

RPO **resound**

Autumn / Winter 2011

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Being able to share the confidence and sense of achievement that comes from giving a musical performance is an integral part of RPO **resound's** programme, so all our projects provide that essential opportunity for participants to showcase their own work – whether live or through capturing their music on CD.

In this issue of RPO **resound**, we'll be catching up on some of the fantastic performances that our project participants have engaged with over the summer and autumn terms. From primary school pupils to youth orchestras, and from trainee music leaders to prison inmates, all of the groups have worked hard

to produce some amazing musical performances.

We will also be seeing how RPO **resound** is continuing to support these groups, sustaining a wide range of musical opportunities long after the final performances are finished.

Cambridge Meets the Brass

The Orchestra's Brass players visit the Cambridge Corn Exchange

RPO **resound** has been getting brassy in Cambridge! Building on the Orchestra's classical concert series at the Cambridge Corn Exchange, we have been working with the venue to produce a series of exciting new brass-themed events.

RPO **resound** brass players recently joined RPO workshop leader David Powell and an ensemble of Cambridgeshire Music Service brass players to create a striking new fanfare. Devised during just one day of musical games and creative workshops, it will receive its debut at the Cambridge Corn Exchange to hail in the venue's 25th Anniversary Concert on 2nd December this year.

In addition to this we also invited local young people to *Meet the Brass* at the Corn Exchange in a high-energy matinée performance for 5-12 year olds. Hundreds of families turned up to hear

an introduction to the world of brass instruments by our charismatic RPO Brass quintet that was both educational and fun. Children were dancing along enthusiastically to a range of music performed and presented for the concert by the Quintet themselves. The audience was given an overview of each instrument and how they work by the players, interspersed with pieces that specifically highlighted each instrument.

"The best children's concert we've been to!"

Meet the Brass
audience member

This was followed by a chance for budding young brass players to meet the RPO musicians in person, and to have a go on our special store of brass

instruments under the tutelage of the quintet themselves. This opportunity proved to be so popular that a queue was formed with mums, dads, and under 10s keen to demonstrate their buzzy bee techniques to the members of the RPO.



Brian and Laurence from the Orchestra demonstrate how Brass instruments work at the Corn Exchange in Cambridge

A Bigger Sound

Working with prisoners at HMP The Mount

Britain's prison system may seem like an unlikely setting for a creative performance with RPO *resound* musicians. However the wide range of benefits that arts-based projects can bring to this environment has been well established through research. This is why RPO *resound* has been working in partnership with two of Britain's best and longest-running providers of arts projects in prisons, Music in Prisons and Rideout, on *A Bigger Sound* at HMP The Mount in Hemel Hempstead.

It wasn't hard to find a group of inmates who already had a strong interest in music. From tabla players and guitarists,



RPO *resound* musicians at HMP The Mount

to a 5-string electric violin player and bassoonist, the team was amazed by the variety of musical talent available to work with. These musicians spent the first week of the project working intensively with Music in Prisons and RPO *resound* musicians to produce a variety of pieces covering a range of musical styles.

Taking this music as their inspiration, the Rideout team spent the next week working with a separate group on creating a storyline and script whilst the musicians continued to rehearse their pieces. Over the final three weeks of the project, the two groups came together to develop and rehearse the combined music and drama piece, complete with a specially devised set. A range of paintings from the prison's art department added a third and final element to the performance.

Adopting a nautical theme, the final performance, entitled *Sail or Jail*, told the tale of a group of prisoners who take to the high seas to seek their fortune! Four excellent performances were given in the prison's chapel to inmates, relatives and members of the public.

"I have been given the opportunity to give my children something so positive that its importance to me just cannot be put into words."

A Bigger Sound participant

The project gave a great boost to the arts in the prison and offered inmates the opportunity to develop both their artistic and communication skills. 'The inmates have been extremely enthusiastic in their responses both during and after the performances, telling us that it was a unique and uplifting experience for them' said RPO Principal Trumpet Brian Thomson, who worked with the participants throughout the project. 'By the end there was an amazing amount of regard and affection between all concerned.'

A documentary about *A Bigger Sound*, entitled *The Band Behind Bars* was broadcast on BBC Radio 2 on Monday 28th November at 10pm.

