

Finish this...

English National Opera

Finish this...



Executive Summary

From September 2021 to December 2021, approximately 630 children from 22 primary school classes took part in the *Finish This...* pilot project (Primary School Strand). Children and their teachers responded to a specially-commissioned operatic fragment which was left deliberately unfinished—with an invitation to ‘Finish This’. Children became ENO composers through the provision of a carefully planned series of lesson plans and resources that allowed non-music specialist classroom teachers to embark on a meaningful composition project with their students, based on exploration of colour worlds of their choosing. The pieces created by the classes were submitted to ENO, and an animated film response to each composition was prepared by ENO visual artists to mark the end of the project.

The project worked with children and teachers of all levels of musical experience; 65% of the teachers taking part described their own level of musical experience as ‘Low’ or ‘Almost None’. Students’ general level of musical experience as compared to others their age was described as ‘moderate’ (70%) or ‘low’ (30%).

Overall Impressions of *Finish This...*

Teachers’ and children’s overall impressions of taking part were extremely positive, with 100% of teachers reporting a positive and enjoyable experience not only for their students but for themselves. Teachers who described themselves as having low levels of musical knowledge reported that the structure and format of the project helped them to the extent that they very much enjoyed the experience.

88% of teachers said they would run the project again in their school ‘without hesitation’ while the remaining 12% said they would ‘probably’ run the project again in their school. Similarly, 88% of teachers said they would recommend the project to another school ‘without hesitation’ while the remaining 12% would ‘probably’ recommend the project to others. A majority of schools indicated they would pay a participation fee of less than £100 for either the project (excluding the final animation) or for the final animation as an optional add on to a free project.

Most Important Aspects of Project

The most important aspects of the project were reported as: the opportunity for children to compose and explore their creativity; the clear project structure and scaffolding, which allowed for flexibility; children feeling a sense of importance and independence; having an end product to work towards; exposure to a new type of music and different instruments; accessibility—for teachers and children; and the freedom children had to be creative within the structure: ‘not

being told what to do’ and ‘no right or wrong’. Common themes running throughout the feedback had to do with creativity, purpose, independence, and—very importantly—the freedom to explore and create. Additionally, opera was seen to ‘level the playing field’: since opera was new to all the children, those with previous musical experience did not have the advantage they might have in other music projects. The colour world impetus was reported to have reduced language barriers.

Structure and Resources

The structure and resources were judged to be unusually strong aspects of the project and were cited repeatedly by teachers as being crucial components that made this project a success in their school. The use of an education consultant in planning and creating these materials had a considerable impact on the success of the project in schools and its popularity with teachers.

‘Easy to understand lesson plans and videos which guided teachers of all experience and musical level.’

Flexible and Accessible

While the project was structured as being delivered across a half term of weekly lessons, teachers were encouraged to adapt the delivery to their needs and in actual practice teachers modified the timetable considerably. A benefit of the project for teachers was that the nature of the lesson plans and resources meant that they could expand or compress the project as they saw fit. The project was judged as being accessible for both teachers and children of all levels of musical experience, and this was attributed to the strength and quality of the structure and learning resources.

Areas to Improve

Many teachers felt that all the components worked well in their setting. Of the teachers who reported some difficulties, the main areas were in managing noise levels (although this was judged to be a ‘necessary evil’ linked to the strong positive of creative freedom); initial confusion in learning to use graphic scores; and strategies for bringing all the sounds together/adding in instruments so that they were used ‘to effect and not just because they were available.’

Reflecting Back

The animation response was hugely popular and motivating for schools. Should the project be scaled up, a recommendation is to explore options to reduce the cost associated with producing the animation in order to allow a standard animation response to be included within an overall project fee.

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Project Overview

Finish This... uses specially commissioned operatic works as a creative starting point to inspire students to create and produce their own music through an invitation to respond to, and resolve, unfinished artistic work.

Accompanied by a package of bespoke resources and teacher CPD training, *Finish This...* empowers teachers to lead and deliver new approaches to music making in the classroom. The programme is closely aligned with the national curriculum and develops students' composition and performance skills, introducing them to opera and new cultural experiences, whilst promoting creativity, collaboration and self-expression.

The Primary and SEND version was aimed at pupils aged 7-11 years, or those with a similar learning age. A mix of opera, live film and animation was used to present a commissioned piece of music titled *Blue Red Yellow...* by Omar Shahryar and Ruth Mariner, which is framed within a short story suitable for primary audiences.

The film is left with an animated question mark and a blank stage; a provocation to the pupils to step into the composer's shoes and experiment with using music and sound to create new worlds and bring the piece to a conclusion (or not ...).

