 2–19
- **Student count:** 234
- **Gender:** Mixed
- **Admission policy:** Non-selective
- **School type:** Community Special School
- **Local authority:** Birmingham

**Project Participants:**
- **36 students and 12 staff**
- (non-music specialist teachers and support staff)

They come to school and go home. It’s very rare for them to meet anyone outside of school and home… their experience is very limited. A project like this can add a huge amount to a pupil’s life experience.’

**Teacher**

1. **BEGINNINGS**

**Musicians**

Nine musicians took part in the project. This team was made up of seven permanent members of the CBSO, an Associate Artist with the CBSO, and a freelance musician who works regularly with the orchestra as both a performer and workshop leader. The musicians’ experience of working in special schools was varied and ranged from one with several years’ experience working in two of the schools involved in the project to musicians who had never worked in a special school setting before. Two of the team had experience outside of the CBSO in working in school settings – one of these players had had extensive freelance experience of working in school, including special school settings.

Historically, work delivered by the orchestra in special schools had been delivered by a small number of musicians and followed a more traditional orchestral model of animateur-led practice – in the case of the CBSO this had been driven by drama specialisms as opposed to music. One of the aims of the project was to develop a stronger musical focus to sessions in special schools and to increase the number of CBSO players with interest, confidence and appropriate skills to work in special school settings.

Providing opportunities for learning pathways for the players was an important aspect of the project. It became clear early on that to best support each musician in their role within the project, the professional career journey of each musician needed to be acknowledged as an individual learning journey, and any CPD needed to be tailored to meet individual levels of interest in developing skills in the field, capacity to be involved in the project, and confidence to work in the special school setting.

‘This project is really special. It’s a real privilege having a project like this and having the honour of going in every week and working with the same children.’

‘It’s one of the best things I’ve ever done.’

**Musician**

**Schools**

Similarly, for the three schools, relationships with the CBSO ranged from schools familiar with the existing historic residency model of delivery, which had been provided intermittently for several years, to a new school with no previous association with the orchestra. The project worked across three schools in three different local authority areas. Each school presented its own community and culture, informed by its geographical location, pupil demographics and local authority management. Models of music co-ordinator/specialist music support varied between the schools as did the way in which the role of these specialists was integrated within the school’s wider educational infrastructure.

Frameworks used for mapping pupils’ musical progression were also varied. Two of the schools used the Sounds of Intent Framework (SoI), either led by music specialist staff with other staff using it under the specialist’s direction, or staff not using SoI themselves as they did not teach music. Due to the age of more senior pupils in one setting, teachers focused on mapping the social, communication and interactive development of the young people participating as opposed to their musical skills progression in isolation, using models such as Solar and Asdan to support this.

All schools, however, were keen to participate in the project and saw the benefits of musical activity for their pupils, and how the project could benefit their non-music specialist teaching staff.

‘Lovely to see her light up and engage with it… her physical limitations – she puts a huge amount to a pupil’s life experience.’

**Parent**

**Pupils**

Whilst the project had been focused on working with PMLD pupils in each school, these populations varied significantly between schools in terms of age range, levels of physical disability, levels of medical need and cognitive ability. Due to the structure of the project, the wider school community outside of PMLD classes were also able to engage with sessions as part of the ‘one term class’ strand – in some instances the class groups participating here featured pupils with much higher ability levels. Overall, pupils were drawn from a diverse range of cultures and communities that reflected both the inner city and more rural/suburban communities of the geographical areas where the schools were situated. Pupils’ exposure to orchestral music and performances varied from some, to very little, or no previous exposure to orchestral music.
2. DEVELOPING AN APPROACH TO PRACTICE

The project relied on all three of the above groups developing trust and understanding of each other. Musicians had to adapt to new ways of delivering sessions if they had worked with the previous model of delivery, or if new to the work, learn to understand the special school environment from scratch. None of the musicians had worked over a five-term period with one class group, so all were stretched in terms of their approach to delivering sustained activities over such a length of time, and to delivery activity with the aim to enable pupils’ development at the appropriate levels. All musicians had to develop an understanding of the learning needs and the communication methods of each pupil they met during the project. Teachers, support staff and musicians learned to understand each other’s specialisms more deeply over time and with that they gained the confidence to ask when they needed help to develop and progress the sessions, working together to achieve their aims. Pupils had to get to know the musicians and their instruments; learn to understand the expectations of the session; and needed time to feel confident and comfortable with their exposure to the sessions, being in a group, and in communicating, their feelings, preferences and ideas to others.

‘Pupils are reaching out, exploring and touching the instruments, feeling the vibrations... more confident.’
Teacher

Teaching and support staff had to embrace the sessions and develop confidence in their own musical skills. They had to be able to observe the responses of pupils during sessions, express and advocate for the pupils’ needs, and be able to guide and support the musicians in delivering activities that responded to these. Pupils had to gain an understanding of the experience presented to them, build confidence to participate and to take part with and in front of their peers. To achieve this confidence, pupils had to work on their abilities to lead, instruct, make choices, and to try new activities with new people. They had to feel confident that their communication was being acknowledged, reinforced and listened to by the musicians.

4. SLT/CROSS DISCIPLINE CONTRIBUTIONS TO REFLECTION MEETINGS

Reflection meetings were embedded into the project delivery at mid and end points of each term’s activity (each term usually concluded with a sharing session where other classes were invited to come and watch). The meetings happened at lunchtime and needed to fit around staff and musicians’ availability. Generally, both teachers involved in activity that term would attend the meeting along with the musicians working that day and where possible they were joined by the music co-ordinator/specialist at the school. At times a class TA would attend instead of the class teacher or would be invited to attend if they had taken a strong role in supporting the session in the absence of the teacher. The sessions were facilitated by the evaluator, who raised any questions or queries from musicians to enable them to be discussed with staff and the music specialist. Teaching staff were invited to give feedback on the sessions and experiences of the pupils and contribute their own observations for the sessions which became starting points for discussion. The reflection meetings gave teachers the opportunity to learn about each other’s sessions, share learning, pick up tips for their own groups and offer their own guidance to colleagues and musicians in moments of problem-solving. This was particularly useful in discussions around the needs of specific pupils and how best to utilise staff support in sessions. At times, teachers already had experience of working with pupils from other classes but at a different stage of their educational development, and could share their expertise with staff currently working with that individual. The meetings brought a wider focus to the individual teacher’s experience, and they quickly became a ground for a shared learning time between all specialists involved in the project. In Year 2, the evaluator suggested that a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) attend each meeting, to further raise awareness of the sessions with senior staff, to give these staff the opportunity to learn about the project in more detail and offer their expertise to the reflection discussions. Meetings were also attended by a school governor in one school, and a key teacher specialising in communication at another, who also delivered a training session on intensive interaction to the wider musician team in Year 2.

5. INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND FAMILIES

As the project developed, the involvement of families became more significant. Discussions at reflection meetings played a part in this, where collectively, a pupil’s achievements were discussed and celebrated, and where the whole class benefits of the sessions were explored - it became apparent that there was potential to further develop opportunities for parents and families to be involved in experiencing this. In one school a parent emailed the head teacher after visiting an end-of-term sharing session, to comment on his child’s involvement. This prompted discussions with schools to try and capture further comments from family members – a parent/family questionnaire was piloted at the end of the project, and sessions were trialled in the schools in addition to larger school sharing events where family members were invited to attend. In these sessions parents, carers and guardians were able to experience the project for themselves and observe their child’s participation or take part alongside their child in activities. Family members were also invited to contribute to the group reflection at the end of the session. Attending these reflection sessions enabled the family’s perspective of their child’s involvement in the project to be heard, and in some cases opened doors to encourage family members into the school building, enabling the school to build stronger relationships with that family. In one instance, family members were able to give information about changes in the behaviour of their child at home whilst participating in the project. The child had become less reliant on their iPad and had begun to explore their own voice more, exploring and extending the range of pitch and level of volume that they had not witnessed before.

