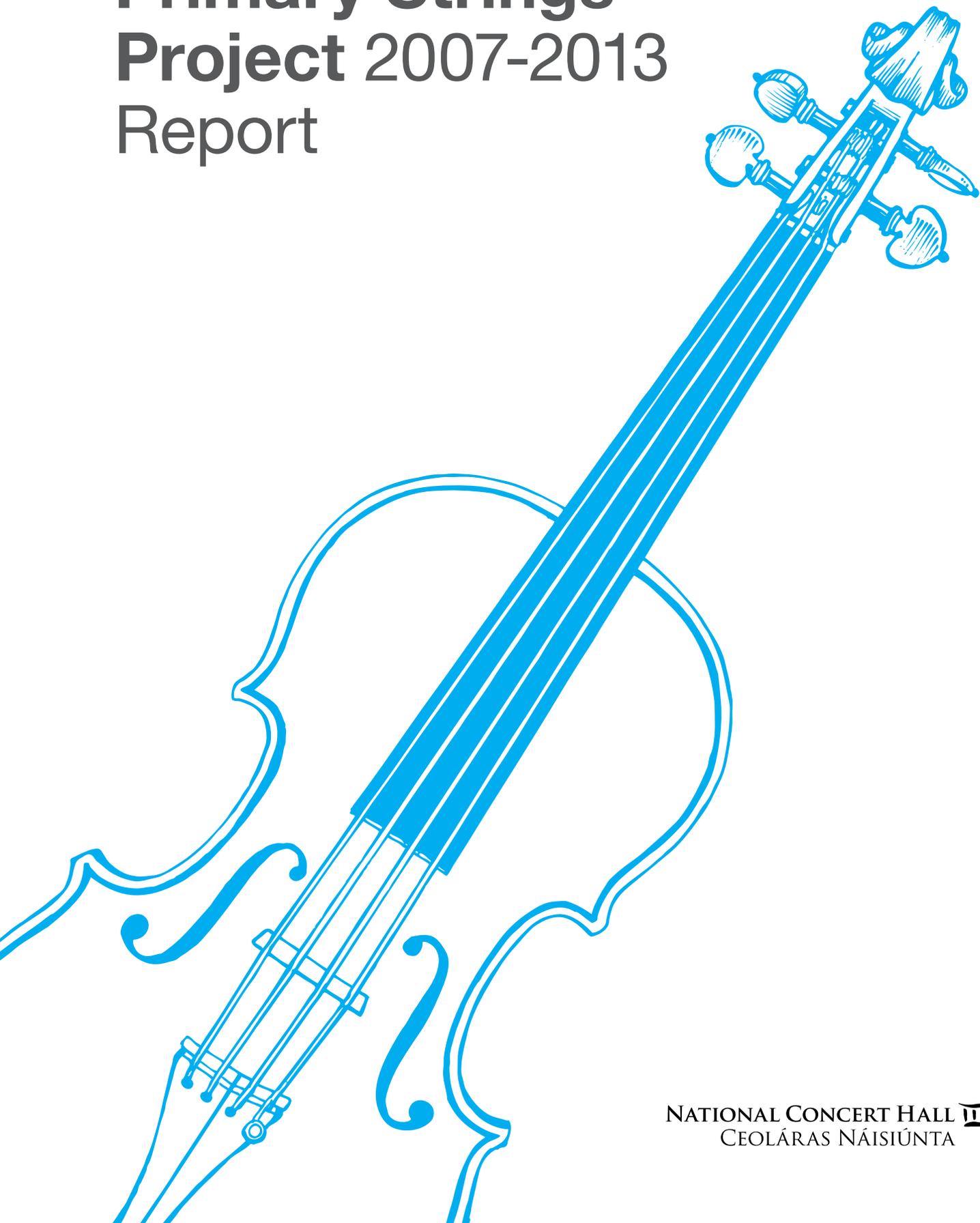


National Concert Hall

Primary Strings
Project 2007-2013
Report



Introduction



Dorothy Conaghan

In Ireland there is as yet no state supported countrywide provision for instrumental music tuition. Pedagogical practices in instrumental teaching have been modeled on the individual, or the master/apprentice model. Tuition for such lessons is usually accessed on a fee paying after school basis. We are now in the second decade of the twenty-first century and in many primary schools in Ireland a quiet revolution is taking place in the way children experience instrumental tuition. Thanks to the *Primary Strings Project (PSP)*, over 20 schools countrywide have been guided (through workshops, mentoring and training) in the setting up and developing of instrumental music programmes for their students. Since 2007 over 2,000 children have had the opportunity to learn a string instrument in class groups during school hours. Many of the schools availing of the expertise of the project director and consultant Dorothy Conaghan are in the DEIS category. Six schools have established in-school orchestras.