Aims and Objectives

- To access authentic, high-quality materials and resources to develop their musical listening and making skills, using opera as a starting point.
- To engage in the process of composing their own music, including developing ideas from a stimulus; interpreting music; exploring and creating sound; and finding different ways to record their work.
- To broaden knowledge of genres of music, by experiencing opera in an expected way.
- To increase self-confidence, creativity and sense of achievement.
- To provide a collaborative experience of being part of an ensemble to offer the opportunity of reconnecting with their peers and the curriculum with a fun, unique learning experience.
- To see their music 'come to life' through animation and exhibition to the public across ENO platforms.

Project Team for Primary Strand

- Amy Powell (Programme Manager, ENO)
- Katy Robinson (Programme Coordinator, ENO)
- Sarah Lewis (Learning Consultant)
- Omar Shahryar (Composer and Facilitator)
- Ruth Mariner (Dramaturg/Librettist)
- Tmax Productions/Harry (Film Editor & Animator)
- Alec Doherty (Illustrator)
- Beth Warnock (Head of ENO Engage)

Timeline

September 2021

Teachers attended a 90-minute online CPD session, led by the primary learning consultant Composer and Dramaturg/Writer and ENO Staff (Amy Powell and Beth Warnock). The CPD introduced the programme aims and structure and then reviewed the lesson content to give an insight into each lesson and associated exercises.

September - November 2021

Teachers delivered the package of lessons with their class in whatever time frame worked for them. Some teachers chose to deliver 1 lesson a week (for a 6-week project), and some opted to deliver all lessons over a few days intensively.

Late November 2021

Schools submitted their work to ENO by Tuesday 23 November including their mp3/mp4 file with their music piece, a photograph of their graphic score and the individual images, their Word Bank and the colour Hex/RG code of their students' chosen colour.

December 2021

Before the Christmas holidays, each school received their mini-animation film, with a congratulations/thank you message from ENO. ENO also celebrated the schools' work by presenting it on their website and social media platforms, and forming a compilation film celebrating everyone's work as a collective.

Materials and Resources

The following resources were provided for schools.

- Digital Resources. Two film stimuli/activities used in Lessons 1 and 3
- Toolkit Resources. A box of resources which pupils discover as part of Lesson 1.
- Teacher Folder & Lesson Cards. Lessons cards to support the teacher's delivery.
- A Letter and ID badges. An invitation to finish the piece and become ENO Composers.
- Libretto. Libretto for the commissioned music piece *Blue Red Yellow...*
- Word Bank. Example Word Banks created by Librettist Ruth Mariner
- Graphic Score. Represents the recording of the music the class hear in *Blue Red Yellow...*
- Graphic Score Images. Images used for *Blue Red Yellow...*
- Dynamics Cards. With musical symbol on front and Latin name and definition on the back.
- Main Melody. Extension activity to support exploration of the main melody in *Blue Red Yellow...*

Methodology

Feedback for the Primary School strand was collected via a combination of online surveys, paper surveys, focus groups, conversations with individuals, and material from filmed interviews.

Surveys

Teacher Survey

The majority of data feeding into the evaluation was collected via an online survey distributed to teachers using SurveyMonkey. The survey consisted of 46 questions (both qualitative and quantitative) in a range of formats designed to maintain interest and engagement across a large number of questions. The online survey was completed by 17 of the 22 teachers taking part (a response rate of 77%). One teacher completed only half the survey.

Children's Survey

An additional, shorter feedback survey compiled by the Primary strand project leader was distributed to participating children in schools. This survey consisted of seven questions and was completed by 251 children from 4 classes at 3 schools.

Focus Groups

Focus group discussions were held for teachers and the artist team in order to gain more in-depth information on key themes arising in the overall feedback.

Four teachers took part in the teacher focus group which looked in more detail at response trends from the online teacher survey feedback. Teachers participating in the focus group self-selected to take part. The artist team focus group met following the preliminary analysis of the overall project feedback and focussed their discussion on key findings and recommendations for further project development.

Follow-up and Individual Conversations

One teacher who wished to be included in the focus group but was unable to attend on the scheduled day was interviewed by telephone; informal conversations were held with three teachers during school observation visits by the Primary strand project leader; and several teachers provided voluntary informal feedback comments via email while the project was running. Artists and teachers participating in the focus groups were invited to contribute further reflections by email following the focus groups.

Film Interviews

Teachers and children from a primary school in Luton took part in filmed interviews during in-school visits by English National Opera staff as part of project documentation and promotion. Comments from these interviews have also fed into the findings of this report.