6. CHALLENGES

Collecting consent forms from some of the schools has proved challenging, as many of the children were from families where English is not the first language spoken at home. In one school where this was particularly difficult at the outset, gained advice about the style of the forms and found that at the current time there was nothing else that could be done – the school struggled with this issue anyway, and it was exacerbated currently by the fact that specialist support staff who later with non-English-speaking families are currently overstretched due to cuts in services and a reduction in available hours to support those needing assistance. Musicians initially reported struggling to complete the weekly sessional reflection forms, and had expressed concern that this would be so pushed they were not sure how this would work; however with refining, and additional support on the best way to approach these forms (given by both the evaluator and the CSBO’s L&P staff), this ceased to be as much of a problem, although time was often tight. Feedback has demonstrated that this element of the session has been helpful in providing a structure to enable discussions with staff and pupils (where appropriate) about what has worked well in the sessions and how to develop ideas and pupil abilities for future sessions.

There was on occasions been a clear difference between the feedback gained through verbal and written reflection. For example, a rich discussion may take place organically between the musician team after a session highlighting how skills in working together, observation and understanding have developed, but when coming to fill in the form, musicians would find it hard to see or express this (‘Nothing changed really, did it?’).

Throughout the project musicians became aware of the often very isolated life situations of many of the pupils, and in some instances of pupils’ life-limiting health conditions. Sadly, there were instances where pupils passed away or were hospitalised with serious illnesses during the project. The complexities of this kind of situation can cause concern to never less experienced players and more experienced players alike. Having the CSBO’s Director of Learning & Engagement and external expertise on hand helped the players to navigate their way through these emotional challenges as they presented themselves, and to find a collective way forward making sure all contrasting opinions could be discussed and appropriate advice sought from the class teacher.

Orchestral schedules can impact on musicians’ ability and capacity to participate in regular project sessions. At times, due to availability and scheduling needs, sessions were fitted into days already containing a rehearsal and evening concert, which meant long days and feelings of ‘split focus’.

There were instances where pupils’ behaviour became challenging or distressing to witness. Having a clear idea of pupil groups across all three schools at any one time presented a challenge for the organisation having schools on board from the initial training session and delivering sessions to musicians on specific SEN safeguarding issues and behaviour management has been discussed for future project work.
THE MUSICIANS’ JOURNEY

‘Having the opportunity to observe was really important for me — learning how to communicate and realising how old the pupils are — a big learning curve.’

Musicians

(i) Aims
From the start the project was viewed as a learning opportunity both for the orchestral musician team and the CBSO’s L&P programme, and to develop a new model of orchestral practice with special schools in the region.

(ii) Hopes and Concerns
In project baseline questionnaires the musicians voiced aspirations to develop skills related to effective communication with pupils, staff and colleagues. When asked what skills they were hoping to develop during the project, the musicians identified the following:

• To be more confident with relationships with staff and confidence to guide and communicate effectively with them.
• To be confident working with and finding ways to be able to communicate with the children.
• Pitching activities and communication at an appropriate level.
• Being able to engage pupils with SEND effectively… and help them develop musically.
• Skills in singing and signing.
• Leadership skills.

When asked to comment on any initial concerns, achieving good communication and the approach to pitched activities were mentioned, alongside concerns around perceptions of their own performance standard. Players expressed worries such as: ‘Will I be good enough’, ‘Will I be able to offer enough’ and some concerns in living up to school staff’s expectation of what the musicians could do a good enough job! With limited experience I worry too that the teachers will have higher expectations than I can deliver!

• ‘My initial concerns are running out of ideas and not being able to engage the pupils properly.’
• ‘Getting the level right.’
• ‘How will I react if a child has a fit or is violent?’
• ‘Forming a strong team with other musicians on the project.’

(iii) Skills and Abilities
Musicians were also asked several questions relating to their confidence levels in delivering group and 1:1 activity, and in using classroom percussion. Responses given to questions were generally between 3-4 out of 5, (0 being no confidence, 5 extremely confident) with the highest responses being consistently placed at 4 and the lowest responses 2 and on one occasion 0 (using tuned instruments).

Using tuned percussion, creative composition, using their voices and engaging with staff were areas where musicians felt less confident. Responses ranged from players reporting a consistent confidence across all areas of skill, to players who felt they had clear strengths in some areas and weaknesses in others. Questions around being able to engage in 1:1 and ‘conducted’ music-making with pupils (flowing gesture) were generally viewed as being a more comfortable area of activity. Confidence in delivering classroom composition and creative ‘soundscape’ activities was mixed across the team.

Musicians experienced an initial training session focusing on practical skills and introductory training on Sounds of Intent prior to starting delivery. Some of the feedback given at this stage indicated the newness of the context for the musicians, and that it was hard to understand exactly how these ideas and techniques would be applied in settings. This highlighted the learning time needed by new musicians to gain a comfortable understanding of the special school environment in preparation for working with pupils and staff. Later in the project musicians received training from school staff in intensive interaction and Makaton sign language. Early years training was also delivered to support musicians working with the youngest class group involved in the project.

(iv) Musician development
Ongoing and careful support of each individual musician’s development has been important throughout the project. It became clear early on that having specific definitions of role/responsibility helped the players in knowing how to fit within a team dynamic, particularly at the beginning of the project when teams were new to working together. Feedback from the musicians helped to inform this model, and changes were made in some instances as the project developed to support musicians who were not attending every session but wanted to be able to contribute to the direction taken in the sessions. Individual musicians’ confidence levels grew during the project, meaning that musicians who had initially taken a supportive role gained confidence to lead activities and initiate ideas within the sessions. These musicians reported at the end of the project that they now feel confident to lead sessions in the future.

A consistent approach to feedback and regular reviewing of players’ training needs, concerns, progress and emotional wellbeing has been essential. Plenaries at the end of weekly sessions have enabled players to talk, reflect and plan together, and share out the role of leadership/facilitation when collecting feedback from staff and pupils on how the session went that week. Musicians commented that the reflection session forms, designed to help develop musicians’ skills in observational of musical, personal and social development in pupils from session to session, provided an essential focus for these discussions, helping to pinpoint specific elements of practice for them to examine as a team.

(v) Peer learning
‘Each school is so different. It’s helpful to see, I will get thinking now for next week’s session!’

Musician

(vi) Knowledge & understanding of SEND school environments
‘The style of teacher massively affects whatever we do. [The teacher] tells us about the pupils, her observation of each pupil really helps, for example X hits his tray because he can’t vocalise.’

Musicians

The opportunity to visit the other schools (an element introduced into the project at the request of the musician) enabled musicians to develop awareness, relatively quickly, of the diversity of SEND school populations – and within this the range of disability encompassed within a PMLD statement of educational needs. To the musicians, each school had its own ‘character’ and style of approach to working with their individual pupil population. Developing this understanding broadened musicians’ learning and developed their abilities to work effectively with professional colleagues. Support from teachers within the schools in areas of communication and PMLD was important in helping the musicians to deliver appropriately-paced musical activities from week to week, and in developing confidence to nurture relationships with staff who had varying levels of confidence in using music.

