

Key findings from the evaluation of year one of Joined Up Music, a pilot project of Mid Wales Music Trust supported by Arwain, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Phyllida Shaw (Independent Evaluator)

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Mid Wales Music Trust and the aims of the Joined Up Music project

Mid Wales Music Trust (MWMT) was set up by musicians and music lovers in 2009, to increase access to high quality, live music in schools and community venues in Powys, the largest and most sparsely populated county in Wales. MWMT designs and delivers musically driven, participatory projects for schools, it supports musical activity for fostered and adopted children with developmental trauma and for adults with learning disabilities, and it works with local and national partners to promote concerts and others musical events in community venues, including (so far) arts centres, village halls, churches, schools, a barn and a bookshop. The different strands of MWMT's work are linked. Children and young people with good experiences of live music today will become the parents, teachers, musicians and the audiences of tomorrow. Family members who experience the world differently are enjoying live music on an equal basis. MWMT is helping to shape the future of live music in Mid Wales.

Over the past seven years, MWMT has earned a reputation among schools for the quality of its work with children and teachers, but there is a limit to the number of schools with which a small organisation can work on a one-to-one basis. The Trustees¹ and Executive Director, Catrin Slater are therefore now exploring a more strategic, sustainable approach to young people's musical development.

In December 2016 MWMT secured support from Arwain, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development for Joined Up Music, a three-year pilot project with schools. Match funding was secured from Powys Welsh Church Act (administered through the Community Foundation in Wales), donations from individual trustees of MWMT, and in-kind support from Theatr Brycheiniog.

Joined Up Music is about enabling children and young people in Powys to discover and develop a knowledge and love of music and to engage in their cultural heritage. The project has six aims:

1. to develop best practice in music provision and partnership working, to enable a broader range of children and young people in rural Powys to discover and develop their musical skills, across an interconnected range of workshop, performance, tuition and ensemble opportunities;
2. to work with teachers and musicians to use music as a springboard to strengthen children's engagement with classroom learning, increasing aspiration and academic attainment;
3. to use music as a means of developing collaborative skills, self-esteem and confidence through developing group-working skills, individual self-expression and providing meaningful performance opportunities;
4. to support teachers in delivering music education in the classroom;
5. to establish and develop partnerships with South Powys Youth Music, Glasbury Arts, Sinfonia Cymru, Brecon Baroque Festival and Hay Music Trust, in order to deliver and enrich the programme;
6. to analyse the project's impact and effectiveness by commissioning an evaluation and using the findings to devise a robust business plan to secure the longer-term sustainability of the project.

¹ Lord Burns (Chair), Robert Ayling, Michael Berkeley, Susanna Best, Nick Butler, David Challen, Paul Greatbatch, David Lipsey, Emma Metcalfe, whose expertise encompass industry, the arts and education

This is an interim report on the results of year one.

Year one: two activities

In year one (2017), Joined Up Music comprised two activities. The first, which took place over three days in May, was inspired by the children's book *Black Dog*, by Levi Pinfold. A team of two musicians and a designer-puppeteer worked for two half days (15th-16th May) with 38 year 4 pupils at Clyro Primary School near Hay-on-Wye and for the same amount of time with 20 pupils, with different learning needs, from years 7, 8 and 9, at Penmaes School in Brecon.

The tasks in each school were the same. The pupils composed and rehearsed a song, learned two other songs, and designed, made and learned to manipulate shadow puppets based on the *Black Dog* story. A week later (22nd May) they shared their work on stage at Theatr Brycheiniog in Brecon. In two separate performances (Clyro in the morning, Penmaes in the afternoon) each group performed alongside a band of five professional jazz musicians to an invited audience from local schools, including their own.

The second activity in this first year took place on 17th July. It was a day of music, art and creative writing at Gwernyfed High School, for 60 year 5 pupils, most of whom will be moving on to this school in September 2018. One of the objectives of the day was to provide the participants with a positive first experience of the arts in a secondary school environment. The day was led by a musician and a writer contracted by MWMT and supported by the head of music, the head of art and a senior English teacher at the school.

The theme of the day was Timbuktu, which is twinned with Gwernyfed's local town Hay on Wye. A group of sixth formers from Gwernyfed had recently visited the ancient Malian city, made a film of their trip and written about it. Having watched the film, the 60 pupils were divided into three groups and took part in two of three concurrent sessions (music, writing and design), writing songs, composing a musical soundscape, designing and making Malian masks and writing postcards about their journeys.

