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# The Big Wish

## Evaluation Report by Orchestras Live

July 2018

### Bedford, Dunstable and Luton

## The Big Wish – inspiring the next generation of orchestral musicians

Following the success of premiere performances of The Wish in Luton in 2017, the neighbouring music education hubs for Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire were keen to offer the same kind of inspiration to young children in their areas, so Orchestras Live produced a touring project for 2018 – The Big Wish – involving workshops in numerous primary schools and orchestral performances of The Wish at Dunstable, Bedford and Luton.

Originally commissioned by Orchestras Live and The MIX (Luton Music Hub) for premiere in July 2017, The Wish was conceived as a brand-new Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra, with the aim of inspiring young children to engage with music and take up an instrument whilst supporting learning at Key Stage 1.

Designed to introduce orchestral instruments in a vivid way, with lots of audience participation especially singing, the piece was developed by composer John K Miles and specialist music leader Claire Henry, bringing together their different experience and skills from orchestral projects they had achieved over many years with Orchestras Live and City of London Sinfonia.

The Big Wish was performed on 11, 12 and 13 July by City of London Sinfonia (28 musicians, conducted by John K Miles), with two performances in each of the following locations: The Grove Theatre, Dunstable; Bedford Corn Exchange; UK Centre for Carnival Arts, Luton. The performances were attended by a total of 2,151 children and staff from primary schools across Luton, Bedford and Central Bedfordshire.

In an additional strand of skill-sharing, nine young instrumentalists from Luton, Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough were invited to rehearse and perform The Wish with City of London Sinfonia.

In the weeks leading up to the performances, Claire and John held a series of workshops at 7 primary schools in Luton, 8 primary schools in Bedford and 8 primary schools in Central Bedfordshire, where young children had the opportunity to meet presenter Claire Henry, hear about the narrative of The Wish and learn the song and ‘musical keys’ for the interactive elements of the concerts. Online resources were created by Claire and John to help schools prepare for the concerts



“Some of these children will not ever have seen a live orchestra or been to a professional venue before. The children clearly valued the experience and will certainly remember it for a long time to come.”

Charlotte Payne, Music Director of Inspiring Music (Central Beds)



“My favourite part was everything because I enjoyed fixing the orchestra and it was very relaxing.”

Audience feedback



## PROJECT AIMS

- To produce an orchestral tour for Key Stage 1 audiences through a partnership between Orchestras Live, City of London Sinfonia and the music education hubs for Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.
- To hold workshops and performances for young children from primary schools in the three areas.
- To inspire children to take up orchestral instruments, with learning pathways provided by each music education hub.
- To involve older student musicians in the project through 'side by side' rehearsal and performance alongside CLS players.
- To collaborate with a London conservatoire to establish a clearer route to higher education and raise aspirations amongst young people in Luton.

### THE STORY OF THE WISH

The composer's greatest wish is to hear his song 'If you have a dream' played by the orchestra. Unfortunately, the orchestral 'machine' keeps breaking. The 'fixer' (presenter) checks through the sections one by one to find out what's wrong. It turns out that the brass have forgotten their melody (pitch), the strings are too sad and can only play in a minor key (tonality), the wind keep 'flying off' and need to calm down so that they can play slowly as well as fast (tempo), and the percussion have completely 'lost' the beat (pulse). The presenter has a musical key (motif sung by the audience) to fix each of these problems. Eventually all the sections are fixed and the machine is tested by slowly turning up the volume (dynamics). The orchestra plays a reprise of all the music used to fix the orchestra and the concert ends with the Finale song 'If you have a dream' sung by the audience.

## SONGS

### Key song

Can we find all the keys to fix the music machine?  
When it plays there's a feeling of magic.  
Percussion, wind, brass and strings will need to work as a team  
When they do it will sound so fantastic.

### Fixing the brass

Fix the brass with their key  
Find the right melody  
Fix the brass with their key  
Find the right melody

### Finale song – If you have a dream

If you have a dream  
Follow the light in your heart  
It will guide you up  
Up to the stars, through the universe  
  
Dreams can come true  
For me and you  
If you try you can achieve  
just believe, and your wish will shine through.



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## PROJECT TEAM

John K Miles	Composer and Conductor
Claire Henry	Animateur and Workshop Leader
Natasha Krichefski	Participation Projects Manager, City of London Sinfonia
Stuart Bruce	Partnership Manager, Orchestras Live
Kerry Watson	Manager, Luton Music Service
Charlotte Payne	Music Director, Inspiring Music (Central Beds)
David Rose	Music Service Manager, Music for Bedford Borough



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Yesterday morning I had the pleasure of attending 'The Wish' at Bedford Corn Exchange and I wanted to say that myself; [my colleague], and the young girl we were supporting had the most wonderful time. This was the first time that she had had an opportunity to experience orchestral music and it was in such a fun and accessible way.