(vii) Communicating with Pupils: Developing a Repertoire of Musical Activities
‘Really pleased we have found things that work, like the scrunchy, [as] it was our idea. With the small [younger] class this really helped; they found it hard to hold instruments and were dropping or throwing them or putting in their mouths and the staff were not keen on this. [We wanted to give the opportunity for the pupils to be able to explore instruments], so tying instruments onto [the scrunchy] has helped.’

Musicians
Musicians developed a range of strategies when delivering activities with groups. These have included using simple verbal communication, Makaton sign language, cue cards with written lyrics for songs that can be carried with them and designing lead/support roles in leading improvisation. Part of the musicians’ learning journey has been finding ways to work together, and in developing team cohesion. The project’s structure provided opportunities for musicians to work with class groups for a longer period. Whilst this initially caused some concerns, it enabled the musicians to gain a deeper understanding of pupil responses and confidence in delivering regular activities for these groups. At times it has also challenged the players, as they have sought to find a balance between moving activities forward and providing a consistent learning experience for pupils.

A challenge across all the musician teams has been finding a balance in sessions between 1:1 focused activity, and group activities. This has been compounded by the complexity of needs of the pupils, and in the musicians building rapport with pupils, meaning that scope to further develop musical interaction, beyond the initial sessions, increased. Teacher support in managing this balance helped the musicians, particularly where there were concerns that they were not able to give each pupil individual attention all the time. The learning gained from here has also filtered into activity delivery in the one-term classes.

Musicians began to create new activities that enabled opportunities for individualised communication and participation which allowed pupils to perform in front of their peers. A key example was development of pupil-led ‘duets’, where a pupil conductor and musician of their choice perform an improvised duet. The musician would follow the gesturing, eye contact, or instrumental playing of the pupil, and their duet would be revisited each week. Over time the musicians gained confidence to refine the levels of activity, sound, instrumentation, and density in musical improvisations and the communication between musician and pupil became more sophisticated, so that the experience offered more clarity in terms of musical content and quality of listening.

Use of classroom percussion became more considered and intentional with specific sounds and instruments used for specific activities. For example, timpani drum heads were used in small group sound making activities. Musicians’ use of their own instruments became more specific, and focused over time, with careful thought and attention paid to particular sounds, pitches or effects that an individual pupil might respond to.

Musicians began to see the scope of development in using existing ideas, particularly with pupil-centred activities such as conducting and expressing musical preferences, where they began to explore what they offered to pupils with more creative depth and structure. An example of this development was in being able to develop a musical vocabulary of consistent motifs, utilising contrasts in pitch, timbre and dynamics when being conducted by a pupil and becoming confident in using these to create musical dialogues over time, noting changes in pupil awareness and preference.

Similarly, musicians began to understand how to differentiate activities within a class group to meet the specific abilities of individuals within group sessions. For example, in a post-16 class, the lead musician used lyrics in a pizza making song that enabled pupils who could use language to increase their vocabulary, whilst ensuring that all pupils could participate either by using voices to pitch parts of the melody, or perceiving to become aware of the pulse.

The musicians showed great enthusiasm in developing activities for their pupils. This was driven largely by their desire to get to know the pupils and to understand their learning needs and musical preferences. Not all teachers involved considered themselves to be ‘musical’ and this led to a range of ideas being developed with groups that link to teacher specialisms in areas such as ICT, literacy and communication. This aspect of the project proved so significant that, in response to feedback from teachers, session templates and activities will be collated into a teacher resource to be shared across schools.

The main challenges for musicians were in knowing how to develop activities over longer periods of time and in managing their own feelings of needing to ‘move forward’ with new ideas when in some cases what was required is a deeper exploration of existing activities.

 Musician feedback

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Musicians’ reflections, Term 1

As sessions progressed, all musicians gained confidence in working in the school settings. Knowledge and understanding of the pupils, particularly those with PMLD, developed alongside confidence in being able to interact socially and musically with pupils and staff. At the end of Term 2 it became apparent that musicians were generally less afraid to take more time over activities. They were able to reduce down the complexities of the sound worlds they created, and were confident to use silence as a musical element within the session in order to allow valuable processing time for pupils and create spaces for pupils to initiate requests for ‘more’ or ‘again’, for example, in reaching out to touch an instrument, vocalising, or pressing a switch. In achieving this, musicians’ abilities to read the often tiny signals of communication volunteered by a pupil with profound needs increased; confidence to read a situation and be more responsive had grown, and this made the pupils more aware that they were being listened to.

‘There was a session last week that I took, and I actually didn’t follow the session plan. It felt that we needed to do something different...following the mood of the group and I wanted to introduce them to the violin/viola. We then developed a high/low conducting game and the pupils really got it.’

Musician feedback

There were other comments relating to the music to be created, learning new skills in delivering music and in being able to watch pupil responses to specific musical elements, for example to experience the contrast of fast and slow music. Staff comments included:

- ‘Seeing the children develop their awareness, curiosity, participation, anticipation of the activities’.
- ‘Inclusion of all pupils’.
- ‘Pupil’s responses to live music and experiences of instruments not available in school. Learning more about using music’.
- ‘Looking at pupils’ responses and incorporating this into my lessons’.
- ‘Learning how to deliver music sessions’.

Concerns expressed related to staff feeling that they may lack musical ability, their pupils damaging or mouthing instruments, and in being able to transfer learning into other sessions. These included:

- ‘Not knowing how to play an instrument’.
- ‘That my own lack of music skills will impact on the sessions’.
- ‘Using these ideas and making it as good’.
- ‘Keeping rhythmic timing’.
- ‘Damage to instruments’.

The STAFF JOURNEY

6) Findings

Initial staff (teaching and support) baseline questionnaires identified (using a 0-5 scale) that although staff reported generally feeling confident in ‘using music’ in school, both teaching and support staff across all schools identified singing as an area where they felt less confident. However, whilst still being the area of least confidence in every school, this level of confidence had increased by Term 2.

Staff reported feeling more confident with using tuned and untuned percussion, although there were varying degrees of confidence identified, with some support staff expressing more confidence in these areas than teaching staff. On average confidence levels were reported at between 3 and 4 across the schools, with a slight increase in confidence being reported in every school for using untuned and tuned percussion in Term 2.

While there was a consensus that music making could improve pupil confidence and develop communication skills (with most staff reporting ‘agree’ and some ‘strongly agree’ when asked about this), two staff disagreed that music making would help pupil decision making.

6) Hopes and Concerns

When asked what staff were looking forward to in the project, most of the feedback from teaching and support staff identified that the project would provide an opportunity to observe pupil responses and be able to see how pupils progressed in sessions over time. There were other comments relating to the music to be created, learning new skills in delivering music and in being able to watch pupil responses to specific musical elements, for example to experience the contrast of fast and slow music. Staff comments included:

- ‘Seeing the children develop their awareness, curiosity, participation, anticipation of the activities’.
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Feedback from Teaching Staff

Staff input into the project has been a crucial element of its success. Regular reflection meetings with staff and musicians have enabled teaching staff to shape the structure of sessions and provided a space for ongoing learning opportunities for the musicians. Suggestions have been made by staff as to how to develop work with pupils or in structuring the pacing of group activities; this was particularly beneficial when musicians may have needed advice with how to move activities forward. Feedback from teachers has also provided significant insights into the overall pupil learning experience, incorporating observations on pupil progress, feedback on social and emotional development, impact outside the classroom session, effects on home life and observations of family members. In turn the project has highlighted the musical abilities of pupils, and the importance of music making opportunities for pupils who have complex communication needs.