Characteristics of Participant Schools and Teachers

Classes Taking Part

- Twenty-two primary school classes from 6 schools took part in the *Finish This . . .* Primary School pilot. The participating schools came from London and Luton. Approximately 630 children took part in the pilot.
- The majority of primary school participants were from years 5 and 6 (64.7%), with 24% from year 3 and 12% from year 4.
- A further 2 SEND classes are delivering the programme throughout the Spring term 2022 and a case study write-up will be issued from May 2022.

Levels of Musical Experience

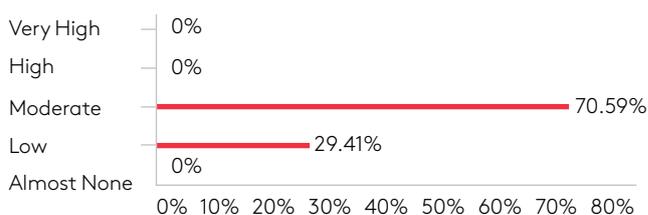
Teachers were asked to describe their own level of musical experience and their students' level of musical experience (relative to their peers).

Teachers' Level of Musical Experience

- 65% of teachers described their own level of musical experience as 'Low' or 'Almost None'.
- 24% of teachers described their own level of musical experience as 'Very High'
- Remaining 11% described their musical experience as 'Moderate' or 'High'

Students' Level of Musical Experience

Teachers were asked to describe their students' general level of musical experience as compared to others their age. The majority described their children's musical experience as 'moderate', although it is worth noting that almost 30% of the classes taking part were rated by their teachers as having 'low' levels of musical experience relative to their peers.



Findings

Overall Impression of Finish This . . .

Teachers' overall impressions of taking part were extremely positive, with 100% of teachers reporting a positive and enjoyable experience not only for their students but for themselves. Notable within this is that two teachers reported having some initial trepidation about taking part due to their own lack of musical knowledge and experience; however, they felt that the structure and format of the project helped them to the extent that they very much enjoyed the experience:

'At first I was very nervous about it as it is out of my comfort zone and I was worried about doing it justice, but after the online session and going through the plans and resources and plans provided, I was very excited. I knew that the children would absolutely love it.'

Further evidence of teachers' positive experience of the project is provided by their response to questions about whether they would run the project again in their school and whether they would recommend the project to others. As can be seen below, 88% of teachers said that they would run the project again in their school 'without hesitation' while the remaining 12% said they would 'probably' run the project again in their school. There were no negative responses to this question.

Would you run this project in your school?



The same pattern of responses was given to the question 'Would you recommend this project to another school?', with 88% responding 'without hesitation' and the remaining 12% responding 'probably':

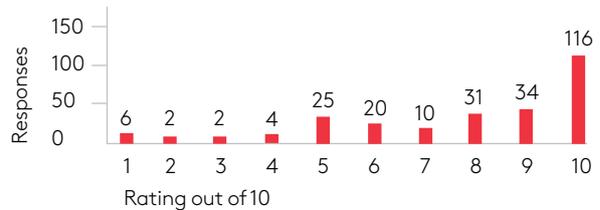
Would you recommend this project to another school?



Children's Enjoyment

Children also reported a very positive experience with 60% of children ranking their enjoyment as a either a '9' or '10' on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest, and an average rating of 8. This is a high rating for a project of this duration which works with entire year groups and is evidence of the project's strong appeal to a wide range of children.

On a scale of 1-10, how much have you enjoyed the project?



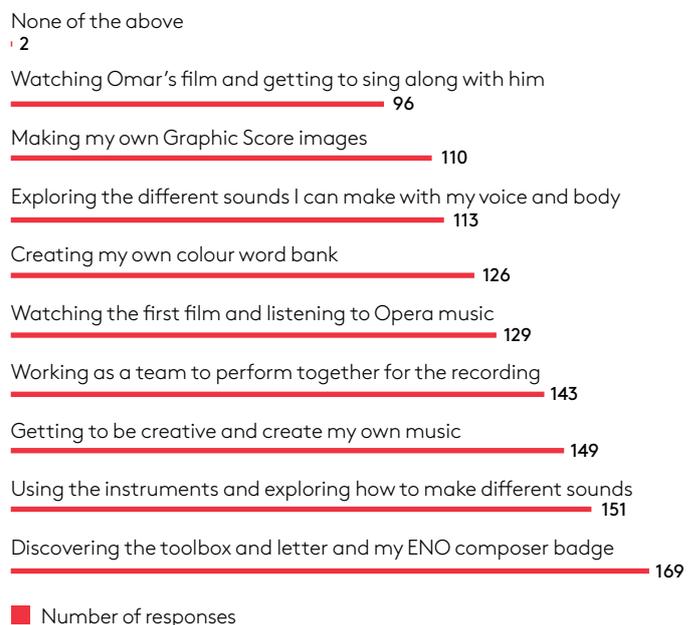
Only 14% of the 250 children completing the in-school feedback survey rated their level of enjoyment as 4 or lower. These below-average enjoyment responses will be looked at in more detail later in this report for ideas of ways in which the project can be strengthened. Note: A number of strongly positive comments from children giving a low rating on the 1-10 scale indicate that some of these children may have had difficulty using the rating scale.