Faster, Higher, Stronger

Creating North London's 'World Orchestra'

Faster, Higher, Stronger is an ambitious collaborative music project that is inspired by the motto of the Olympic Games and will bring together a kaleidoscopic range of young musicians to form a gigantic North London World Youth Orchestra.

Musicians from six youth ensembles have been composing a 45-minute *Olympic Symphony* under the expert guidance of RPO workshop leader and composer James Redwood and a team of dedicated musicians from the Orchestra. The diverse musical line-up brings together a saz ensemble, steel pan band, rock group and three youth orchestras from Brent, Enfield and Haringey Music Services.

Not content with this colossal ensemble of 250 plus young instrumentalists, we are adding 50 members of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to the mix, and an accompanying choir of 3500 primary school children to sing the

songs specially penned for them by the participating ensembles. All these performers will come together for the first time in April 2012 to rehearse and then premiere their spectacular collective composition at two of the largest and most prestigious venues we could find - the Royal Albert Hall and Wembley Arena!

The project has been made possible through RPO *resound*'s strong working



Faster, Higher, Stronger participant with workshop leader James Redwood

partnership with Brent, Enfield and Haringey Music Services. Collectively this consortium of partners won funding support from the Mayor's Music Education Fund. This enabled us to create this ground-breaking new project concept, combine our resources and ideas in partnership, and therefore directly engage with thousands of participants, tutors and teachers from across the three boroughs.

With the composition stage completed, and the final scores produced, the rehearsal process is now fully underway. Local schools are being recruited and teachers trained so that they can rehearse their classes and choirs in preparation for the massed song elements of the Symphony. As we get closer to 2012 and the Olympics, the feeling of anticipation is gaining strength, and we know that *Faster, Higher, Stronger* will be our highpoint of the Cultural Olympiad activities!

The Soldier's Tale & It's Our Music

Celebrating performances from two fantastic creative projects

Two summer projects that culminated in stunning performances this year were *The Soldier's Tale*, with primary school students from the London Borough of Brent, and *It's Our Music* with the Corby Cube.

The Soldier's Tale took its title from Igor Stravinsky's theatrical work by the same name. The music and words of this piece tell the story of Joseph – a soldier. His fiddle is his prized possession, but he is tricked into giving it away by none other than the Devil himself.

Pupils worked with the RPO resound team and workshop leader James Redwood to devise their own fiendish lyrics and accompanying music – all of which told separate sections of the story.



The *Soldier's Tale* participants at Elsley Primary School show off their costume designs

The Year 4s and 5s also designed and created their own costumes, props and even some inspired designs for the programme covers distributed at the performance.

The final performance was given to a packed school hall where the pupils could share the story with their friends and family, using all the songs and music they had created, and hear a choice selection of Stravinsky's original music performed live by the RPO resound musicians.

It's Our Music provided four days of intensive creative sessions for twenty six young performers from across the musical spectrum. Based in the town's new venue, The Core at Corby Cube, participants represented a wide range of interests from urban and technology-based music, to rock and pop musicians, as well as young classical performers. Given this is The Core's first year as a venue, there haven't been any symphonic performances to date, so the project was linked to the Orchestra's activity across the county, and the ensemble drew inspiration from the RPO's concert Residency at the Royal & Derngate, Northampton. What's more,

we plan to have a reunion with the *It's Our Music* band early next year with a road trip to see the full Orchestra live in Northampton playing the very music that inspired them!

"[The whole experience] was amazing. Some of the instruments I've never even heard of before".

It's Our Music participant

Working with a team of five RPO resound musicians, local music leaders from Big About Music and RPO workshop leader Tim Steiner, participants fused ideas from classical music with their own musical tastes and influences to create a full *It's Our Music* Friday night concert – kick-starting Corby's weekend of Cultural Olympiad celebrations.

You can find video excerpts from both of these performances on our website: www.rpo.co.uk/resound

Working with the Winds

Bringing together young wind musicians through creative performance

"All members learned a lot... To play without written music was the best aspect... the shy kids were able to play forte without being afraid to be wrong..."