She is Deaf. She wears a cochlear Implant and can therefore hear most of the music, depending on it's pitch .... and if it gets too loud, she can quickly take her CI off!! :D She is oral and so is able to talk and sing but she is also learning British Sign Language. We had previously downloaded the song sheets and learnt the songs by heart, so that we could sing and sign the songs with everyone else... She was so thrilled to be able to join in with the production and I believe will be an experience she will remember for a long time.

(HI Support Assistant, audience feedback)



## EVALUATION

- **To produce an orchestral tour for Key Stage 1 audiences through a partnership between Orchestras Live, City of London Sinfonia and the music education hubs for Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.**

The partnership proved effective, with each partner contributing time and resources to plan and achieve the project. Orchestras Live was the lead producer, facilitating the partnership and contributing financial support from its own resources. The music education hub partners co-ordinated the school workshops, mentoring strand and concert audiences with CLS, and contributed financial support. The total budget of £56,529 also required support from Arts Council England through a Grants for the Arts bid prepared by Luton Music Hub and Orchestras Live. Additional support was committed by Friends of Luton Youth Music, Friends of Bedfordshire Youth Music and The Wixamtree Trust.

### Feedback from Inspiring Music (Central Beds)

Project objectives achieved	★★★★
Orchestras Live had positive impact on practice	★★★★★
Reached new audiences?	YES

*“Some of these children will not ever have seen a live orchestra or been to a professional venue before. The children clearly valued the experience and will certainly remember it for a long time to come.”*

(Charlotte Payne, Inspiring Music)

### Feedback from Music for Bedford Borough

Project objectives achieved	★★★★
Orchestras Live had positive impact on practice	★★★★★
Reached new audiences?	YES

*“The quality of performance was high as was the way in which the musicians embraced the concept of the story– moving and acting in response to the narrator.”*

(David Rose, Music for Bedford Borough)

### Feedback from Luton Music Service

Project objectives achieved	★★★★
Orchestras Live had positive impact on practice	★★★★★
Reached new audiences?	YES

*“Feedback from schools indicates that this project was a fantastic learning experience for the children as many of them had never seen or heard an orchestra before.”*

(Kerry Watson, Luton Music Service)

- To hold workshops and performances for young children from primary schools in the three areas.

1,849 Key Stage 1 children attended 24 workshops led by Claire Henry. The six performances were attended by approximately 2,151 young people and their teachers, plus at least 71 parents and carers at some of the concerts.

For this second iteration of The Wish, John and Claire had made some revisions to the score and narrative, in light of the premiere performances in 2017. Also, John assumed the role of conductor as well as composer, giving him a greater role in the performances and the narrative alongside Claire. This was felt to have worked well.

The response from children and schools was overwhelmingly positive.



Primary school children's feedback from concerts:

- "I didn't want to go because it was really good"*
- "It made me feel young in a way that I can't explain"*
- "It was good because it was different to like normal orchestras"*
- "It was brilliant especially the acting"*
- "I learned that it is a bassoon not a bazooka."*
- "Who knew the conductor controlled how a orchestra plays!!"*

Primary school teachers' feedback from the concerts:

- "The experience was pitched at the right age group, it was visually interesting and interactive while helping the children to learn about the instruments in the orchestra in a fun way."*
- "They learnt more about what each instrument sounded like, where they are positioned in the orchestra and most importantly they experienced the wonderful sound of them all playing together in front of them."*

*“It was a wonderful experience for children who never usually get the opportunity to see and hear a live orchestra. The workshop at school was fantastic and we were well prepared for the event. Well done to Claire for not batting an eyelid when a special needs child plonked himself on her lap while she was playing the flute.”*

*“They gained knowledge about the different instrument families and how each musical instrument sounded. They also learnt about rhythm, pitch and about different musical notes. The call and response was very effective.”*



Guests attending the concerts included dignitaries, councillors and officers from the local authorities, parents of the young instrumentalists, and representatives from local cultural organisations.

Partners in Central Bedfordshire and Bedford commissioned local film-makers to capture elements of the concerts and interview young audience participants and project stakeholders, contributing to digital assets that promote these music education hubs.

The project was featured also in the August 2018 edition of Music Teacher Magazine with a double spread article written by a reporter who attended the Luton performances. This was new national coverage for this project to a highly relevant readership. A copy of the article can be viewed online [here](#).

- **To inspire children to take up orchestral instruments, with learning pathways provided by each music education hub.**

Each music hub partner is building on the project through promotional activity with schools, including events where children can have a go on a range of acoustic instruments, enhancing their ability to make informed choices following the inspiration of The Wish.