Favourite Elements for Children

Children were asked what their favourite parts of the project were and given a list of options to choose from. The aspects which children rated most highly were:

- The discovery of the toolbox and ENO Composer badge
- Exploring how to make different sounds with instruments
- Being able to be creative and 'create my own music'
- Working collaboratively with one another

What was your favourite part of the project?



The most important aspects of the project from the perspective of teachers were:

- Opportunity for children to compose and explore their creativity
- Clear project structure and scaffolding, which still allowed for flexibility
- Working collaboratively
- Children feeling a sense of importance and independence
- Having an end product to work towards: 'They (and I) liked the way their compositions had a real purpose.'
- Exposure to a new type of music and different instruments
- Accessibility—for teachers and children
- Freedom children had to be creative within the structure: 'not being told what to do' and 'no right or wrong'.

'It was great to hear directly from the composer and to have his ideas explained and acted out. It was great that it felt like the children's composition, not simply something that they were given to perform or adapt.'

'They LOVED the animation video that was made for their own class composition. Thank you for that, they were so proud of themselves.'

Creative Content

Teachers were asked for their views on different aspects of the creative content of the project: the fact that it was based on opera; the importance of the starting piece being newly composed with primary school children in mind; how it compared to other music projects; and the instrumentation. Questions and responses are given below.

Advantages to the Project Being Based on Opera

Teachers highlighted several advantages to the project being based on opera:

- Introduction to a new style of music—'allowing opera to feel more accessible'
- Means of exploring new instruments and voices
- No instrumental experience needed
- Excitement of the new—a sense of discovery
- Use of libretto/concept as a starting point
- 'Levelling the playing field'—opera new to all

'The use of a libretto helped to focus the children's ideas and gave them a great starting point for creating their sounds.'

The last point (levelling the playing field) should be considered in more detail. Several teachers mentioned it and it may go against common perceptions of opera as being difficult to access.

Teachers felt that since opera was new to all the children in their class, those with previous musical experience did not have the advantage they might have in other music projects:

'The fact that it was neutrally new for all of them. They were all complete beginners so an even playing field.'

'Because none of the children were particularly familiar with it, it put them all on an even footing which is a great starting place and not always the case for some children.'

Creative Concept of Starting Composition

The use of the colour-world concept was judged to be a particularly successful aspect of the creative content: Using vocabulary for colour as a starting point was both open enough and focused enough to allow the children to generate lots of ideas.

Similarly, teachers reported that children responded well to the flexibility/open-endedness of starting composition and enjoyed the freedom it allowed them:

'I was worried that the students might find the introductory piece too abstract but they really enjoyed it and were able to write in a similar style. The excellent musical performances found from often quieter pupils!'

Comparison to Other Music Projects

Teachers were asked about points of difference as compared with other music projects, with the following themes emerging, all of which are explored in more detail elsewhere in this report:

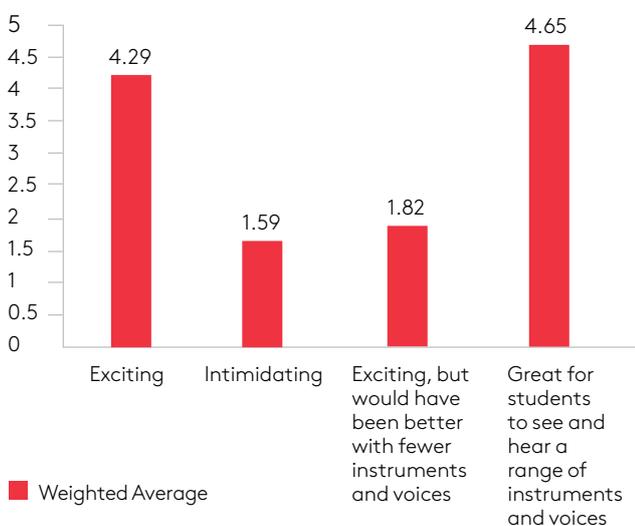
- Well-planned structure and resources
- Enabled children's own creative ideas
- Use of colour-world/storyline concept provided a 'starting off' point
- Excitement of working with the composer
- Sense of real purpose—finishing an existing piece
- 'Level playing field' for children
- Accessible for all levels of experience (teachers and children)
- Flexibility and openness of stimulus and use of lesson plans

'They (and I) liked the way their compositions had a real purpose. Skills and knowledge were effectively woven into the sessions, making meaningful links between musical concepts and terminology as their work progressed.'