The depth of discussion between teaching staff and musicians developed significantly over the course of the project, with the reflection sessions giving the school valuable protected time for staff to focus on the impact of the project on pupils and share in discussion with the musicians and music specialists where possible.

7) Staff skills development

Initially staff identified progress in many pupils, either socially or musically, with observations on pupils’ musical participation emerging more slowly than the social and communication benefits. Over time feedback from staff on pupils’ responses began to be more musically focused and more confidently expressed. Teaching staff reported that they were using ideas and resources in other
sessions with success, and some staff who had been involved in the one term residencies continued to deliver a music session using activities from the workshop with their class after their CBSO activities had finished. Musicians gained confidence to strengthen relationships with support staff during sessions to encourage observational feedback of pupils’ responses and develop techniques for co-active and pupil led music making with them, and to raise awareness of providing good quality listening environments. In addition, twilight sessions were held in all schools to support staff skills development. These helped to raise awareness of the project across the wider school community, beyond those staff involved in the weekly sessions.

In some instances, staff confidence levels in using music increased significantly. One teacher, skilled in communication and highly dedicated to developing the communication skills of her post 16 class, developed a new assessment sheet for music for her class team so that she could begin to incorporate music making into her communication work.

Other teachers who had not been confident to deliver music sessions went on to do so. Another teacher used her work with switches to incorporate ideas from the CBSO sessions and used these in other curriculum sessions. This teacher, who at the start of the project identified as being not musically confident, went on to deliver a school assembly where she showed other classes and staff the activities that had been developed with her class during the CBSO project.

Staff asked musicians to provide resources for them to use such as recordings of music performed, hello and goodbye songs and listening lots of orchestral repertoire to enable ongoing and increased musical engagement between the CBSO visits.

Staff have volunteered several case studies, committing time outside of the sessions to reflect on pupils’ development. A teacher with specialist skills in working with PMLD children offered to write an article on the project for a specialist PMLD magazine and collected a case study video of one pupil over several weeks, focusing on the skills this pupil developed due to the consistency of the session and its activities. She noted increases in his ability to reach and stretch out, increased motivation to touch instruments and increased vocalisation became evident within the sessions, with staff commenting on this as a development of an individual’s self-expression.

Staff have expressed interest in future skills sharing sessions with colleagues across the 3 schools and in developing further INSET training and support for PMLD music making.

THE PUPILS’ JOURNEY

‘My children don’t get choices – they get given stuff. B has his choice with the cello, and L and M are given choices because of the session. It’s about the sound. M responds to speed. B to low vibration. It’s interactive – my kids don’t usually get to do this, but I think they are [being interactive] in this session.’

Teacher

Classes were asked to provide baseline information for each pupil at the start of their project. It was intended that this would provide a focus for staff in preparing for the project and support musicians in getting to know the pupils, particularly to assist their understanding of their communication needs and ability levels of participants. The questionnaires also gave insights into the pupils’ existing relationship with music. Staff were asked to comment on:

- Listening skills and awareness of sound.
- Ability to demonstrate a preference in a musical experience, i.e. having a favourite song.
- Ability to make a choice.
- Ways of communicating expression.
- Ability to take the lead or initiate.
- Comfort with working in a group situation.

Staff were asked to give information on pupils’ use of signs/symbols, vocalisation, gesture and language. Lastly, they were asked to comment on pupils’ abilities to recognise and recollect each week at the end of the session the groups aimed to have a short reflective discussion to recap on what had taken place and highlight pupils’ contributions. Where possible the pupils were part of this activity and time was taken to acknowledge each pupil’s contribution to the session. This information was briefly noted on feedback forms designed to help musicians plan for the next session. Teachers, support staff and musicians shared in this discussion. Musicians then had time after the session to continue their reflection and make any additional notes on the forms.

The sessional feedback form was adapted as the project developed. It aimed to help the musicians to differentiate more clearly between observations relating to the class group dynamic and pupils’ specific musical responses, and gave space to acknowledge pupils’ social development, confidence and engagement:

- Group: ‘Very quiet & focused today as if they knew what was coming. All sitting in circle ready for us to arrive (every week).’
- Group: ‘It was too hot, and the children were quite unsettled.’
- Group: ‘Very alert today and up for the session.’
- Individual: ‘K is producing musical motifs (vocally) and expecting they will stimulate a coherent response (SO1.4a). C was copying fast/slow, quiet/loud on the drum. T also copied dynamics and played the jiggly rhythm on the cello.’
- Individual: ‘D was aware of tempo and dynamic. H was expressing a preference to play his mini cymbals rather than just listening to the music. I took ownership of his whistle and understood the 3 blows in time to our percussion rhythm.’
- Individual: ‘2 happy to play shell shaker. M feeling vibrations on happy drum & trying beater.’

Teachers’ observations noted from reflection meetings provided additional information for the musicians, again relating to group, social and musical responses. These were also important in building musicians’ understanding of the pupils’ experience:

- ‘For my kids to remember they have met you before, that they remember you, it’s a huge thing for our children (a PMLD group with very complex healthcare needs).’
- ‘Older students, they’ve done it all before, so the challenge to engage them, as teachers, is harder... to see what they can do is huge.’
- ‘To hear D and see him sing independently is a HUGE thing. We all know D and see him – Brilliant!’
- B: ‘the cello – he is motivated by this.’
- M: ‘tracking the musician next to her, turning, looking up at each other – all for a child of her disability, so it’s tiring (meaning the effort and motivation for her to do this is strong).’
- L: ‘eyes open all morning – that never happens – a huge physical effort.’
- Some challenges: D (pupil) – a challenge for the musicians – often eyes are closed, blocking out the activities and opportunities for engagement – ‘he’s listening though, she feels it’s hard for players to know this at times.’

Teachers were also able to give the musicians insights into how the sessions linked with wider aims within the school:

- ‘You don’t see progress, in the same way, it’s things like this that you can build on for a creative curriculum, and you can link it to communication.’

EVIDENCING THE YOUTH MUSIC OUTCOMES

Three of the five outcomes for the project centred on pupils’ development. Indicators were set to measure the success of each outcome. Below is a summary of the findings for each outcome.

Outcome 1

- To increase the musical understanding and musical decision making of children and young people with PMLD through live performance.

Indicators for Outcome 1

- Children demonstrate a preference for specific instruments or musical styles.
- Children anticipate specific musical activities or moments within the structure of the session.
- Children have improved listening skills and develop increased awareness of sound and silence.

Findings:

The musicians learned to use performance to provide structured opportunities for listening, offering both ensemble and solo performances as part of each session. These helped pupils to understand concepts of sound and silence and to anticipate when the music would start again. Over time pupils were exposed to contrasts within these listening performances such as fast and slow and loud and quiet. Staff and musicians observed how pupils ‘joined in’ to the contrasts, with some pupils demonstrating preferences through expressive communication for one of the two elements offered. The musicians developed spaces in the sessions for pupils to experience different musical qualities of their instruments. Pupils were observed maintaining concentration for longer periods of time or reaching out for instruments they wanted to hear and explore, documented by staff feedback and film. In some instances, a pupil’s increased vocalisation became evident within the sessions, with staff commenting on this as a development of an individual’s self-expression.