*"I loved the oboe it sounded magical"* (audience feedback)

*"It is not often children get to see a live orchestra in action right in front of them these days. To also get to know the instruments was fantastic and I hope inspire them to go and learn one themselves."* (teacher feedback)

*"The children responded enthusiastically and it was a memorable way to exhibit the different instruments."* (CLS player feedback)

- **To involve older student musicians in the project through 'side by side' rehearsal and performance alongside CLS players.**

Nine young instrumentalists (Key Stage 5) took part in a rehearsal with John K Miles and all six performances, gaining skills through desk-sharing with CLS musicians.

All the young musicians really entered into the spirit of the performances, joining in with the theatrical aspects and interaction with audiences. Their rapport with CLS extended to some of them playing cello quartets together on stage as the audiences arrived at the venues.

*"I now have playing experience with a higher level orchestra, which has allowed me to gain tips and pointers from professional musicians."*

*"I really enjoyed the experience, I found it very inspiring and uplifting"*

*"When the show came together with the children singing along, it was very rewarding."*

*"I think the students' parts could have been a bit more challenging/involved"*

*"It was great to see some of the musicians were also quite young."  
(teacher feedback)*



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- **To collaborate with a London conservatoire to establish a clearer route to higher education and raise aspirations amongst young people in Luton.**

Following on from the collaboration with Guildhall School of Music & Drama in 2017 when one of their undergraduate flautists mentored two students from Luton Sixth Form College and which saw them all performing with CLS in *The Wish*, it was hoped to develop this strand and involve more GSMD students in *The Big Wish*. Unfortunately, the timing of the project and their existing commitments meant it was not possible for GSMD to be involved. Orchestras Live is in discussion with GSMD about a more formalised partnership which could lead to more frequent mentoring and creative collaborations in future.

### **Feedback from lead artists**

*"I found the whole experience fantastic from start to finish.*

*The workshops were very enjoyable and the children all seemed to get enormous pleasure from the narrative and then the understanding that they were going to bring their knowledge to impact the outcome of the concert - I think this is paramount to their feeling involved and inspired.*

*Some of the workshops worked out a little odd as the children were not able to attend the concert.... I felt this was unfair and did not best utilise the time and budget for the project.*

*The re-shaped story felt tight and clear and this made it very easy for the CLS musicians and young performers to get involved (I think our first responsibility is to them, aspiring to give them quality and inspiration to perform) and many compliments regarding the show were received from both parties. I was overwhelmed by the support and enthusiasm in general from the players regarding their 'acting'. Many had not been involved with other education shows that I have written, due to the larger scoring of *The Wish*. The clarinet player said it was the best education concert he had ever performed in.*

*I do feel that the show works brilliantly as a stand-alone show too. Perhaps in future performances the weighting of the children who had been involved in the workshops v's those who had not could be a bit more equal. I think it's fine to mix them up but when it's just one class who are not involved it seems a little unbalanced perhaps. The workshops deepen and embed the story without question.*

*I thought the addition of John as conductor was absolutely great and it was much easier to get a sense of momentum and flow in terms of telling the story. It was lovely for the children to see all the roles encapsulated into one show. There was an overwhelming sense of team."*

(Claire Henry)



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*"This year THE WISH was further refined towards its ultimate goal of a standalone show, with minimal pre-concert workshops. The narrative has been tightened up significantly with some brand new music written to bind things together. My switch to the role of conductor/composer/presenter this year felt like it worked well, in terms of being able to support Claire's brilliant presenting with added participation and connectivity to the audience.*

*It feels like the show could easily be presented as a standalone show, particularly as there are now significant internet resources available. This was proven to an extent by the fact that many schools attending the concerts had not had the opportunity of attending workshop and were fully engaged in the show. The audiences were big this year, which made the show feel very viable as a future proposition, even potentially commercial, if promoted in the right way.*

*It also felt successful in terms of objectives met. All the children got to hear the range of orchestral instruments played separately and together and the anecdotal evidence is that it provided an inspirational, first time experience of orchestral music for many children.*

*I still feel a 13 piece version could be the icing on the cake in terms of flexibility and economy for the project, particularly in the context of smaller audiences.*

*Flexibility is the key word for THE WISH, it can now work as a standalone show, can be enhanced by workshops (depending on its intended functionality), is perfect for cross art collaboration and can also work well as a 'side by side' project.*

*The side by side element worked well this year, and some of the musicians ended up playing the full orchestral parts, There was an organic feel to their involvement and the fact that there were 6 shows allowed them to talk to the pro musicians, get a feel for professional music making and even get involved with informal music making outside the project (the pro cello section played quartets with some of the young musicians during breaks).*

*Moving forward, I'd love to see the show performed regularly in the UK and abroad, to introduce as many children as possible to the magical sound of an orchestra.*

*Hopefully Luton, Bedford and Central Beds will want the show back at some point and if there is anything I can do to help facilitate any other future performance opportunities in partnership with Orchestra's Live I'd love to help. NB I will be setting up a webpage for the project in the near future for promotional use."*