Response to use of Full Orchestra, Chorus and Soloists

The starting piece *Blue Red Yellow...* by composer Omar Shahryar used full orchestra, chorus and soloists. Teachers were asked how this impacted on their class. As can be seen in the chart below, teachers rated this as being an exciting aspect of the project, which was also beneficial for students. Only a small number of teachers felt that the large forces were intimidating, and both of those teachers also said that this was exciting for their students at the same time.

Omar's starting piece used full orchestra, chorus and soloists. Please let us know how this impacted on your students. You may have a mixed response, which is fine!

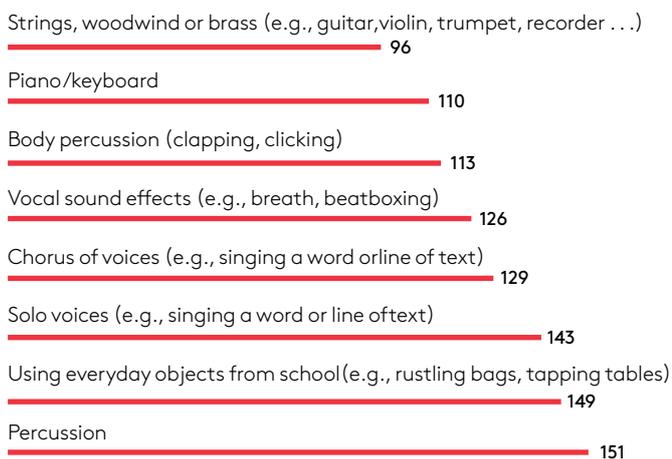


1 = Not At All 2 = A little 3 = Moderately 4 = Very 5 = Extremely

Schools Creative Responses

Instruments used by Children in Compositions

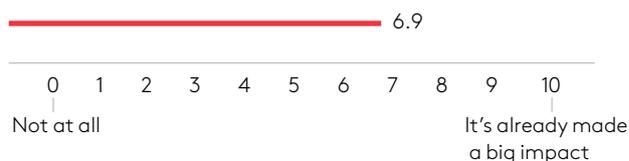
Children were inspired to use a range of instruments and voices in their compositions, and also made use of 'found' instruments, vocal sound effects and body percussion. Teachers noted that a strength of the project was that proficiency on instruments was not required for children to create their compositions and performances.



Creative Legacy of Project for School

Teachers were asked whether they felt the project would have an ongoing impact in terms of creativity in their school. Responses were given using a 10-point scale with 10 being the highest possible rating. The average response of 6.9 shows that teachers felt the project was helping them develop overall new creative ideas in school.

To what extent do you think this project will help you and your students to develop new creative ideas outside of this project?



Structure and Resources

The structure and resources were judged to be very strong aspects of the project and were cited repeatedly by teachers as being the crucial components that made this project a success in their school.

'It was all very well thought out and at the right pitch for primary children.'

Teachers were asked to rate the structure on a 10-point scale with 10 being the highest possible rating in response to the following question:

To what extent did the structure help you to understand and progress with the project?



Was the structure too restrictive, too loose or about right?



The most helpful aspects of the structure were judged to be:

- The well-planned sequence of lessons
- The quality of the lesson plans and video resources
- The initial online CPD introducing the project
- The way in which the materials complimented
- The flexibility of the timeline which allowed some schools to compress their project into an arts week, while others extended it beyond 6 weeks.

The importance of the high-quality structure and learning resources are mentioned repeatedly throughout the feedback. The use of an education consultant in planning and creating these materials has had a considerable impact on the success of the project in schools and its popularity with teachers.

'The video meeting going through everything brought all of the resources to life. Everything was broken down well into steps.'

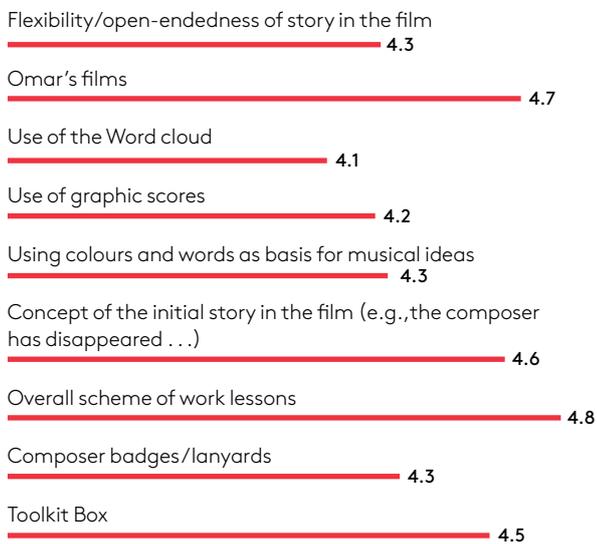
'Easy to understand lesson plans and videos which guided teachers of all experiences and musical level.'