Evaluation activity in year one

For the *Black Dog* project, the evaluator and Executive Director of MWMT met with the headteacher at Clyro and the deputy head at Penmaes to confirm their reasons for accepting the invitation to take part in the project and their objectives. In both cases the timing was good (with no competing pressures in the form of revision or exams/tests) and the activity was free of charge. The *Black Dog* is a story about overcoming fear and building confidence, which both school leaders thought appropriate. In both cases, too, the project offered an opportunity to work with professional musicians and a designer-puppeteer, in an intensive way, towards a final product. While both schools had previously used Theatr Brycheiniog, this was the first time either had performed their own, original work accompanied by a band of professional jazz musicians.

The evaluator observed one of the two half-day sessions in each school and both performances. She then returned to the schools to interview the school leaders, the class teacher at Clyro and three of six teachers and teaching assistants who had taken part in the project at Penmaes School. Feedback from the schools attending the performances will be incorporated into a subsequent evaluation report.

For the evaluation of the day at Gwernyfed High School, the Executive Director met with the Head of Music to agree the objectives in advance and her colleagues and the MWMT artists collected feedback from the pupils at the end of the afternoon. Additional feedback will be collated in September and included in the next evaluation report.

Findings at the end of year one and lessons learned or confirmed

The funding from Arwain was awarded in December 2016 and it was January before MWMT could contact artists, schools and other potential partners to confirm their participation in the project.

The plan for year one was adjusted slightly to take account of the relatively short lead-in time.

The plan	The delivery
Production of a teachers' resource pack	Completed
Six half-day workshops in three schools	Two primary schools: Clyro and Penmaes. One secondary school: Gwernyfed High School
Two performances at Theatr Brycheiniog	Completed
An optional INSET session for teachers	The schools opted not to prioritise this in year one, but both Clyro and Penmaes are keen to organise a session in year two.
Opportunities to experience world class music through MWMT's partnerships with other music organisations.	As part of the Hay Chamber Music Festival the Fitzwilliam Quartet delivered a lecture recital at Gwernyfed High School for GCSE and A Level students from three local secondary schools. As part of the Brecon Baroque Festival in October 2017 the Ystradivarius Ensemble will deliver a half-day participatory music workshop for children at Penmaes School.
Opportunities to develop music skills through partnerships with Glasbury Arts and South Powys Youth Music	Glasbury Arts were not successful in securing funding for their project. South Powys Youth Music's activities are funded within the Arwain project and will begin in year two.

Black Dog: Preparation

Clyro and Penmaes schools were provided with a resource pack which they were asked to refer to in advance of the first session, so that teachers and pupils would be prepared. At Clyro, the relevant class teacher had read the pack and was well prepared. At Penmaes, where several teachers and teaching assistants were involved, some had looked at the pack but others had not. The lessons here were that, (i) at the pre-project briefing meeting, the school leader should be asked how s/he would prefer to receive the resource pack (i.e. on paper, as an attachment to an email, or as a link to MWMT's website) and to ensure that the teaching staff look at it well in advance; (ii) the school leader should be contacted again, two weeks before the first session, to ask if colleagues have any questions arising from what they have read.

At Clyro, in preparation for the first half-day workshop with the puppeteer and the two musicians, the pupils spent an hour, in class, practising the song they had been sent beforehand and in pairs, designing monsters. They also spent one after-school session, refining their drawings. Penmaes did not find the time for this level of preparation.

The project plan for *Black Dog* included a session for teaching staff at each school to explain the objectives of Joined Up Music and of this project, to demonstrate some of the activities involved and to answer any questions teachers might have. Due partly to the lead-in time and schools' other commitments, neither Clyro nor Penmaes opted for this session. However, in their feedback to MWMT, the Penmaes staff said they would have felt more confident about taking part in the *Black Dog* project had they had known more about it in advance and met at least some of the artists involved. Both schools have subsequently expressed an interest in taking part in year two of

Joined Up Music and the senior leaders in both schools have committed, in principle, to a session for staff in advance.

"I think the kids thought it was going to be "work", but it wasn't. It was fun. They were all talking about it when they came back into class. That's how you can tell it has gone well." Penmaes teacher

Excellent artists

The teaching staff at Clyro and Penmaes praised the creative, technical and teaching skills of the artists who worked with them and their pupils. The staff at Penmaes School were impressed by how quickly and effectively the team connected with pupils with a wide range of learning styles and abilities. The lesson here was that for short, intensive projects to achieve their objectives, the artists delivering them need to be skilled and experienced.