Report compiled by Dorothy Conaghan
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Executive Summary

The National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project (PSP)* was established in 2007 by Music Education Consultant Dorothy Conaghan¹ and the National Concert Hall Education Department to assist schools in the setting up and development of instrumental tuition programmes within the primary school curriculum framework. The project has been introduced to over 20 schools in the Republic of Ireland (hereafter Ireland) and aimed to equip class teachers, string teachers, and school management with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to operate a ‘whole school instrumental programme’ during the school day. Over the past six years, Ms. Conaghan has engaged with students, string teachers, class teachers, school principals, home school liaison officers and parents through workshops, in-service courses, and consultations. This report sets out to identify the extent to which the key aims of the project were met, particularly in the context of high quality tuition and social inclusion, and to identify areas of impact as well as recommendations for the future.

Key Findings

- The *Primary Strings Project* has challenged the value of group lessons over individual lessons for beginner instrumental learning. The experience of music teachers indicates that instrumental skills and knowledge are acquired by children (in the early stages of their tuition) at approximately the same rate in group lessons as in individual or small group settings². However the training and mentoring of string teachers for group tuition has become a necessary part of the *Primary Strings Project* process to deliver this outcome.
- Active partnerships where all stakeholders are involved in planning and decision-making are key to best practice. However, without the specialist guidance of the National Concert Hall consultant to advise on strategic planning this process of collaboration rarely takes place.
- Access for all is fundamental to the *Primary Strings Project*. There is considerable evidence that ‘school string programmes’ successfully bring instrumental music lessons to groups of children who would not otherwise experience them³. The *Primary Strings Project* is both explicitly and implicitly aimed at inclusive practices, and these school string programmes have allowed children from very diverse backgrounds to learn a musical instrument.

- The active engagement of partners who are, or who had been, Home School Community Liaison Officers in their schools resulted in ownership of the school programme. This ownership, which grew from active interest from the outset, involved other family members, as well as the wider community. Social change through access, along with high expectations and standards, has fostered community wellbeing.

Recommendations

- In order for the *Primary Strings Project* to continue and to expand it is imperative that long-term funding mechanisms are established.
- Great music education is a partnership between classroom, specialist teachers, and professional performers. There is a unique opportunity for a professional orchestra to partner with the performing groups in these DEIS schools and to build on the experience of the project director through outreach to communities where live orchestral music has never been heard. This partnership could take on some of the relevant elements of the *El Sistema*⁴ approach in Venezuela and elsewhere.
- Access for all to quality instrumental tuition is a fundamental aim of the National Concert Hall

Primary Strings Project. This aim is also shared by the *Music Generation* (MG) partnerships. Collaboration with MG for all future planning in this area of performance music education is highly recommended. The Irish Association of Youth Orchestras (IAYO), which introduces over 800 new audience members to the National Concert Hall annually as part of its Festival, is also in favour of collaboration in this area of access.

- Sourcing suitable teachers has been an ongoing difficulty for the individual primary schools. A partnership with third level colleges, where training of instrumental teachers is a priority, would give both graduates and undergraduates an opportunity to observe best practice in schools, and so contribute to their training.

Conclusion

- Successful school string programmes build partnerships between the child, the family, the class teacher, the school and the music teacher. Active partnerships where all stakeholders are involved in shared planning and decision-making are at the heart of best practice. Following on from such partnership, all aspects of community wellbeing are considered. This is most obvious in the 'music for music's sake' approach, which focuses on enjoyment for students, teachers, and parents alike.
- The National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project* holds a significant place in the music education development of over 20 primary schools in Ireland. The project addresses issues of best practice, inclusion, equality of access and provision. In particular this project acts as a catalyst and highlights the numerous benefits that ongoing support to schools can have in terms of continued professional development for both primary and music teachers, ultimately having a profound impact on the musical learning of the child.

The National Concert Hall

Primary Strings Project

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and terms of reference

The National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project*, grew out of a passion and a conviction that all children should at some point during their school years have the opportunity to play a musical instrument under the guidance of a dedicated professionally trained musician. This idea grew from tentative beginnings in 2001 in Leixlip⁵, when Dorothy Conaghan was asked by Kildare County Council Arts Office to ‘teach violin to whole class groups in school time’. This initiative was developed as a result of there being two separate provision systems in Ireland for performance and general music education. General music education is provided countrywide through the state education and examination system. However, in Ireland there is as yet no state-supported countrywide system of instrumental tuition. In the past members of the religious orders provided instrumental tuition (often on a voluntary basis) in both primary and second level schools. This was in the form of a ‘pull out, fee paying system’ during the school day, and tuition usually took place on a one-to-one basis. In many cases fine orchestras and performing ensembles were developed. However this is no longer the case due to the huge drop in religious vocations over the past thirty years. This lack has created a void in provision. The tuition currently available still takes place after school and can be accessed either from a private teacher or from a music school.

There are a small number of state-supported music schools such as the Royal Irish Academy of Music and some Institutes of Technology, as well as initiatives supported by some Local Authorities and some Vocational Education committees. However these schools are fee paying and lessons are sourced by parents on an after school basis. The most frequent providers are private music schools and individual music teachers and while there is much excellent work carried out in this area, it is possible in Ireland for anyone to set up as a practitioner regardless of ability, qualification, or training. There are no controls in place to monitor this area of private music education.