Usefulness of Resources

All of the resources provided were judged by teachers to be very useful, with the clarity of lesson plans and quality of the video resources cited repeatedly.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, all the resources received a weighted average rating of between 4 and 5 ('Extremely Useful' and 'Must-Have').

Please use the rating scale to tell us how useful you found the resources and films in *Finish This...*



■ Weighted Average

1 = Unhelpful; 2 = Not useful; 3 = Moderately useful; 4 = Extremely Useful; 5 = "Must-Have"

'Easy-to-follow resources: both lesson plans and well-thought out and well-produced videos.'

'We could really see the thought and intention of each element.'

Ease of Delivering Aspects of the Project

Teachers were asked to tell us, on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the easiest), how easy or difficult they found the following aspects of delivery. The average ratings for each aspect are given in the right-hand column.

Process of devising your own colour world ideas and words	8.5
Delivering the overall lessons	7.6
Facilitating students' experimentation with different sounds and music for your word cloud	7.4
Logistics of creating your recordings	6.9
Facilitating your students' use of the graphic scores	6.8
Working with your class to bring everything together into your final composition	6.6

Different Approaches to Lesson Delivery

Teachers reported through the focus group and survey responses that they adapted their use of the Lesson Plans and resources to suit the particular needs of their schools, and in particular, their individual school timetables.

While the project was structured as being delivered across 6 weekly lessons, teachers were encouraged to adapt the delivery to their needs and in actual practice teachers modified the timetable considerably. A benefit of the project for teachers was that the nature of the lesson plans and resources meant that they could expand or compress the project as they saw fit.

As a result, some schools delivered the project as an intensive 2-day activity across an arts week, while others revisited particular lessons in order to consolidate learning, and prolonged their final recording, resulting in a project lasting 8 weeks.

Teachers viewed this as a strength of the project, and feedback from the focus group was that this flexibility should be highlighted even more strongly in a wider rollout to further schools. It was suggested that case study examples could be presented of different ways in which the project was delivered by real teachers in different settings. Some teachers also reported that they viewed the lessons more as 'sessions' which they could adapt for their needs.

At the same time, many less musically-experienced teachers valued the step-by-step nature of having a pre-made package of lessons that guided them through what can be a challenging area of the curriculum to deliver.

One teacher noted that they found the deadline for submitting the final compositions to be too difficult for their school.

'The short time limit for the contribution meant lots of the children's great ideas had to be cut, which they were disappointed with.'

If flexibility of delivery is encouraged, a rolling timeframe of submission dates will be needed in a wider rollout.

Accessibility

Several teachers highlighted the accessibility of the project as being one of its most valuable aspects. The project was judged as being accessible for both teachers and children of all levels of musical experience as can be seen from the focus group comments below:

'You can have all kinds of abilities, I mean me and my team, have very, very different musical abilities and we were we were all able to access the project and all produce similar things at the end. All three of us felt comfortable in delivering the project . . . , and it was for all abilities and children as well. And you know I don't think the children who had any musical background did much better than the ones who didn't because they all were able to experiment.'

From a teacher who rated herself as having a low level of music experience:

'It was quite accessible . . . I saw it as an English lesson and the tools they were using were instruments, rather than pen and pencil, and actually it worked really well . . . all my children, I felt, achieved something from that and enjoyed it all. It was lovely to see those children that don't normally achieve things in an English lesson or a math lesson, actually achieving in that music lesson and . . . working collaboratively. There's so many skills that we developed alongside the music and I think that was really powerful.'

The strength and high-quality of the structure and learning resources were seen as vital in making the project accessible to teachers of all levels of musical experience.

Areas To Improve

Teachers were asked 'Were there parts of the project that didn't work well in your setting or that were difficult/confusing?' and 'What should we focus on improving?'

Many teachers felt that all components worked well in their setting. Of the teachers who reported some difficulties, the main areas were:

- Noise levels—although this was judged to be a 'necessary evil' and also a source of enjoyment for the children which was strongly linked to the very important positive of 'freedom' and 'no right or wrong'.
- Graphic scores. A few teachers reported some initial confusion with understanding the use of the graphic scores. This may be an area to provide more support in.
- Bringing all the sounds together/adding in instruments. Although teachers expected a certain amount of cacophony when bringing different instruments and sounds together, several highlighted this as an area where more input could be useful (e.g., more exploration of how different instruments might be used to represent different ideas; blending sounds from different instruments):

'ensuring children used instruments to effect and not just because they were available.'

