

CASE STUDY

Partnership Choir & Production

Peter Hatch, King's College School



ABSTRACT

A medium-complexity project which sees a range of different schools, primary and secondary, collaborating every year on a themed partnership production. This brings music together with the other performance arts.

PARTNERSHIPS

King's College School
St Mark's Academy
Coombe Boys' School
Coombe Girls' School
Perseid School
Cricket Green School
Ricards Lodge School
Raynes Park High School
Bond Primary School

BACKGROUND

Now in its fourth year, The Partnership Production, featuring the Partnership Choir, at King's College School takes place annually at the end of the spring term in the Collyer Hall Theatre at King's. Over 360 King's pupils are involved in community projects weekly on Friday afternoons; many of these feature the arts. The staff involved in these considered that it would be beneficial to draw all of these together so that they could culminate in one high-profile production, rather than a number of standalone performances, and so The Partnership Production was born.



The performance itself is very much seen as the end of a journey which is more important than its final destination.



NARRATIVE

Each year the Director-in-Residence at King's chooses a story, which is then divided into scenes, each of which is then allocated to a different community project. The Partnership Choir's role in the production is to provide underscoring to scenes and to perform between scenes. A range of topics and stories have featured in previous productions including, two Canterbury Tales, The Pilgrim of Love (one of the tales of the Alhambra by Washington Irving), The Man who Planted Trees by Jean Giono and the medieval story of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The choice of material is extremely important, since it should be accessible, have themes which resonate with the cast and include a wholesome moral outcome. It is vital that all

members of staff involved are fully apprised about the material. Therefore a meeting of all staff involved takes place at the beginning of the academic year to launch the performance and discuss the possibilities. The choir draws its pupils from up to four different schools within the Wimbledon ISSP each year, St Mark's Academy, Coombe Boys' School, Coombe Girls' School and King's have participated in the project. Pupils meet together during the course of the autumn and spring terms to rehearse, either at King's or at one of the other schools. This enables the pupils to get to know each other and build relationships as the year progresses. Music staff from all schools are involved in helping to teach the repertoire and occasionally pupils have also taken a leading role. Up to 40 pupils have sung each year.



In addition to the choir, the other schools in the production have included two special schools, two secondary schools and a primary school, each of which performs a scene with pupils from King's. Over 150 pupils perform on stage annually in this production. Each scene is devised by the staff and pupils involved, with the overall director ensuring that there is a sense of continuity between the scenes. The Director-in-Residence visits each project during the course of the year to share ideas. All pupils involved in the production meet three times for run-through rehearsals with the Director. There is also a technical rehearsal. A dress rehearsal takes place during the afternoon of the day of the performance, which always takes place on the last day of the spring term, since all school facilities are available for use as term ends at 12.00pm. Due to the nature of the project, staff can share good practice and learn from each other through co-directing. Often pupils involved in the choir have been able to use the songs for their GCSE Music ensemble submissions. The project has strengthened the relationship between the schools involved since it has generated new staff contacts. King's pupils are in charge of designing and building the set in addition to composing original music to underscore the production.

The performance itself is very much seen as the end of a journey which is more important than its final destination. The rehearsal process enables pupils to work together with their teachers to prepare a performance of a high standard for the audience which is made up of parents and staff from the schools involved.

FUNDING

The project is funded by King's and the Friends of King's. This covers costumes, materials for set, a stage manager, transport and sheet music. The total cost is in the region of £3000.



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LEARNINGS

The most difficult thing about this project is ensuring continuity from year to year when staff leave schools. This can be overcome by building excellent relationships with each school, especially with the Head Teacher, so that the project becomes embedded into the life of each school. Timing and the rhythm of the rehearsal process is also an important consideration, in addition to availability of facilities.

COMMUNICATIONS

News about this project is communicated, by King's, via the Schools Together Website, King's Partnerships Twitter account and the King's website. Additionally, all schools involved publicise the project through their own social media accounts.



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MUSIC

The choir repertoire is chosen to fit with the theme of the production. It is always helpful to choose music which is accessible to a wide age range; in the past, pieces have included a selection from the film Les Choristes by Bruno Coulais, arrangements of spirituals, El Vito arranged by Emily Crocker and Sumer is Icumen In. The accompaniment for each piece is arranged for a small ensemble of instruments.

IMPACT

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Peter Hatch

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BIOGRAPHY

Peter Hatch

King's College School

Peter Hatch read Music at the University of Manchester. Whilst still at university, he led a music composition outreach project involving 30 primary school children at the Bridgewater Hall. He found this project inspirational and has worked passionately in this field during the past 19 years, spearheading cross-sector arts projects in a wide variety of primary and secondary schools in South West London, Kent and Northern Ireland.



Taken from the publication:

ALL TOGETHER NOW...

How to set up outstanding music partnerships between schools

One of eight case studies from cross-sector partnerships

To view more case studies, or the full publication,
please visit: schoolstogether.org/publications/

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