In her article on music education in Ireland for the 2013 publication *Encyclopedia of Music in Ireland* Patricia Flynn⁶ states that ‘access to music education is variable and dependent on geography, available local expertise, ability to pay and cultural expectations’. The Music Network Report, *A National System of Local Music Education Services* (2003) highlighted the inequity of provision of music education in Ireland⁷. The Report proposed a model for a national system of music education services that is publicly supported, socially inclusive, community focused, multi-genre, of high quality and complements school-based general music education.

A pilot initiative based on this [Music Network] report and supported by the Department of Education and Science was carried out in Donegal and Dublin. Implementation of this system is through Music Education Partnerships (MEPs) between local statutory bodies and community groups.

Following this, and addressing the question of ‘geography’, a national music education programme was established in 2010. This programme is called *Music Generation* and is funded by a philanthropic gift by the Irish rock group U2 and The Ireland Funds. The initiative helps young people access music lessons in their own locality, and has (at the time of writing) reached out to ten areas throughout the country.

1.2 Music in the Irish primary school curriculum

According to the Primary Curriculum, 1999 the primary school curriculum is child centered rather than subject-centered, and is underpinned by a constructivist philosophy of education⁸. Where does music fit into this philosophy? In the MEND report (2001) Frank Heneghan states that “the future of music education in Ireland is hampered by the lack of a guiding philosophy⁹”. Music education in school is delivered by a generalist teacher who is an education specialist thus teaching all subjects on the curriculum, and as a result access to performance music education is confined to a classroom experience delivered by a generalist teacher who may or may not have a background in music.



1.3 Pedagogical practice (string tuition)

Pedagogical practices in instrumental teaching, and particularly in violin teaching, have been modeled on the individual lesson concept of one-to-one teaching. This teaching style originating from the eighteenth-century master apprentice model is recorded in *The Art of Playing on the Violin* by Geminiani (1751). In the nineteenth century over 20 instructional manuals and methods, including the works of Kreutzer, and Sevcik were published. These nineteenth-century publications form the bedrock of the conservatory model which we have today.

However, the twentieth century brought a departure from publications for the virtuoso player with the London publication in 1961 of *A New Approach to Violin Playing* by Kato Havas. Why, one may ask was this a new departure? The answer is because it dealt with issues such as remedial exercises, tension release, and stage fright, so that players of all levels and ability could fulfill their personal potential. The same decade brought the New York publication in 1969 of *Nurtured by Love* by Shinichi Suzuki. Unlike any of the previous books cited this is not a method book nor is it about technique, but is a philosophy book. Suzuki's methodology is based on a 'mother tongue approach' believing that all children can learn if the environment is right, and that musical ability does not depend on talent alone.

1.4 Group instrumental tuition

Performance music education as part of the curriculum is more prevalent in countries such as the USA, where a vast wealth of good practice and research has been developed in this area. In the 1970s Paul Rolland pioneered new concepts regarding freedom of motion as demonstrated in the teaching research project at the University of Illinois. Rolland taught string playing to large groups of children in the school system. His work was studied by Sheila Nelson (a London based pedagogue) who subsequently developed the 'Tower Hamlets Project' in East London. At its height this project involved over 1,000 young string players, 20 schools, and over 35 qualified string teachers, and as Keith Swanwick remarked in his appraisal of the initiative, 'the project resulted in admirable musical learning taking place'.¹⁰

However, the context of music education in Ireland is quite different and transplanting such practices to Ireland without any adjustment would be unwise and unsustainable. Over the past six years the director of the National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project* has endeavored to adapt best practice models in the area of inclusive instrumental practice within the context of the primary classroom in Ireland.

1.5 Purpose of report

This report sets out to identify the extent to which the key aims of this project were met, in the context of equality of access to quality instrumental tuition. The report also sets out to identify the impact learning an orchestral instrument has had on the personal and social development of participants, their teachers and their families. It aims to identify successes as well as areas for review, within the project's activities.

2. The National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project*

2.1 Background

We are now in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and in some primary schools in Ireland a quiet revolution is taking place in the way children experience instrumental tuition. Since 2001 some school children have been learning instruments in whole class groups. As mentioned previously the 'Leixlip Model' served as a template for other schools to observe and subsequently introduce high quality musical expertise to class groups in their respective schools. The National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project* developed from a need to provide performance-based workshops to schools where students were being taught string instruments in groups. The first year culminated in a joint performance by three schools¹¹ in the National Concert Hall in June 2008 partnered with some members of the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland. This event was followed by a joint orchestral workshop in the National Concert Hall in November 2009 with composer Joanne Martin¹². This workshop event provided an observation opportunity for interested primary school principals from Dublin and beyond, many of who returned to their schools with the intention of starting a string programme themselves.

As more schools requested help in the form of workshop sessions from the National Concert Hall, it quickly became apparent that the project needed to develop and provide guidance in more specific directions. The service expanded to include the mentoring of musicians, class teachers, school principals and parents. This more 'holistic approach' has ensured that the instrumental music programme is relevant to the wider musical culture of the school and that it complements the existing curriculum provision. Over time this approach has ensured the individual school programmes are both unique and sustainable.