Gerd, SMG Concertband Conductor

RPO resound has a long history of working in Hertfordshire on previous projects, including our Department for Education-funded partnership project *Count Us In*. So when working with the Stevenage Senior Wind Band this September we weren't surprised to see familiar faces in the ensemble. However, we were also joined by a group of young musicians who were very new to us – the SMG Concertband from the German town of Ingelheim-am-Rhein,

which is culturally twinned with Stevenage.

The German participants weren't just new to us, but were also new to RPO resound's creative composition approach – putting their music pads away to create brand new ideas as a group with just their ears and instruments to rely on. Working with the bands separately at first, we explored the thematic material that would go into their piece. By the time they came together, both bands had taken to the sessions completely naturally. Young performers who hadn't improvised or even played without music before all joined in for the piece. In fact, the young musicians were so confident they performed the whole piece by themselves without a conductor!

Based on Mussorgsky's *The Old Castle* (from *Pictures at an Exhibition*), this

piece rounded off a concert which included performances of the bands' own repertoire, pieces for the two bands playing together and a very well-received performance from the RPO ensemble.

We loved working with both of these bands and look forward to summer 2012 when we hope to be involved with Stevenage Senior Wind Band's return trip to Germany.



RPO musicians with the SMG Concertband

Compose, Create, Celebrate

Continuing our work with music leaders in St Albans

In the last issue of **RPO resound** we reported how the St Albans' Apprentice Music Leader programme has been helping local musicians develop the skills required to lead community music groups.

After months of training and practise, this July saw these skills being put to the test. A performance from the leaders and community groups at The Alban Arena, entitled *Compose, Create, Celebrate*, gave a platform for the Apprentices and community groups to perform the pieces that they have created together.

Taking Sibelius' *Finlandia* as their inspiration, the different groups were free to explore their own creative ideas. Whether looking at the piece's melodies, use of rhythm or even using the piece as the starting point for a short opera, each group performed their own unique take on this work.

After this, the groups were joined on stage by members of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for a side-by-side performance piece composed by workshop leader Jason Rowland, who had been leading the Apprentice's training. Combining parts from each of the community group's pieces with



Compose, Create, Celebrate
at The Alban Arena

elements of the original work, it created a thrilling patchwork of orchestral ideas. It also provided a great opportunity for both the Apprentices and community groups to gain the experience of performing with members of the Orchestra.

The second half of the evening was devoted to the RPO itself, with both the Apprentices and the community groups joining the audience to enjoy a programme of music which included movements from Grieg's *Peer Gynt*, Stravinsky's *The Firebird* and Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Compose, Create, Celebrate marked the end of the St Albans Apprentice Music Leader programme. However our relationship with the Apprentices continues as we are now in the process of providing a range of opportunities for them to shadow and work alongside established **RPO resound** workshop leaders and musicians.

"I found the project pushed me out of my comfort zone again and again and again, always in a good way. I kept realising I could do things that seemed very scary until I tried them."

Music Leader Apprentice

Musical Pictures

Our sessions with early years participants at Tate Britain

Musical Pictures, our series of interactive workshops for young visitors to Tate Britain, had its final session this November. Participants and their parents joined RPO workshop leader Helen Woods for an animal-themed adventure that took them around a variety of different statues in the gallery.

Working in partnership with Tate, these sessions have been designed to help young people discover the musical magic hidden behind the gallery's artworks, drawing the 3-10 year old participants into a world of colours, stories, rhythms and melodies over a series of eight separate sessions.

All sessions have been held in the Tate galleries, so whether exploring a ruined castle, watching a beautiful sunset or going for a ride on a horse, they have provided a chance for participants to look at original works of art in a way that adds a new musical dimension to them.

Useful Information

RPO resound
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
16 Clerkenwell Green
London EC1R 0QT
Tel.: 020 7608 8800
Website: www.rpo.co.uk/resound
Email: education@rpo.co.uk

Ruth Currie
Community and Education Manager
currier@rpo.co.uk

Alec Haylor
Community and Education Co-ordinator
haylora@rpo.co.uk

Hannah Taylor
Community and Education Intern
edintern@rpo.co.uk

RPO resound Original Design:
White Label Productions

For further information and details of upcoming projects please send email enquiries to:
education@rpo.co.uk

In the next issue...

The Orpheus Centre | Faster Higher Stronger | Ismaili Community Ensemble | And much more...