The use of live instruments supported the pupil’s development of listening skills, giving a rich multi-sensory listening experience within the classroom. Time was needed for pupils to become familiar with the sounds of the musicians’ instruments. Some of the pupils were operating at a very basic level, Sol level 1, where they were learning to make sense of and tolerate different sounds. In some cases, the musicians worked with the staff to utilise their instrumental skills to provide a gradual exposure to the instruments through repetition of activities.

Case studies of pupils (filmed and written) outlined specific musical preferences initiated by pupils. For example, one child demonstrated a preference for Bach being played on the cello over Prokofiev, by opening his eyes and looking towards the sound for Bach and closing his eyes and disengaging when Prokofiev was played.

‘...CBSO sessions can meet maths, English and communication targets’

Teacher
Outcome 2
• To enable children and young people with PMLD to develop their skills to become confident musical communicators.

Indicators for Outcome 2
• Pupils show confidence as a conductor communicating their musical intentions to rest of the group.
• Pupils choose between two instruments deciding which one to use as part of group performance activity and/or choose between two CBSO musicians to decide who will begin or perform a piece of music.
• Pupils lead the group in setting the pulse, initiating a beat or choosing a musical pattern.

Findings:
A key element of the project focused on the musicians learning to understand and respond to the communication of individual pupils. As both musician and pupils got to know each other instances of confident musical communication progressed, with individual pupils finding their own way to lead. Staff were able to guide and facilitate this where needed. Examples included pupils using eye contact to ‘point’ at a musician to play: looking or pointing towards indicators for fast/slow, and conducting pupils in a group composition.

Over time the weekly ‘hello song’ used by the musicians was extended to include fast/slow; and conducting pupils in a group composition. This helped pupils to develop their skills to become confident communicators.

Outcome 3
To enable children and young people with PMLD to develop transferable social and communicative skills for life through high quality live music making experiences.

Indicators for Outcome 3:
• Pupils’ listening skills (development)
• Pupils being aware of and able to tolerate being part of a group, and demonstrating increased involvement in group activity, and in becoming more confident in their interaction with people other than their school staff and parents.
• Pupils demonstrating increased capacity for communication whether through vocalisation, gesture, sign or using musical instruments (tuned or untuned).

Findings:
Musical activities in the sessions encouraged increased vocalisation in some pupils, which staff identified as pre-verbal expressive communication. In one case study parents have reported a participant was more confident to use his voice after activities; this contributed to group activities and supporting others in activities rather than leading them himself. Some pupils, initially unwilling or unable to tolerate being part of the activities, choosing to sit outside the circle or not remain within it for a full session (even though they showed interest in activities and were listening to what was happening), gradually became more involved, ultimately becoming active participants.

Impact: Has the involvement of the CBSO made a difference to the life of this pupil?

There are eight students in our class with two teaching assistants and two complex carers who look after two of the pupils’ medical needs. The class is a combination of severe learning difficulties and profound multiple learning difficulties. There is a variety of different communication needs, with three having communication books, two that are able to speak and four who use symbols, gestures and facial expressions to make choices.

This particular student who is eighteen years old has a degenerative condition and it affects her motor skills, vision and hearing. Within class it is hard work for her to maintain good head control and will for the majority of the day sit with her head down. She has limited speech and it takes her a long time to answer a question. She has listened to live music when people have been into school but as far as I am aware she has not been to any live music concerts outside of school.

3. The pupil’s journey
She has really enjoyed the CBSO coming into school and since the first week has tried to control her head movements and has really engaged with each element of the lesson. She has really enjoyed the live music aspect of these lessons and enjoyed exploring the orchestral instruments through listening and touching. She particularly enjoyed the clarinet. As the lessons have progressed she has begun to look and search for the clarinet. When the clarinet was played next to her she looked around for it and then reached out to grasp it with her hands and pulled it towards her. She was not that interested in the shells and the stones but when we looked at the ocean she was fantastic at playing independently.

During the independent ocean piece she independently played many instruments over the eight weeks including bells, shakers, and glockenspiel. She also enjoyed listening to the variety of music played by the musicians and showed her recognition of the mood/character by her responses e.g. Head back and eyes closed for slow melodic music and head up, clapping for fast rhythmical music.

There is a short video of her playing the xylophone and she plays it brilliantly to start with and then she moves her hand so hits the desk. The video then shows her playing the xylophone with the beat until she hits it again which is a beautiful video to watch. She also gave positive feedback for the sessions, even when hampered by the lack of hearing aid. Over the eight weeks she also increased her eye contact with the musicians.

4. Special moments
Holding the clarinet as the clarinetist was playing a piece of music next to her and she was looking up and making good eye contact. She also did not want to let go of the clarinet when the music had finished.

5. Impact: Has the involvement of the CBSO made a difference to the life of this pupil? We have tried to carry on with these lessons with our class after our sessions with the CBSO have finished. The musicians suggested some good clariinet players. We now use a WADDE speaker and the student has now started to pick that up from her tray and put it on the side of her face to feel the vibrations like she did with the clarinet. During the Kaleidoscope performance (a CBSO mixed instrumental ensemble who gave a concert at this school: an addition to the ongoing programme and funded in full by the school) she kept her head up and was enjoying the music and was watching the musicians as they played.

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Case Study 3

For the time he has worked with the CBSO O has been a Musician.

These sessions have been valuable to O as they have allowed him to gain a degree of confidence and even managed a small solo.

O sat for the first reintroduction session and gradually joined in.

The musicians ran a quiet one to one session with O for a few weeks and then reintroduced him to the group.

When the CBSO first came to run sessions with Orange class, O really found it difficult to stay in the same room let alone listen to the music.

O is a young man who is on the Autistic Spectrum. He has noise sensitivity issues although can be very vocal himself.

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Case Study 2

Class 7LS project with the CBSO began in April 2018 and lasted throughout the Summer Term. Initially, the musicians spoke a couple of sessions in class, meeting the staff and pupils and discussing their targets. They observed the pupils working during one of their lessons and made notes as to how they might incorporate some of the pupils’ responses in their sessions.

1. Brief introduction to the project

Class 7LS project with the CBSO began in April 2018 and lasted throughout the Summer Term. Initially, the musicians spoke a couple of sessions in class, meeting the staff and pupils and discussing their targets. They observed the pupils working during one of their lessons and made notes as to how they might incorporate some of the pupils’ responses in their sessions.

1. Brief introduction to the project

The student's journey

The student's journey

Case Study 4

M and his class have been involved in a long-term CBSO project since 2016 and therefore completed 5 terms of sessions with the musicians. M and the pupils in his class all have complex physical, learning and sensory needs and school staff hoped that participation in the project would help to develop their skills of engagement, anticipation and communication.

As the project developed both staff and musicians felt that the pupils would benefit from a clear and consistent routine with lots of opportunity for close contact with the musicians and the instruments as well as a short wait to enable turn taking and anticipation.

M is eight years old and enjoys adult company and eating! He likes listening to songs and music in the classroom and will often move his head in time with the beat. He has a physical disability and low level of understanding with very little communication skills. M uses a wheelchair and cannot stand but is able to move and kick his legs and use his arms and hands. He tends to put his hands in his mouth and suck his fingers much of the time and as a result they are often very sore.

At the beginning of the project, M would often be unengaged and would spend the session sucking his fingers in a world of his own. If the musicians were not near him, he would seem unaware of what was going on. He enjoyed direct attention from the musicians and would become animated during his turn in the 'Hello' song but would quickly lose focus as soon as they moved away again. M was not particularly interested in exploring instruments offered to him and showed no interest or awareness when his friends played their instruments as part of the session.