In 2010 a collaborative schools workshop was hosted by the National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project* at the Ballyfermot Civic Centre in Dublin 10¹³. This workshop, devised and directed by Dorothy Conaghan, concluded with a seminar the outcome of which established the specific needs of primary school principals, class teachers and visiting musicians when starting and sustaining an



inclusive instrumental programme. The findings and recommendations, which emerged from this 'Ballyfermot Day', were to form the bedrock for the subsequent aims and aspirations of the National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project*.

2.2 Key Aims of National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project*

- To assist school principals in establishing, developing and sustaining an in-school group instrumental programme
- To demonstrate and teach a high level of performance skills through workshops with children and to provide continuing professional development (CPD) for the visiting music teachers
- To ensure that all children have equal opportunity to access and experience high quality instrumental tuition during school time (which is not parent dependent)
- To collaborate with class teachers to ensure that the school instrumental programme acts to enhance and add value to the national primary music curriculum and not to replace it.
- To empower parents in their understanding of the process of learning an instrument, with a view to supporting their children towards realizing their full potential
- To introduce the concept of 'peer mentorship' in music learning throughout the schools.



2.3 Development of the project

In order to deal with the many requests from schools for workshop sessions the Director of the project, Dorothy Conaghan, together with the then Head of Education at the National Concert Hall Katie Wink, set in place the following criteria for primary school instrumental programmes which were to benefit from the workshops:

- The Principal of the school is the first point of contact for the education office (this can later be delegated to a staff member).
- Every child in the class is included in the instrumental lessons.
- A qualified music teacher/ performer is hired and funded by the school.
- A class set (30) of instruments is purchased by the school.
- Lessons are to be of little or no cost to the students.
- The class teacher is happy to assist the music teacher and is willing to back up the work covered in (violin) class.
- Schools are designated DEIS¹⁴ or equivalent.

2.4 How the workshops developed

The Director of the *Primary Strings Project*, trained in group string pedagogy in London in the 1980s, and since 2009 through Arts Council Bursaries and travel grants, has had the opportunity to observe, research and study best practice in the USA and the UK. As a result of this study, research papers have been presented by Ms. Conaghan at the Society for Musicology in Ireland annual conference and

the Society for Music Education in Ireland annual conference. The findings of this research have formed the framework for the consultation visits and workshops funded by the National Concert Hall for the project. Furthermore the resulting recommendations have been adapted to suit the context of each individual primary school in the project.

The following list of workshops formed the basis of this outreach project to schools.

- Class work and demonstration with primary students
- Starting, developing and sustaining an in-school string project
- Setting up an orchestra with advice on repertoire and conducting
- How to get the most from rehearsal time/ supervised practice
- BabyBows©: "Preparing little kids for big music" with infant class teachers
- CPD Teachers' Boot Camp: how class teachers can support the specialist teacher during the weekly violin lesson
- Parent sessions
- CPD Teacher Training: mentorship for the specialist music teacher

2. Data Collection

Qualitative data has been collected (with an empirical approach) and is based on interviews, observations, dialogue and workshops in 19 schools, which took place from the start of the National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project* over the past six years. Quantitative data has been gathered from a survey sent to 17 music teachers with 9 responses, and 58 class teachers with 47 responses. This data collection took place from January 2012 to April 2013.

All interviews, music making activities and observations were transcribed and analyzed, aiming to uncover the impact the project has had on the schools involved.

4. Key Findings

Except in rare circumstances, it was found that it is the responsibility of the school Principal to initiate, fund and manage an instrumental programme. It was also found that, other than observing an existing programme, there are no formal directives available to school managers in either the establishment or maintenance of an instrumental programme or the sourcing of a specialist teacher. In 73%¹⁵ of the schools, the principals had no guidelines on qualifications, training, or rates of pay when hiring a music teacher, nor had they any idea of the music teachers' roles and responsibilities. It is interesting to note that, of the schools which approached the National Concert Hall for help after setting up their programme, over half have needed to replace their music teacher within the first year, due to there being lack of understanding on both sides as to their respective roles and expectations. In this instance the professional advice of the National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project* director was found to be invaluable in setting up and sourcing a suitable music teacher.

- Bearing in mind that there is neither state funding nor official guidelines available for instrumental music programmes, each school must source its funds from either a benefactor or the school budget. Increasingly schools are required to show their benefactors how this contribution has been spent and this is usually displayed in a performance. In this day of collaborative funding partnerships the importance of sound and experienced advice from the outset is paramount to maintaining a good relationship with such a benefactor. All the school Principals and their

music coordinators who have been recipients of the start-up advice consultations can testify to the value of the *Primary Strings Project* at this early stage¹⁶.

