



**Enfield Special Schools Creative Music Project: 'A World Premiere:
Enfield and Beyond'**



Enfield Special Schools Creative Music Project: 'A World Premiere: Enfield and Beyond'

This piece has been written by Sound Connections Programme Co-ordinator, Helen Evans, February 2018

Sound Connections is working with Enfield Music Service, lead partner of the Enfield Music Education Hub, to provide music sessions in five special schools in autumn term 2017 and spring term 2018, leading to a final performance in the Millfield Theatre in March 2018, which is free to attend and part of the [Enfield Schools' Music Festival 2018](#).

Following a successful music project last year, which culminated in a performance involving all Enfield special schools, Enfield Music Service was keen to move forward creatively and offer special schools the opportunity to take part in a music project involving the creation of new music to be premiered in a final performance.

Planning the project

Initial meetings took place where everyone involved in the project came together to discuss the school music sessions, twilight training sessions and the final performance. From this point the Enfield Special Schools Creative Music Project 'A World Premiere: Enfield and Beyond' started to take shape. It was decided that the project would focus on working collaboratively to create a piece of new music based on an international musical theme, which reflected the ideas discussed at the meetings, from international musical styles, to journeys, outer space, and dreams.

There are five schools taking part in the project, from different locations across Enfield: Durants School is a secondary autism specialist school; Russet House School is a primary autism specialist school; Waverley School is a school for pupils age 3 – 19 with severe and profound learning difficulties; West Lea School is a mixed special school for pupils age 4 – 19 and Oaktree School is a school for pupils with complex needs age 7 – 19.

Creating new music

Sound Connections associate artists (SEN/D music specialists) Graham Dowdall and Roshi Nasehi have been working collaboratively with these schools from November to February. They have been leading music sessions with the children and young people and alongside teachers and school staff, bringing fresh ideas, skills and adding value to the musical activities already taking place in the schools.

Music sessions have focused on creative music making using percussion instruments, Assistive Music Technology (AMT), including the use of iPads and a range of music apps, and vocal music in its widest sense, including vocal processing techniques, sampling, microphones and amplification. These sessions have featured existing repertoire and warm-ups as well as ideas for new repertoire based on the theme of 'A World Premiere: Enfield and Beyond'. Schools have continued to practice the music in-between the music sessions with Graham and Roshi. This new music will be

performed at Millfield Theatre, along with other contributions by schools, in keeping with the overall theme.

Professional development

Throughout the project Graham and Roshi have offered advice and guidance to school staff on music-making and they have led two successful and well-attended twilight CPD training sessions, with attendees coming from schools from across Enfield. In November Graham led the first session: 'An Introduction to Music and Disability: Inclusive Music Making and Technology' and in December Roshi led the second training session focusing on inclusive singing: 'Exploring Singing and Vocalising in SEN/D settings'. These training sessions have formed an important part of the project, providing the opportunity to inform, enthuse and energise school staff, pass on skills, enrich the culture and leave a legacy.

Impact

Graham and Roshi have been working closely with the school staff and pupils. Roshi said: *"There's been a really good response to the new activities and approaches which in my case is focusing on singing in the widest possible sense to include talking, whispering, humming, and using AMT to enjoy a range of effects. The teachers have fed back that they are picking up lots of new ideas for future music sessions and the children have been very enthusiastic and lovely to work with. At the end of one session a pupil who has profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) used 'Eye Gaze' to say "music' and "favourite"."*

Graham commented: *"It's been really fun and rewarding to work across these five very different contexts where the age and needs of the young people vary so much. What has been clear across all schools has been the pleasure that the young people are showing in their music making - always enthusiastic to try things out and engaging in developing and contributing their own ideas. Also the positive cultures in the schools and belief in their young people's musicality shown by the staff. Amongst other elements, we have been creating some lovely soundscapes focusing on places the young people are interested in going. This has included some gorgeous underwater soundscapes using pictures of underwater environments set as a background to the Thumbjam iPad app which clearly inspires a very interactive approach to playing. It has also been amazing to hear the young people respond descriptively to sounds with a level of imagination that few professional musicians could apply! Ideas have poured out of those able to convey using language but also in more abstract sonic ways for those who don't use language so much."*

Enfield Music Service has supported the project and would like to continue to raise the profile of music making in Enfield special schools. Nick Skinner, Head of Enfield Music Service said: *"The project this year, working with Sound Connections, has helped us significantly to work in a more co-ordinated manner across the special schools of the borough. The initiative has relied on the power of music to find creative ways forward - and has succeeded. We are now beginning to imagine what might happen next."*

Schools have expressed that the project has brought the special schools together and their pupils have enjoyed making music and working towards the final performance. Peter De Rosa, headteacher of Durants School, who has been instrumental in the creation of Enfield Schools' Music Festival, said *"This has been a great joint project which has brought all the special schools in Enfield together. It has given so many pupils the opportunity to develop and perform in public to showcase what they can do"*. Teachers at Russet House School said: *"We have found the Music Project to be a delightful experience that has enabled our children to participate at all levels,*

engage in a range of resources that are easy to use, provide enjoyment and allows the class to work together as a group. All the children have thoroughly enjoyed these Music sessions and are eagerly waiting to perform on stage."

We are looking forward to the final performance on Wednesday 7 March at 10.30am where new music will be premiered. All schools will be performing and it promises to be an excellent morning. This free performance is part of the [Enfield Schools' Music Festival 2018](#) which takes place on **6 and 7 March** at the **Millfield Theatre**.

To find out more...

If you would like to find out more about this project or about Sound Connections SEN/D consultancy services, please contact philip@sound-connections.org.uk