(John K Miles)



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CLS player feedback:

*"Claire was amazing, so natural and funny. The music was great and I'm still singing the tunes now, very catchy!"*

*"The children sang with much more involvement at the end when they were asked to stand up. I don't know if it would be possible to have them standing a few more times in future projects? Or even have a few of them sitting on the stage nearer the orchestra to feel more directly involved throughout?"*

*"It worked well, but could perhaps have made more of the forces available?"*

*"It could have had a few even faster and more fun sections perhaps, but still works really well."*

*"I really enjoyed the project and thought it was the most successful one I've been involved with for a long time. Would love to do more in the future!"*



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## LEARNING POINTS

- Consider ways of making The Wish a sustainable model, e.g. music service musicians to recruit students; involvement of local composers, etc.
- Have a written agreement between key partners to clarify roles and responsibilities and ensure a consistent approach to scheduling with schools, photo consents, child licensing, etc.
- Arrange a preliminary CPD twilight meeting for representatives from the schools, to help prepare them for the workshops and concerts, as well as follow-up activity and pathways to instrumental learning.
- Continue to offer workshops and concerts to schools at no cost (except for their own transport and staff cover) and introduce a cancellation charge to deter schools from dropping out at short notice.
- Involve CLS players more closely in the planning of projects to harness their creative skills and ideas.
- Hold an artistic planning day with music service partners and music leaders to refine workshop content to align it more closely with local requirements.
- Utilise online resources so the piece can work with or without preliminary workshops, and so schools can see and learn about instruments before the concert day.
- Provide parallel learning resources in a form for whiteboard projectors where schools are unable to access online resources.
- Where workshops are held, aim to reach all schools, and prioritise groups within schools, that will be attending a subsequent concert.
- Highlight the young musicians and their schools more fully, as role models for the audiences.
- Build in more flexibility about the involvement of the young musicians, making their parts more challenging where appropriate.
- Plan how children can try instruments for themselves after seeing them in the concert, supporting a pathway into regular tuition.

## LEGACY PLANS

- Agreement in principle to hold a similar project in 2019, based on CPD, school workshops and orchestral concerts.
- Milton Keynes to be invited to join the consortium.
- Timescale to shift to May, enabling music services to hold their own Come and Try instruments days for children later in the summer term, so that WCIT and other instrumental tuition can be put in place for participants in the autumn term.
- A more embedded partnership to be developed with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and/or other conservatoires in London.

## EXTERNAL LINKS

**Find out more** about The Wish and The Big Wish on Orchestras Live's website:

<http://www.orchestraslive.org.uk/featured-projects/the-wish/>

Watch the video documentary of The Wish premiere performances in July 2017 via

**YouTube:** <http://bit.ly/thewishfilm>

**Orchestras Live** website: [www.orchestraslive.org.uk](http://www.orchestraslive.org.uk)

**City of London Sinfonia** website: [www.cityoflondonsinfonia.co.uk](http://www.cityoflondonsinfonia.co.uk)

**Luton Music Service** website: [www.thelutonmusicmix.com/](http://www.thelutonmusicmix.com/)

**Inspiring Music** (Central Beds) website: [www.inspiringmusic.co.uk/](http://www.inspiringmusic.co.uk/)

**Music for Bedford Borough** website:

[https://www.bedford.gov.uk/education\\_and\\_learning/schools\\_and\\_colleges/music\\_for\\_bedford\\_borough.aspx](https://www.bedford.gov.uk/education_and_learning/schools_and_colleges/music_for_bedford_borough.aspx)

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**APPENDIX: SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITY**

Monday 11 June	Luton workshops	Dallow Primary School Icknield Primary School Stopsley Primary School
Tuesday 12 June	Bedford workshops	Turvey Primary School Ravensden Primary School Oakley Primary Academy
Wednesday 13 June	Bedford workshops	Great Barford Primary School Broadmead Lower School
Monday 18 June	Luton workshops	Somerles Infant School The Meads Primary School Southfield Primary School
Tuesday 19 June	Bedford workshops	Ursula Taylor C of E Primary School Christopher Reeves Primary School Great Denham School
Wednesday 20 June	Luton workshops	Hillborough Infants Hillborough Juniors
Wednesday 4 July	Central Bedfordshire workshops	Langford/Gravenhurst Lower Eversholt Lower School
Monday 9 July	Central Bedfordshire workshops	St Augustines Academy Tithe Farm Primary Beaudesert Lower
Tuesday 10 July	Central Bedfordshire workshops	Watling Lower St Georges Toddington Apsley Guise Lower
Wednesday 11 July	Performances x2	Grove Theatre, Dunstable
Thursday 12 July	Performances x2	Bedford Corn Exchange
Friday 13 July	Performances x2	UK Centre for Carnival Arts