- Lack of sufficient time (only 2 teachers)
The majority of teachers felt that the time frame and number of lessons were appropriate and should not be lengthened. Teachers also noted that the flexibility of the project allowed for it to be delivered in school over an extended or compressed period of time depending on the needs of the school.

Noise and Experimentation with Instruments

A number of teachers mentioned noise levels as being the most difficult practical aspect to manage while also stressing that the freedom that children experienced while experimenting with the creation of sounds on different instruments was a positive that should not be lost in trying to 'manage' noise.

'Instrument experimentation with a whole class (and year group!) at the same time. It was quite noisy!'

At the same time, children who reported negatives about the project most frequently cited 'noise' as being off-putting, sometimes for apparent reasons of sensory overload and often because they wanted to focus on an aspect of the music that became lost in the overall noise (11 responses out of 252 children surveyed).

'I didn't like that it was too noisy.'

The challenge for project designers is to consider whether steps can be taken to help with noise levels while maintaining the sense of freedom that children experienced through sound experimentation. This formed a topic for the focus groups of teachers and artists. Initial thoughts included:

- Introducing children to instruments as a precursor to the project with an experimentation session to get them thinking about sounds and how they might be used;
- Utilising larger spaces for the sessions in which instruments are introduced;
- Alerting new teachers embarking on the project to expected noise levels and letting them know that this 'organised chaos' is a beneficial part of the experimentation process from which children gain enjoyment and learning
- Awareness that children who are vulnerable to sensory overload may benefit from special accommodations such as ear defenders or a quieter space in a large room during the sessions which involve experimentation with instruments. Further discussion with the creative team around this point may be helpful.

Improvements to the Resources

Very few suggestions for improvement were made for the resources.

One teacher requested 'screens to help work through each lesson' so they would not need to 'keep looking at the lesson cards'.

Another teacher requested: 'Some completed examples (made by children) to show them what it can look/sound like.'

This topic was also addressed in the teacher focus group and it was agreed that examples of finished pieces and elements of the creative process that had been created by children would be useful supplementary material for the resources.

Two teachers felt that the ENO Composer lanyards for children were a distraction and questioned whether they were a useful addition to the project; however, the children's feedback demonstrated that the lanyards were instrumental in creating the sense of importance that children found inspiring and motivating. On balance, the lanyards should remain as part of the Toolbox.

Some additional resources were requested in separate questions about additional interactive videos to use with the children and additional specialised CPD sessions for help with certain topics. These are explored in more detail below.

Requests for Additional CPD

Teachers were asked whether they would like additional (optional) CPD sessions to help them with delivery specific aspects of the project, and whether they would prefer additional CPD sessions be delivered online via pre-recorded videos or in-person. Teachers could choose as many additional CPD sessions as they liked, and an 'Other' box was provided for teachers to write in their own requests. No teachers used the 'Other' box.

A total of 15 teachers requested additional CPD in the following topics. One teacher said that they did not think any further CPD was needed.

	In-person	Online	In-person and Online
Understanding Graphic Scores and how to guide your class through the process of using them	7	10	5
Ways to approach teaching the music-making lessons 4 & 5*	8	12	8
Creating stories and new worlds through opera	6	5	4
Developing confidence and skills in teaching creative music-making lessons	6	7	5
In-person CPD does not interest me		4	
I do not think any further CPD is needed		1	

*Lesson 4 : "Create This"; Lesson 5: "Annotate This"

It is worth noting that all of the teachers who described themselves as having 'low' or 'almost no' musical experience requested additional CPD. Only one teacher did not request any further CPD. This teacher described her own level of musical experience as 'very high'.

Many of the teachers who requested in-person CPD for particular topics also indicated that they would like online CPD in these topics. Four teachers replied that 'In-person CPD does not interest me'. While one teacher requested only in-person CPD, overall, there was a general preference for online CPD for reasons of convenience and scheduling flexibility.

The Future

Additional Interactive Videos for Use with Students

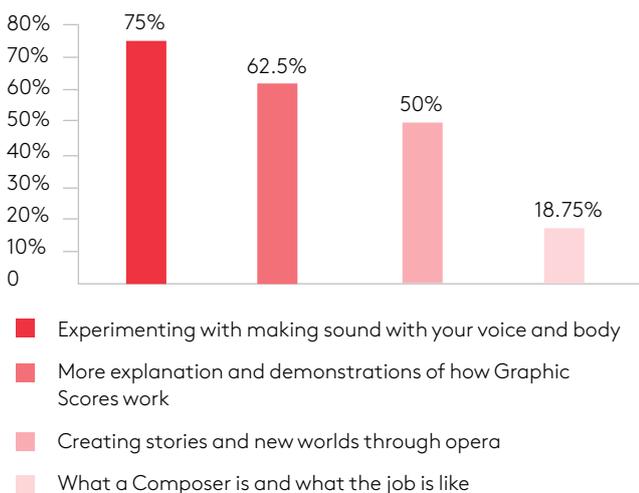
Teachers were also asked whether they had an interest in additional (optional) 'Dive deeper' interactive exploratory videos for use with students as extension activities.