When asked about how they would teach a class the majority of instrumental teachers said they tend to teach the way they were taught themselves, or cite an influential pedagogue. Although in more recent times 'group teaching' has been included in the curriculum at music colleges it usually deals with the skills needed for groups of eight students or under and not whole class groups of 30 or more. There is a gap in provision for the specific training of teachers for whole class groups. However (as has been found on a recent observation study to the music services at 5 London Boroughs and 'Wider Opportunities'¹⁷) the most effective form of teacher training for group tuition is by mentorship, where a new teacher assists and observes a more experienced teacher. The regular workshop visits facilitated by the director of the *Primary Strings Project* have given each new string teacher both the opportunity to observe best practice as well as to consult the director on teaching matters. This form of mentorship has been widely praised by participating schools.

- All instrumental teachers in the *Primary Strings Project* have changed their approach as a result of the school visits by the National Concert Hall facilitator.¹⁸
- The ethos of the *Primary Strings Project* is to provide access and inclusion to instrumental tuition with standards. The *Primary Strings*

Project only provides outreach to schools that have instrumental lessons during the school day for all children in the class group regardless of ability. (See 2.2) Sourcing suitable and relevant repertoire for class groups often presents a problem where children of different abilities must be taught simultaneously. The music used needs to be carefully chosen so that no child is left out, but at the same time it must present a challenge to all members in the group. Equal opportunity to access instrumental tuition is highly dependent on the repertoire used.¹⁹ A number of works have been specially written for use in string classes where each participating child (regardless of ability) is an essential part of the ensemble.

- The absence of a specific curriculum or syllabus for the visiting instrumental teacher, together with the absence of any mandatory qualifications or teacher training for music teachers employed within the primary school sector, means that although there may be access, the quality of tuition is variable. The *Primary Strings Project* aims to address this by advising schools to hire competent performing musicians, who as well as being committed teachers are willing to adopt a holistic approach to instrumental tuition.
- Evidence has shown²⁰ that children do not progress as quickly or achieve as much without the active support of the class teacher in the music sessions. CPD courses (using Croke Park hours²¹) facilitated by the *Primary Strings Project*, prepare class teachers to take on the role of co-teacher.
- If parents have never had the opportunity to learn an instrument themselves²² they are often at a loss as to how to give support and engage in conversation with their children on this aspect of their school day. The *Primary Strings Project*



sessions give parents the skills to understand the process of learning an instrument, along with the importance of regular practice and music reading. Furthermore, with the inclusion of parents within the ethos of the programmes, schools have learned that parental support in and out of school is not to be underestimated. Attendance at afterschool orchestra has increased, with teams of parents volunteering to help both during and after school.

- A form of 'peer mentorship' has been researched and demonstrated in two schools by the *Primary Strings Project* director. This initiative (where younger students are mentored by older students) has been inspired by the *El Sistema* orchestral programmes in Venezuela. This form of mentorship is encouraged by the *Primary Strings Project* director as a preparation for the concept that 'not all learning is provided in formal settings'

6. Impact

Investing in music has had a major impact on all schools opting to run an instrumental programme. As outlined above the majority of the schools in the *Primary Strings Project* are designated 'DEIS'. The percentage of students taking music lessons in these schools before the *Primary Strings Project* began was 0.007%. Over the past six years over 2,000 children have had access to weekly instrumental tuition as a direct result of the mentorship provided by the National Concert Hall through the *Primary Strings Project*. The percentage of students from the class groups who are currently participating on a voluntary basis in after-school orchestra in these DEIS schools has grown to 24%. This figure far exceeds the national average.²²

In the *Primary Strings Project* as well as all children being given the opportunity to learn to play an instrument, the class teacher often learns to play along with the children. This is a way of encouraging and developing the teaching skills of class teachers (CPD) in primary music activities. Whilst many aspects of the primary music curriculum can be taught without instrumental skills, having class teachers actively involved has been shown to be the single most influential factor in ensuring children's musical progression and fulfillment. One primary school in West Dublin now boasts a 'class teachers orchestra'

Broader outcomes such as improved concentration, self esteem and team-working skills can result from children learning a musical instrument. Recent research by *Sing Up*²³ has shown that effective arts work can make a real difference to everything from behavior and attendance to attainment across the curriculum. This is also true in Ireland, as can be seen from the impact of the *Primary Strings Project* in participating schools. One school Principal comments that 'on violin day the school and children are much calmer. If it were not for the National Concert Hall's help in guiding this string programme we would be missing out on this experience of making music together'²⁴



Class teachers boot camp

Taking part in musical events and festivals, both at local and national level, has raised the profile of all of these schools. One entire class in North Dublin performed at Dublin Airport, while another were guests at the Dublin Airport Authority annual music festival. Through music, these schools have been able to link into the wider community and the project has brought a symbol of high musical status to each school involved. When one school recently performed alongside the Army Band, music acted as a social catalyst and provided an opportunity for integration between professional musicians, parents and children. Parents play a strong role in the community element of the programme and as a result are empowered to become pro-active in their own child's education.