As the sessions developed and a clear and predictable routine was put into place, M's confidence and awareness of what was going on in the group increased. He also started to wear special arm splints, which helped to keep his hands out of his mouth, and this too aided his focus and engagement in the sessions. As part of the session, pupils would move into small groups to explore boxes of instruments. It was during this time that staff discovered M loved the storm drum and would become very animated when given it. Each session he found new ways to explore it. He expected it to always be in the box and would often look quite disappointed if it wasn't!

M also loved using the tambourine during the 'Hello' song and his anticipation and excitement as his turn approached was evident to everyone. He would play enthusiastically, especially with his feet and vocalise until the end of the song. By the end of the final term, M would watch the tambourine go around the group and begin to anticipate his turn more and more as it approached. His awareness of the group and what was happening around him increased considerably throughout the project.

Case Study 5

LOR class were fortunate enough to work with the CBSO in the Autumn Term 2017. Our introductory session was on 8 September, LOR class were fortunate enough to work with the CBSO in the Autumn Term 2017. Our introductory session was on 8 September, LOR class were fortunate enough to work with the CBSO in the Autumn Term 2017. Our introductory session was on 8 September, LOR class were fortunate enough to work with the CBSO in the Autumn Term 2017. Our introductory session was on 8 September. We felt very lucky this year that we could choose four different classes to work with the CBSO over the course of the year. This has meant that LOR would get to work with the CBSO when they may not have in previous years. LOR are a group of students aged fourteen to nineteen with profound and multiple learning difficulties. They are a noisy, lively bunch who can be difficult to engage. They aren't the obvious choice when it comes to making an impact. However, we have many examples of how our students have made progress through working with the CBSO and this is especially evident when we look at the progress D has made.

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LOR class were fortunate enough to work with the CBSO in the Autumn Term 2017. Our introductory session was on 8 September. We felt very lucky this year that we could choose four different classes to work with the CBSO over the course of the year. This has meant that LOR would get to work with the CBSO when they may not have in previous years. LOR are a group of students aged fourteen to nineteen with profound and multiple learning difficulties. They are a noisy, lively bunch who can be difficult to engage. They aren't the obvious choice when it comes to making an impact. However, we have many examples of how our students have made progress through working with the CBSO and this is especially evident when we look at the progress D has made.

1. Brief introduction

D has a great sense of humour and an assertive nature. She is sixteen years old. D likes dressing up in gloves and hats, swimming and floating, light-up objects. D has charge syndrome which has led to her multisensory impairments. All of her senses are likely to be impaired so it can be difficult to engage her in conventional learning. The School has always promoted the arts and D will have been exposed to numerous projects and performances. Music is a huge part of her sensory curriculum. However, she has never been exposed to such talented musicians on a regular basis.

2. Introduction to the student

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3. The student’s journey

D’s special moment came when she stopped exploring the chimes with her mouth and began to explore it in a more conventional way.

4. Special moments

D’s special moment came when she stopped exploring the chimes with her mouth and began to explore it in a more conventional way.

5. Impact

D’s special moment came when she stopped exploring the chimes with her mouth and began to explore it in a more conventional way.

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Teacher

He has been getting very excited at home, and we have talked to mum, we are getting comments from home: we think when A is excited at home it’s because he thinks it’s the CBSO session [anticipating it that morning]. But when he is in the session, he is really calm, and concentrating.

Assistant Headteacher

The legacy of the project has impacted upon all three participant groups (pupils, staff and musicians) across areas of practical, experiential and aspirational engagement. Legacies have taken the form of written documents, case studies, audio and video files, and form the harder to assess real life memories of experience and expressions of feeling of the pupils, whose thoughts and opinions are often advocated for by parents, family members and staff.

Case Study 7
T’s Dad and Grandma - interview

T’s grandma used to play the cello in the Bromsgrove Secondary School orchestra, and her brother and husband also had an interest in music. Dad used to play the trumpet. It’s clear that the family have a leaning towards music.

Grandma: “One night after tea, we suddenly had this burst of... noise from him, he was trying to get as loud as he could. We found out that he had had the [CBSO] session that day.”

What was different?

“The volume, and the different sounds and the pitches.”

Dad: “T sings quite a lot, but he sings softly, you can just about work out what he is singing, but since the music sessions he’s got louder.”

Gran: “He is expressing himself. It’s expanding his boundaries.”

Dad: “He’s always had a ukulele and in the last six months he has had a guitar. He would just pluck the strings [imitates pulling gesture] but now he is plucking them.”

We agree that T’s experience is being expanded by this change in exploration. The family tell me that music is his way in life to explore and express himself. They tell me about how they found out he recognised the EastEnders theme – it wasn’t ever watched at home, so they wondered how he knew it. Then they found out it is on TV when he goes to his carers. Music marks out parts of his life and gave his family information in this instance about things he does with other people.

Gran says: “I think he has always been interested in music, even on the keyboard, with the pre-set stuff he would just select classical. In the days even when we had a lobby machine he has always been interested and we have the wind chimes. Last night he climbed into the chair (we have wind chimes near to it) and was just playing these wind chimes. He’d been agitated, and this calmed him down.”

They tell me that T has the keyboard, he likes that, and the iPad, which he can use to record things. He likes to go up to the TV and record the Formula One theme onto his iPad, they say. But interestingly, he hasn’t touched the iPad in six weeks (this is during the time when the CBSO sessions have been taking place).

Gran: “Keep funding it, don’t stop, the benefits are enormous.”

We felt all the students who took part in the CBSO workshops thoroughly enjoyed the sessions.

‘Having live music played in the classroom environment gave the pupils a wonderful enriching experience.

‘This allowed them to have an opportunity to engage with the instruments through a multi-sensory approach catering for their visual, auditory and kinaesthetic needs.

‘One pupil, who is hearing impaired, particularly enjoyed feeling the vibration of the cello as it was being played. We also felt allowing some of the students to lead the orchestra was greatly beneficial in developing their self-esteem and leadership skills. This has been a wonderful opportunity for our school.’

Assistant Headteacher

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1. PRACTICAL

(i) Teacher Packs

A teachers’ pack, sharing session ideas from across the three schools has been developed in response to discussions with participating teachers, all of whom were non-music specialist and had varying levels of confidence in delivering music sessions. This will include sample session plans, advice on using the percussion instruments used in the sessions, advice on compositional activities using switch technology, session ‘top tips’, and listening lists, inspired by repertoire used in the listening sessions of sessions.

(ii) Musician Packs

The musicians have been consulted on a project pack which will be available to share with colleagues across the orchestral sector. It will use their own learning experiences as a basis for sharing ideas for orchestral practice in SEND school settings. As well as ideas for musical delivery, it will include practical learning about the school and classroom environment, tips on effective team working and building relationships with school staff, and address areas of emotional challenge that arise in the work which require pastoral support from the orchestral management team.

(iii) Staff CPD

Each school received a CPD session for school staff teams which offered a focused time to raise awareness of the project across the wider staff community. The sessions were designed to increase confidence levels in using percussion instruments creatively, increase confidence in group music making, develop rhythmic confidence and provide skills in 1:1 working. These sessions proved valuable in being able to strengthen links with each school’s music co-ordinator/specialist and from this, put plans in place to work with the specialists as a team to explore possibilities for CPD provision across the three schools as part of future work.

