

VOCES CANTABILES MUSIC

INSPIRING PEOPLE THROUGH MUSIC

EMC Annual Conference

Access to Music: New perspectives in distribution, education and politics

Hatch My Ideas! - opening up new opportunities for young people in music and the arts

Voces Cantabiles Music (VCM) is a not-for-profit music foundation which seeks to bring a new perspective to singing and music in education, and to inspire people through music. This vision is conveyed by the professional vocal ensemble, Voces8, and a team of twenty-five young professional musicians.

VCM is driven by a passion for music and a commitment to communicating this to audiences and students alike. As an ambassador for music and the creative arts, VCM empowers others to realise and exceed their potential.

VCM runs three professional ensembles, the chamber choir, Voces Cantabiles, along with Voces8, and a new, young chamber orchestra, the Senesino Players. We also have a youth choir, for children aged over 16 who wish to explore their singing further.

With over 100 concerts in 11 European countries in 2007, Voces8, the flagship ensemble, is building a strong reputation abroad. We are working very hard to achieve excellence when we perform, and we are excited by the impact that we have been able to achieve when we work with young people.

VCM is delighted to have been working to develop successful partnerships with musical organisations, centres and schools around Europe and in the USA. The ECM and IFCM members, the Jubilate foundation and the Slovenian Choral Organisation have been hugely supportive to date, and links in San Diego promise great developments in the pipelines.

VCM's vision is to encourage young people to unlock their creativity through participation in music-making. We believe that this increase in involvement will act as a catalyst with which to engage people in creative pursuits, regardless of age, ability or nationality. As a first step in realising this vision we are delivering an innovative, participatory music and education programme called **Hatch My Ideas!** for students from five to eighteen, of all abilities across the UK.

It is hoped that this successful programme can be introduced on an International level, with the help of European Commission Funding and through support from other International organisations. Our aim is to set up centres of excellence around the world from which we hope to engage a wider audience of all ages and nationalities.

Our education programme is offering a wonderful opportunity for young people across the UK to access music in an innovative way. We always look for local partners when we set up projects, and these include private schools, music organisations, local government and private donors. Participating schools are drawn from all areas of the UK, some of which are extremely deprived. These schools have been selected following advice from local music and education advisers which has highlighted schools with a particular need for a creative project of this nature, thus opening up access to those who will really benefit from it.

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All schools taking part receive a series of creative interventions designed to inspire their young people and offer unique creative and performance opportunities. These are designed and developed by the VCM Facilitation team following discussions with representatives of each school – no two projects are the same. Projects so far have started with singing and explored themes including the Olympics, Global Warming and the environment. Each project is unique and **student-led**. The responses from students determine the course that each project takes. The education team works closely with teaching staff to develop projects which employ cross-curricular themes.

The programme uses music-making as its foundation, and a central aspect is the development of student-led learning, teamwork and leadership skills and creative thinking. Learning how to develop these skills can continue after the programme with the support of school staff, parents, family, friends and mentors. The singing programme is a key with which to unlock these particular doors. The students will learn that the emphasis is on them to turn the key.

VCM aims to establish a sustainable culture of creativity which will inspire and motivate young people, school staff and communities as a whole. VCM Facilitators enable the projects to be driven by the inspiration and commitment of the students and staff taking part, thus firmly planting the seed of creativity for future generations to nurture and sustain. In this way we aim to make music accessible to more people, regardless of background or ability.

Sustainability is a key priority. To ensure sustainability a long-term series of workshops is planned from the outset. Schools take part in sessions with Voces8 and the other participating schools to work towards a final performance arranged with the assistance of the lead school, council or funding organisation. VCM Facilitators visit each school individually every three weeks during each six-month project to work with students, staff and parents.

VCM offers continuing training during and after each project. Teaching older young people and staff new skills will benefit the community both during the project and longer term. We provide materials and training to support participants via an interactive Web-based forum, **www.hatchmyideas.co.uk**.

With programmes structured in this way, schools have the opportunity to offer students a chance to work with enthusiastic young professional musicians and develop a productive and inspiring relationship with them.

Our twenty-five passionate and committed professional musicians bring a wealth of experience and expertise in working with young people in schools, in young offenders' institutions and with young refugees. We are currently involved in a ten-month programme working with young refugees in collaboration with The Childrens' Society.

VCM works in collaboration with various individuals and organisations who share the vision to motivate and inspire through creative learning. These include: David Hemery, Olympic Gold Medalist; The Childrens' Society; the Worshipful Company of Musicians; and The Musicians' Benevolent Fund. Plans and part-funding are in place to begin six-month education programmes in sixty-two schools between September 2007 and April 2008.

We feel that our education programme has a significant impact on young people. All projects have received hugely positive feedback from students, staff and parents.

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VCM believes that music is important for the social and cultural values it represents and promotes, and for the communities it can help to build and unite. VCM motivates people through music-making and helps them achieve a creative goal. The Foundation aims to reflect the diversity of today's culture through music education and make it accessible to more people.

The overwhelmingly positive response to our education work reflects the real need for this type of innovative education work throughout the UK. The response which we receive when we convey our approach through workshops and master-classes throughout Europe suggests that this need is international.

VCM has a responsibility to promote choral music on a global scale, whether this is by opening up educational opportunities around the world or by inspiring others through world-class performance. A new internet facility, called **Songbud**, is being launched which will allow choirs to organise tour exchange programmes, to make friends and contacts via the website and then undertake reciprocal tours. This will allow choirs to reduce the expense of touring whilst enabling them to experience other cultures and choral music traditions with like minded groups from around the world.

If you would like to know more about any aspects of our organisation, or to find out how your organisation can be involved in our education work, please contact Clare by email at: clare@voces8.com

Presentation written by **Clare Stewart**, Director of Development for Voces Cantabiles Music.

Links

www.vocescantabilesmusic.org.uk

www.voces8.com

www.songbud.org