Peer mentoring

7. Conclusion

The National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project* has gained a significant place in the music of over 20 primary schools in Ireland. The project addresses issues of social justice, equality of access, best practice, inclusion and provision, all of which have positive impacts on children, their parents and the community. In particular this project highlights the numerous benefits that continued support to schools can have in terms of continuous professional development for both primary and

music teachers, ultimately having a profound impact on the musical learning of the child.

Dorothy Conaghan
March 2014

Testimonials

on impact of National Concert Hall Primary String Project

'the National Concert Hall Primary Strings Project afforded us the wonderful opportunity to have access to the expertise of Dorothy Conaghan (music consultant) in both the establishment and development phases of our In-School Strings Project. For a novice project like ours, the skills, experience and expertise that Dorothy shared with us so generously enabled us to plan judiciously, set out a clear road map in the form of a 3 year strategic plan, put robust systems and practices in place, source and train up relevant staff and most importantly avoid common pitfalls that we, as amateurs, would not otherwise have known about. From my experience, this level of expert support is absolutely vital for all strings programmes in the primary school context in Ireland today. We are very grateful to the National Concert Hall for supporting us and for its part in making our strings project such a great success!

Ena Morley, Principal St. Ultans NS Cherry Orchard, Dublin 10

Having conducted a small survey of children in our school, our senior school and our local post primary school, we realised that the children of our area did not have the opportunity to learn to play an instrument within their community. This was a result of many socio-economic factors such as cost and lack of local expertise. This area of Clondalkin is deemed as a Disadvantaged Area and our school is a D.E.I.S. Band 1 school. This means that we are amongst the most disadvantaged in the country.

The National Concert Hall has been a continuous help to us, providing us with expertise, through Dorothy Conaghan. She visits a few times a year, giving workshops to our staff and students and her guidance advice and support have been invaluable to both staff and students alike. We now have over 300 children participating in our strings programme.

From St. Peter Apostle JNS Neilstown Dublin 22.

Without doubt the Music Programme has had a profound impact on all aspects of our school. Early interventions have lifelong effects on the adaptive capacities of a developing self. Music becomes an anchor of identity, and a carrier of individual and collective culture and history.

We have watched the self-esteem and confidence of our music students grow as the lessons progressed. Some of our past -pupils have reported back their success in music in the second level setting owing to the ground work laid down while here with us.

Children who had never had the opportunity, or shied away from public performance have come into their own in performing alongside their class mates or indeed, in a solo capacity.

We now have pupils who can read music, understand musical terms and notation and who know how to handle a musical instrument.

All the classes have been pitched at the level of the children so they progress without realising.

The parents have been firmly supportive from the start and are willing to attend their daughter's performance. Our recent survey re Parent's Orchestra had a wonderful response. We are now looking at the best way to proceed with this. We will be talking to you, Dorothy!

The staff are totally committed to the development of our programme. Teachers have happily acquired violin skills that they never had.

Pupils are happy and motivated to learn alongside their teachers, and the peer mentoring system that Dorothy has devised has worked a treat. It has had a powerful impact on all the music students , especially the weaker academic students.

From Bernadette Murtagh, St. Colmcille's GNS Swords Co.Dublin

The Violin Programme has been in place in Divine Mercy SNS since May 2013. The school enrolment is 610 and there are six classes in each of the four streams from third class to sixth class. Almost 70% of the school enrolment have an international background with the predominance of this cohort having family of origin from Africa. There are a considerable number of Eastern European students as well as Asian pupils whose families are generally attached to either medical or hospitality industries. In addition there is a strong enrolment of Irish traveller families in the school. Ms Conaghan has been teaching the violin since the inception of the programme.

The current six fifth classes each have a 40 minute lesson each Friday. Over 150 pupils participate in these classes under the guidance of Ms Conaghan and with the assistance of their own class teacher. The school music policy has been adapted to allow for this intervention. The following constitutes feedback from the partners involved in this project. The feedback has been categorised according to general themes which have emerged.

The Importance of the Role of the Violin Teacher

There is unanimous agreement among teachers that the role of the violin teacher is of paramount importance. One teacher commented that “the teacher’s experience ensures that the time used is productive”. Another claimed that “she teaches at a pace that the children can follow and keep up”

The Upskilling of the Class Teacher

There was general agreement that the teachers themselves have benefitted from exposure to the programme and that this exposure has broadened both their interest levels and confidence levels. One teacher proclaims that she “actively partakes and is learning to play the violin. It has taught me more about reading music and how to teach it effectively”. Another teacher with almost 30 years teaching experience says that she is “actively involved and have learned quite a bit on the teaching of notes and rhythm”

Pupil Outcomes

Each of the class teachers involved admitted that there were benefits which accrued to the pupils who take part in the lesson. Besides increased confidence levels and the sense of achievement of pupils involved in the lessons, teachers commented on the self esteem achieved by diverse pupils. One teacher wrote that one pupil “who in class would be untidy and would not complete work was taking the violin class seriously”. Another teacher noticed that “children who have special needs are part of the group and participate really well”. The same teacher recognized that “other children are acting like mini tutors and helping the SEN children”.