(iv) Workforce development

Musicians have received training in introductory approaches to using live music in SEND school settings, intensive interaction, Makaton and singing and signing. Through their work in the schools musicians have developed skills in using assistive technology to support pupil involvement in music making and composition activities, developed skills in 1:1 working and in improvisation. The number of CBSO members who have worked in SEND settings has now increased from one to seven, and the additional two musicians continue to work closely with the CBSO and their L&P department. Observational skills in recognising the musical developments of pupils have developed, due to developing and refining reflective feedback forms during the project; these were informed by the Sounds of Intent Framework, Youth Music’s Do, Review, Improve Framework and Drake Music’s SEND Framework.
2. EXPERIENTIAL

(i) Pupils

‘From week one to now, progression has been fantastic. It’s brought out their confidence. K is singing pitches. J: more singing. Many (of the group are) more vocal: very important. Gaining confidence, especially in group. Being able to move. Anticipation time for many of them has increased: ); on the chimes, she is reaching out more: more: extended. From this I have learned that T can sing on cue.’

‘One of the most progressive lessons I have noticed and they love it. A starts laughing when he hears them in the room. You can see how much it means to them.’

“They can’t take it away, it’s so important for the children’s progression, they’re stretching, vocalising. They tell us every day how much they love it. When we say “CBSO” they have a bright smile.’

Teaching Assistant

It is hard to say what the legacy for the pupils will be, as many of the pupils have limited life experiences, whether cultural or social, outside of their time at school and their time at home. Not every pupil has a strong relationship with their family, and there are many challenges faced by families and care providers in being able to access activities that many of their mainstream peers do on a regular basis. A strong theme in feedback from staff and parents was that pupils felt listened to in the sessions, and that the sessions went at an appropriate pace so that the pupils could genuinely respond. It took time for the musicians to get to know the capabilities of many of the pupils, but this process of taking time, and the length of the project, allowed pupils to develop their skills and achieve more than perhaps would have been expected of them before the project started.

‘It engages pupils in a way that a normal lesson doesn’t. Classical music taps into the brain in a way that other music doesn’t. To see the musicians so interactive. After watching the students today, the engagement levels are phenomenal. They’ve obviously built up a good rapport with the musicians, built up anticipation, which has increased their experience of the music.’

Deputy Head

For some of the pupils with both complex health and disability needs, the project became a space for supporting their sense of wellbeing. The project provided experiences for individual pupils to listen to music right up close to them, in the security of their classroom environment, which explored a range of moods and emotions. This was a unique experience for many of the pupils, and at times soothed anxiety, pain and discomfort. It should be noted that within the overall pupil numbers for the project a significant cohort were dealing with life limiting conditions and some of the pupils sadly passed away during the project. For these pupils, experiencing the project may have been one of the last experiences of their lives, and the legacy of the project for pupils with such complex needs should be considered with this in mind. Whilst it is important to strive for musical progress for any child, there are wider benefits to working with orchestral musicians in the classroom which support areas of health, wellbeing and emotional needs for some of the most vulnerable pupils in SEND school settings.

‘I have attended three of these events and have been thrilled each time to see what our students have achieved – their sense of enjoyment was obvious and this was certainly felt by the audience.’

Parent

(ii) Staff

‘A theme of World War 2 was introduced by a cello mimicking an air raid siren with the students dropping weights on drums as bombs. The main music was the famous “Dambusters March” and the musicians – seven of them this time – were accompanied by some energetic percussion! Students contributed with other instruments and some vocals too.

‘The session ended with the playing and singing of “We’ll Meet Again”. I do hope this is as possible as I understand this may have been the last collaboration between the school and the CBSO. I am so glad that [my son] has had the opportunity to work with these gifted musicians, who again showed their patience, confidence and skills when involved with our students.

‘My brother-in-law, my son’s uncle, came with me today and he was very moved and impressed by what he experienced – he spoke with some of the musicians afterwards and their delight with what the music has brought to the students was obvious.

‘Please pass on our thanks to the school staff and students who participated in this and made it possible. Please also convey our thanks to the musicians of the CBSO for their commitment, skills and desire to communicate their love of music to our students. It has been great.’

Music Specialist

(iii) Musicians

‘I thought today’s staff training session was excellent and very worthwhile. You have such a positive and relaxed manner, but with such attention to detail. It’s great working with you: we’re very lucky!’

Musicians

For the musicians the experience of working with pupils and staff over such a long period of time has been a learning journey that has not only developed their skills in working in SEND classrooms. Musicians have seen for themselves the impact that live music making can have on a child’s life, and how it can be ‘the way in’ to a child when at times nothing else seems to work. They have also seen that for some pupils, being able to absorb the experiences offered by the sessions can take time, and that learning to be part of a group is itself a complex challenge which is achieved in small steps. There have been the emotional challenges of hearing about pupils who have passed away, pupils who may have bonded with through their music making together. Entering a SEND school for the first time is a world away from the concert platform, and
Having sustained activity embedded in schools which was supported by designated reflective discussion time enabled the project to provide precious time for school staff to consider the value of music at a deeper level. In doing so, the implications of the wider impact of the project could also be considered, reinforcing the importance of music within curriculum and personal and social development. Having protected time to focus specifically on the impact of the project’s music-making for pupils and the school community also highlighted the future potential for the project to consider work in new areas of school life. By enabling this, the project became a bridge between areas of school practice; opening a space to ask questions about how better to reach families using music-making, and to acknowledge the ripple effect of the music-making sessions for pupils in relation to their wider educational, social and emotional development. Similarly, discussions and feedback collection after sessions with staff raised awareness across all staff of the value of music making to the whole child, and increased staff confidence in being able to identify the musical achievements and abilities of children with complex communication needs. Over time, the musicians became more skilled at articulating the musical developments of pupils, not just their social and emotional progression.

‘Reflection meetings gave us chance to talk things through with staff. By the end of the project we were more confident to just say.’

Musician

‘It’s been wonderful to have CBSO in school and I know the teachers/staff and students of course have really enjoyed it, and progressed through the sessions. I’ve already had lots of positive feedback from staff regarding the sharing on Thursday.

“Yes it’s a good model to have someone in school who can level the students in SoI so the impact of what has been happening isn’t lost.”

Music Specialist

(ii) Families

Involved with families added a new dimension to the project and has raised many questions for further ways to involve and support families in future work with the schools. It has emerged over time, particularly in Year 2, and developed responsively as family members have either initiated communication with schools, or discussions with staff in reflection meetings have raised awareness of wanting to find ways to share pupils’ experiences of the project with families. There have been challenges in finding ways to do this, from thinking carefully about wording consent and feedback forms when many families do not use English as a first language, to finding the best times for pupils to have family members in school (for some pupils this could be confusing, or upsetting), to understanding the family’s relationship with music, and how their own experience of learning music in school may colour their perception of the project and responses to experiencing it.

Mum: “It gives time to respond.”
Mum: “It relaxes him.”
Mum: “At home I have an iPod, he can say more, singing to it – so music is important.”
Mum: “The children are listening but the players are too.”
Mum: “Because they’re not mainstream children you have to hit them with what they respond to, something that brings out their responses.”

Dad: “They’re responding. but it’s fun too.”

Mum: “When I’m concentrating he is so focused on that it’s hard [for him to focus on doing anything else], but this relaxes him so he can respond. It’s part of their learning but in a relaxed way.”

Musician

‘Please can you forward these comments to the wonderful people at the CBSO?