"When something isn't familiar, it makes you nervous. You don't know whether it's going to be right for the children, but these guys were brilliant." Penmaes Teaching Assistant

"It was good to see a professional puppeteer in action and we hadn't done song writing before either. It was good to be doing something outside the literacy and numeracy framework." Clyro class teacher

"At first the song was going too fast for some of the children, but Raph got the measure of them straight away and slowed it all down." Penmaes teacher

"The performance gave them something to aim for. They've been on stage before but this was live and big and they felt they owned their song. And of course they were on stage with professional musicians." Clyro class teacher

Scheduling and space

At Clyro, the project involved pupils in composition and performance (singing) and in design, making and performance (puppetry) on the same day. While the pupils coped well with the demanding schedule, they may have achieved more had they been able to focus on either music or puppetry on the same day.

MWMT had asked for a maximum of 30 pupils, but Clyro's decision to involve all pupils in year 4 meant accommodating 38 pupils. Some of the activity took place in the school hall, which was large enough for all, but the activity in the classroom (some of it music, some of it puppetry) would have benefited from more space. At Penmaes School there was ample space and support for every pupil.

"There was limited time for composition. Might it be possible to work on composition in smaller groups? Ralph was very good at listening to them and taking on board their suggestions." Clyro class teacher

"Next time we work with shadow puppets, we should film it, to show the children what works best. There wasn't enough time for that this time." Class teacher, Clyro

Ownership

Children value seeing their individual contributions in the design and delivery of the final product. They appreciate that some ideas are better or more appropriate than others and they do not expect every idea to be included, but they need to know that each has been considered. This was less feasible in the composition element of *Black Dog* than in the design element. The design, making and manipulation of shadow puppets was cited by both schools as a new experience and one that both teachers and pupils valued highly. It was an activity that gave each pupil an opportunity to make an individual, creative contribution that they would later see on stage.

"I was amazed by how quickly they learned their song and how they remembered it the next day. I think it was because it was their song. They had the ideas for how the tune should go." Penmaes Teaching Assistant

The Gwernyfed day

The Gwernyfed workshops involved pupils from Llyswen, Hay-on-Wye, Clyro, Talgarth/Bronllys and Llangorse primary schools. They watched the Gwernyfed pupils' 30-minute film *From Wales to Timbuktu* and thought about travelling to new places. What's scary? What's exciting? What might we fear? What might we hope for? How might we be surprised?

Together they learned a song about Timbuktu written by music leader John Webb and then split into three groups for two of the following workshops:

An art workshop in which they would make parts of Malian masks and head pieces and cardboard clothing inspired by the landscape.

A writing workshop in which they would write a lyric of between eight and ten lines, about travel and which they would subsequently make into a song. The lyric could expand on the song they had already learned or it could take a different direction. The other task, individually or in small groups, was to write a poem, a postcard or letter home, describing the journey.

A music workshop in which one group would create a soundscape using percussion and body percussion and another group would set lyrics produced in their writing workshop to music.

The day ended with a sharing in which all of the participants heard or saw each other's work and reprised the song learned at the start of the day.

The feedback from the participants in the music and writing workshops included reflections on both the creative and social aspects of the day.

"It was exciting, as we got to have fun and to realise that music is not all about studying, but about enjoying yourself by making tunes."

"We enjoyed singing the song and changing it, because it was so interesting to see if it worked or not."

"We both liked the pitch that we learned and the way all the instruments blended together. Also, the way everyone stopped playing."

"I really enjoyed making the song called *Timbuktu*, because I liked the structure of the music."

"We found out how to play music using word rhythms."

"I was surprised by the different rhyming words." Pupil from Hay-on-Wye School

"We were surprised by how quickly we came up with a song." Pupil from Llyswen School

"I enjoyed this new extreme music and making different friends." Pupil from Llangors School

"I enjoyed being in a high school, meeting Mr Hanks and Miss Edwards and everyone else. Kind people."

"I liked the music, because you actually played instruments."

This feedback from participants in the art workshop suggests that for many it was a new experience.

“I found learning about Timbuktu interesting. I wasn’t expecting this in art. I was expecting to be doing sketching.”

“Really enjoyed making the masks and looking forward to art at Gwernyfed now.”

“It was surprising to use pastels that smudged into each other and some that didn’t. It was surprising how many resources were available.”

The Gwyrnerfed teachers were encouraged by the children’s level of engagement and valued the “different energy and perspective” provided by the visiting artists. They thought the day had been well led and that the different elements had “tied together well”. The sharing was thought to be an excellent conclusion to the day. The only recommendation for a future session was that all children should have the opportunity to take part in all of the activities on offer.

Conclusion

Measured against its overall aim to enable children and young people in Powys to discover and develop a knowledge and love of music and to engage in their cultural heritage, the Joined up Music project has been successful in its first year of delivery. The feedback from children and teachers has been positive and constructive, and the three schools already involved are looking forward to the development of the project over the coming year. The relationship between MWMT and these schools has grown stronger over the year and feedback from teachers and pupils together has been taken on board and will help shape the future structure of the project.