Principal Overview

The principal recognises the immense value of this programme for many of the reasons cited above. From a management and leadership point of view it has been enlightening to have members of staff engage in the weekly preparation for classes as well as involve themselves in the follow up activities such as the organisation of school concerts, musical sessions at school/community events such as the Art Exhibition and the broadening of the curriculum outside of the narrow confines of academic excellence.

School attendance on Fridays (violin lesson day) has improved and the concept of violins not being an instrument for a disadvantaged multicultural community is being dispelled. The prospect of developing this scheme further in subsequent years is exciting and challenging and we in Divine Mercy SNS intend embracing this challenge.

John Ring
Principal
Divine Mercy SNS Balgaddy Lucan, Co. Dublin

Quotes from some of our students

'Playing music is calming and fun'

'We love being part of a musical team, it's exciting'

'Music takes your mind off stuff, we learn beautiful songs'

'It inspires you and we feel proud of our achievements'

Appendices

Appendix A

Dorothy Conaghan is founder and director of the National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project*. A UCD graduate Ms. Conaghan continued her postgraduate study in string pedagogy and performance in London and Belgium. Starting her teaching career as a secondary school teacher and subsequently having taught for over 25 years at DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama, she has since 2001 been developing a system of whole class string tuition for primary schools in Ireland. She is the founder of the award winning North Dublin based youth chamber orchestra, Young Dublin Symphonia, and directed this ensemble for 20 years. Dorothy is regularly invited to teach, advise and direct instrumental courses for young people and trainee teachers in England, Scotland, France, Iceland, and Germany and Denmark. Dorothy keeps up her own performing on Violin as a member of the “Malahide String Trio”. In 2010 and 2011 she was awarded an Arts Council of Ireland Bursary for development work in the area of Young People, Children and Education.

In 2013 Dorothy Conaghan was awarded the The Mary Kelly Scholarship by University College Dublin for the length and depth of outstanding lifetime achievement in promoting equality in the area of music education. This Scholarship is awarded to one M.Sc. (Equality Studies) student each year who has demonstrated an outstanding record of activism for equality and social justice. The award is competitive and international and is given in recognition of exceptional achievement.

Appendix B

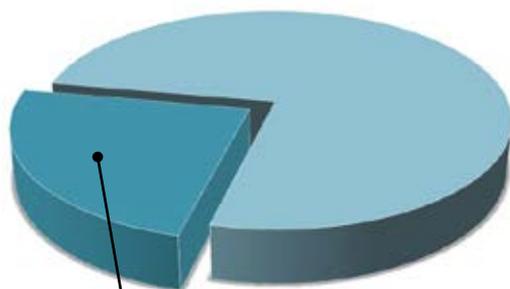
List of schools that participated in workshops, advisory session, mentoring sessions and demonstration supported and facilitated by the National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project*.2007-2013.

1. Holy Spirit GNS Ballymun Dublin 11, 2007
2. St Josephs NS Ballymun Dublin 11, 2007
3. St. Agnes GNS Crumlin Dublin 12, 2007
4. St. Ultan’s NS Cherry Orchard, Ballyfremot Dublin 10, 2008
5. St. Michaels GNS Ballyfermot Dublin 10, 2008
6. Maria Assumpta GNS Ballyphehane Cork 2008
7. Star of the Sea BNS Sandymount Dublin 4, 2009
8. St Andrew’s Primary school Booterstown
9. St. Peter Apostle JNS Neilstown Dublin 22, 2010
10. Scoil Chriost Ri Ennis NS Co. Clare 2010
11. Ennis NS Co.Clare 2010
12. St. Colmcille’s GNS Swords Co. Dublin 2011
13. Rush & Lusk Educate Together NS North Co. Dublin 2011
14. Darndale NS Dublin 17, 2010
15. St Patrick’s BNS Donabate North Co Dublin 2011
16. St Peter Apostle SNS Neilstown Dublin 22, 2012
17. Holy Family NS Ennis Co Clare 2012
18. Scoil Eoghaín Uí Thuairisc Carlow 2013
19. Scoil an Dhuiníní Feltrim Co. Dublin 2012
20. Rolestown National School Co Dublin 2010
21. Holy Trinity NS Donaghmede Dublin 2012
22. Scoil Iosaef Naofa BNS Cobh Co. Cork 2012
23. Divine Mercy SNS Balgaddy Lucan Co.Dublin. 2013

Abbreviations

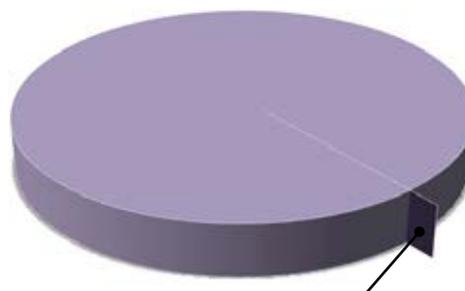
NS National School
GNS Girls National School
BNS Boys National School
JNS Junior National School
SNS Senior National School

Percentage of Students learning an instrument in DEIS schools post NCH-PSP intervention



Instrument learning outside school post to NCH-PSP intervention 24%

Percentage of Students learning an instrument in DEIS schools prior NCH-PSP intervention



Instrument learning outside school prior to NCH-PSP intervention 0.2%

Appendix C

Over the past six years the lack of specific music for orchestral performance at this basic level has become evident. In collaboration with Canadian educator, string specialist and composer Joanne Martin, who taught strings at the University of Manitoba for many years, participating schools have commissioned a number of works. These pieces have been carefully crafted as a result of consultation with, and working alongside, classroom teachers and string specialist teachers. These works allow every child who wants to the opportunity to participate at his/her own level in an orchestral performance.