I’ve just watched a performance at Chadsgrove School where the musicians performed with my son’s class. I was completely overwhelmed with the level of interaction from him throughout as he managed to stay engaged throughout! This is a fantastic achievement for S as he has a very short attention span and usually can not tolerate being in the hall during assemblies.

I was so impressed how you personalised the interactions between each child. S particularly enjoyed feeling the vibrations of the instruments on different parts of his body and showed interest using eye contact when musicians played next to him.

I hope these sessions continue at Chadsgrove as all the pupils gain so much from the experience.’

Parent

Both the resource packs developed during this project are available as a free resource from November 2018, and will be downloadable from the CBSO’s website at https://cbso.co.uk/education/resources

‘I think it makes you more of a live performer on stage. (In school) the children are right there with you. It’s not just about how perfect a note is, although we always try to make it the best we can — it’s about the whole experience — they are in it with you, the children keep it real and live... I think it makes you a stronger performer... when you are (making music) with the children — you should be doing this with the audience too. It brings performance to life.’

Musician
This project marked the start of a new phase in CBSO L&P residency work in SEND schools, with an increased number of CBSO musicians committing to working in these schools, keen to develop their skills in making music with SEND pupils. Due to the larger scale of this project (three schools) which has incorporated several new structural elements—such as involving a larger number of players, engagement with a new school, peer learning across schools through incorporation of peer observations and end of term ensemble visits into final sessions, and both school and whole musician team reflection sessions—there have been instances where all musicians have been stretched to further develop their current levels of skills and understanding. This has been enabled by the creation of new musician teams; work with new populations of pupils presenting with either more complex needs or higher ability levels than previously experienced by musicians; working with class groups for longer project lengths than in previous programmes; working with new age groups with a previously unexplored level of developmental needs; and working with teachers with a range of specialist skills, but who would not class themselves as being musically confident.

A key element in the structuring of this project has been the enabling of CBSO musicians to develop their knowledge and understanding, confidence and practical skills levels relating to SEND practice whilst being given mentoring support. Building on previous (pre) Youth Music projects, this project aspired to be responsive to the learning needs of the musicians, which were identified through regular feedback opportunities in ongoing structured reflection sessions, sessional observations and less formal 1:1 conversation with the external evaluator. This model has built trust between musicians and the CBSO’s L&P team, particularly in relation to the Director. Having the bridging of regular (but not weekly) visits to schools, sessions has maintained strong but flexible links between musicians, the L&P team and mentor/evaluator, and opportunities for more objective discussions to emerge, due to the positive dynamic created between musicians, L&P team and freelance/external experts, and in the building of positive relationships with school staff.

The musicians have developed their understanding of how to engage with the groups involved in the longer-term element of the project. Initially there were some concerns about how to apply activities to groups, with musicians expressing concern: ‘The activities we did in initial training were great but I’m not sure they will work with our group.’ The needs of our group are very complex and I’m not sure how we are going to work with them. Musicians began to develop structures for sessions in partnership with the teachers, and as was highlighted in earlier projects, the opportunity to discuss session development together, in most cases, has been invaluable for the musicians. As time has gone on there has been a development in the musicians’ depth of understanding of how pupils can best process sound and engage with live music, and they have made adaptations to support pupils’ learning experiences as their own understanding has developed.

The wider team has included musicians with a range of experience levels in SEND practice, from the orchestra’s most experienced players through to those who are completely new to the field. Even though some musicians have previously worked in two of the school settings involved in this project, the opportunity to work with a consistent cohort of pupils over a longer period (two terms plus) is a new element for all musicians. Confidence levels at the start of the project in working within SEND schools (and with PMLD pupils specifically) was varied, as was players’ confidence in delivering classroom music activities. Musicians were placed in working groups of three to four musicians for each school, with a team of lead and support musicians in each—‘the aim being to provide consistency for classes and musicians, and for musicians less familiar with SEND practice to be able to learn from working alongside more experienced colleagues.’ The project structure allowed for more developmental learning to take place through working with one class group over five terms, and for other classes in the school to receive shorter one term residencies.

Feedback collected at the end of sessions has commented on social, emotional and musical aspects of pupil development. As the project has progressed there have been several examples of where feedback from staff and musicians at the end of session has developed a more musical focus. Although musicians struggled initially with understanding the direct application of the Sounds of Intent framework, careful revision of reflection forms incorporated a simplified template linked to SoI whilst simultaneously responding to musician requests to want to capture the social impact of the project on pupils. It became apparent over time that some of their verbal observations began to use language and examples of pupil activity that relate directly to the framework. The musicians have needed time to absorb the setting of a special needs school and understand how pupils learn and experience life. This learning must take place first so that a pupil’s responses to sound can be understood within the context of music making. Not all the schools involved use SoI—a range of monitoring schemes are used across the three schools—but the engagement of pupils in more complex needs school and understand how pupils learn and experience life.

When talking to musicians during visits, their ability and enthusiasm for articulating pupil progress in sessions—whether in social or musical terms—was clear: the sessional forms have clearly helped them and provided a focus for discussion. It has been harder, however, for pupils to articulate their own developments, which suggests that a combination of methods of collecting feedback relating to musician development is more successful.

For the pupils, it is hard to quantify the impact of the project on their individual lives. Pupils formed relationships with the musicians, and gained confidence to express themselves, to lead musical activities and to show what music they wanted to make. This took time, but the rewards were significant. Whilst musical skills developed, and levels of concentration and participation increased, the experience of making music regularly with the musicians became about much more: it allowed the pupils to be truly listened to and gave them a unique creative space to engage in carefully paced musical interaction. For children who were unwell or distressed, accessing the project gave an opportunity to nurture emotional and mental wellbeing, provide respite and relief from anxiety. The impact on both schools and musicians is a testament to the level of commitment given to the project by teachers and musicians, and the pupils, whose musical voices are celebrated at the heart of this experience.

Findings

Based on this evaluation the project has found that:

- Sustained programmes of planned musical activity over extended periods of time (across two school years) provide unique opportunities to develop the musical skills of children and young people with PMLD and complex communication needs.
- Investing time in the learning journey from the concert platform to the school setting is invaluable in enabling orchestral musicians to develop the skills of engaged participation in community practice and gives musicians a creative opening to use their musical skills in new ways.
- Developmental learning opportunities containing built-in opportunities for reflection make an important contribution to the creative practice of orchestral musicians and to their confidence in working effectively in special school settings.
- A collaborative approach to learning shared by orchestra and school and supported by SLT teams in schools impacts on the value placed on music within a school community.
- Music-making opportunities designed to meet the needs of pupils and young people can offer even the most profoundly disabled child an opportunity to communicate.
- Music-making opportunities of this kind can assist schools in working harder to reach families, and build relationships between families and school.
- Music-making for children and young people with profound and multiple disabilities and complex needs contributes to musical, social and personal wellbeing and provides unique life experiences for children and young people who experience life limiting or ongoing medical conditions.
- Working with orchestral musicians in the classroom impacts on non-music specialist teachers’ development of confidence in using music and on their abilities to understand, identify and articulate the impact of music on their pupils’ learning.
- Peer learning opportunities are beneficial for orchestral musicians and can build positive working relationships away from the concert platform.
- Working with pupils with PMLD and complex needs can have an impact on orchestral musicians’ own sense of wellbeing, creativity and contribution to society. This project supports existing research findings on orchestral musicians and their engagement with community contexts.
- The effects of working with pupils with PMLD and complex needs can have an impact on orchestral musicians’ perceptions of audience engagement.
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Training Partners
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Jessie’s Fund

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