Footnotes

1. See appendix A
2. Federation of Music Schools (UK), Annual Report, 2011 – 2012
3. Participating DEIS schools list compiled by NCH PSP (2013), see Appendix B
4. El Sistema, founded in 1975 by economist and musician, José Abreu, who believing that music has to be recognized as an agent of social development, founded a national network of youth orchestras. This organization is publicly financed. Between 70 and 90 percent of the students come from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Tunstall (2012).
5. In 2001 the Arts Office of Kildare County Council asked Dorothy Conaghan to set up a 'whole class string programme' in a Leixlip primary school. This programme, still running today was probably the first of its kind in Ireland.
6. A National System of Local Music Education Services; Report of a Feasibility Study, Dublin, Music Network 2003.
7. Flynn, P. (2012) The Role of Philanthropy in Enabling and Shaping National Infrastructure for Music Education in Ireland, *Sonus Fall*, 33, 1.
8. Government of Ireland Primary Curriculum, Music (1999, NCCA Dublin).
9. Music Education National Debate (MEND) Report Heneghan 2004 p.23
10. Swanwick, K. (1994) *Musical Knowledge: Intuition Analysis and Music Education*, London and New York: Routledge
11. The 2008 NCH performance included students from St. Joseph NS, Holy Spirit GNS Ballymun and St. Agnes GNS Crumlin, making a string orchestra of over 65 children.
12. In 2009 Joanne Martin the Canadian composer and pedagogue wrote 'The Dublin Suite' for beginner school string orchestra. (See Appendix C)
13. The Ballyfermot Civic Centre Workshop, included children from St. Ultan's NS and St Michael's NS Ballyfermot and St Peter Apostle JNS Neilstown West Dublin. There were over 80 participants, aged 8-12 years.
14. DEIS: Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, was launched in May 2005 and remains the Department of Education and Skills policy instrument to address educational disadvantage. The action plan focuses on addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years). The RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) Programme is a Government initiative, which targets 51 of the most disadvantaged areas in the country. The Programme aims to ensure that priority attention is given to the 51 designated areas by focusing State resources available under the National Development Plan. The Programme also requires the Government Departments and State Agencies to bring about better co-ordination and closer integration in the delivery of services.
15. 'Whole class instrumental tuition in primary schools in Ireland- An overview' Paper presented by Dorothy Conaghan, at Society for Musicology in Ireland Annual Conference, Dundalk Institute of Technology June 2012
16. 'Since 2009, Ms. Conaghan (NCH) has initiated, supported and developed an effective and enjoyable string tuition programme in our school... from her initial introduction of this concept to our teaching staff, and special needs assistants, through the training of the specialist violin teacher, and integration of the programme into the primary school curriculum, she has opened up new horizons to all our staff' Marie Maloney Principal St Peter Apostle JNS Neilstown Dublin 22.
17. Wider Opportunities grew out of the UK Government's pledge that "over time, every primary school child that wants to should have the opportunity of learning a musical instrument". (David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, Department for Education and Skills, Schools White Paper, September 2001)
18. 'I have changed my whole teaching attitude and approach since I started to work with class groups, in some respects I prefer this way' ...Experienced music teacher of 25 years said, since starting to group teach.
19. 'Pedagogical Practices and the Music Used in Group String Tuition' paper presented by Dorothy Conaghan, at Society for Musicology in Ireland Annual Conference National University of Ireland Maynooth June 2013.
20. 'Teamwork in Action' The relationship between class teacher and music teacher in the context of group instrumental tuition in Ireland,' paper presented by Dorothy Conaghan at Society for Music Education in Ireland Annual Conference Mary Immaculate College Limerick November 2012.
21. Croke Park Hours: Officially known as the 'Public Service Agreement' it requires teachers to provide additional time after school dealing with (among other items): school planning; continuing professional development: induction: and school arranged in-service courses. These extra after-school hours have presented an opportunity for teachers in participating Primary String Project schools to enhance their knowledge of performance music education.
22. A National System of Local Music Education Services; Report of a Feasibility Study, Dublin, Music Network 2003 puts the number of students accessing private extra-curricular instrumental tuition at 0.2% Figures are based on a study by European Music Schools (EMU) 1999. See also Appendix B.
23. Sing up with Strings, Report from the UK based vocal tuition initiative for primary school children. www.singup.org
24. Marie Maloney, Principal St. Peter Apostle Junior National School, Neilstown, Dublin 22.

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