A selection of potential topics was offered, based on informal feedback received during observation visits. A fifth 'Other' option was offered; no teachers completed this.

More than half of the teachers responded that they would like additional (optional) interactive videos, with the most popular topics being 'Experimenting with making sound with your voice and body' and 'More explanation and demonstrations of how graphic scores work'.

In the focus group sessions, both teachers and the Learning Consultant noted that additional videos and resources should be optional so as not to extend the standard number of lessons for the project beyond six lessons.

ENO's ambition for *Finish This . . .* is that it is gradually upscaled across the next 3 years to become available to up to 1000 classes a year nationwide. This has implications for logistics and cost which were explored in survey questions to teachers and discussed in more detail in the focus group sessions held with teachers and with artists.



Starting Piece

The pilot of *Finish This . . .* used a new commission by Omar Shahryar and Ruth Mariner which was specifically written for primary school aged children and the overall project concept. Teachers were asked two questions relative to the importance of the starting piece being a new commission:

How important is it that the starting point be a newly commissioned work specifically tailored for primary school audiences?

Teachers felt that it was important that the starting piece be specifically tailored for primary schools, with an average response of 7.1 on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being 'Very important' and 1 being 'Not important'.

How important is it that there is a fresh, new music piece to work from each year?

Teachers thought it was less important that a new piece be used every year, with an average response of only 5.5 on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being 'Very important' and 1 being 'Not important'.

Reflecting Back

Teachers were asked about the importance of the animated film response that was created to accompany each of their individual school compositions:

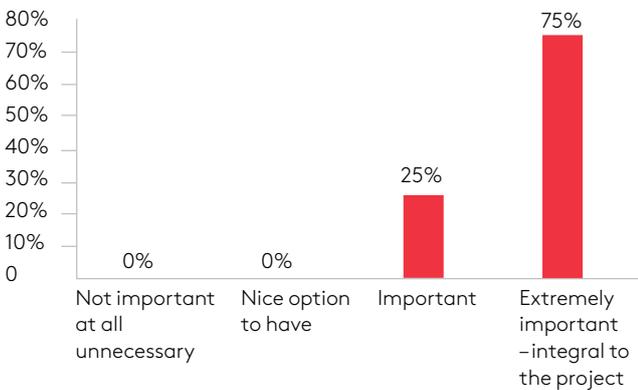
To mark the end of the project, artists at English National Opera have created films using the compositions, words and colours that your students have created. To what extent do you think this is an important part of the project?

This was an extremely important aspect for teachers and their students as can be seen in the chart below. All teachers rated it as 'Important', with 75% rating it as 'Extremely Important'.

The challenge for ENO is to explore options as to how an effective reflection/animation for students' pieces could be created if the project were to scale up considerably to involve hundreds, or thousands of schools.

Suggestions for how this might be approached were put forward by teachers at the teacher focus group and were discussed in more detail at the Artist focus group. Their insights and suggestions have been summarised in the Recommendations.

To mark the end of the project, artists at English National Opera have created films using the compositions, words and colours that your students have created. To what extent do you think this is an important part of the project?



■ Responses

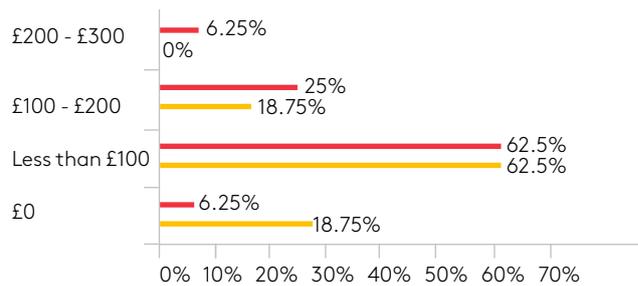
Cost

Teachers were asked to consider how much they would be willing to pay for *Finish This . . .* if, in the future, a cost contribution was required from schools in order to make the project more widely available. Two scenarios were presented:

- If ENO were to request that schools contribute to the cost of the project (excluding the final class animation film), how much per class do you think would be a reasonable school contribution?
- If the overall project was still available free of charge, but the preparation of the class animation film you receive at the end of the project had a cost attached to it, how much do you think schools should pay for this as an option to mark the end of the project?

The results are shown in the chart below (note that 6.25% represents one school). A significant majority of schools indicated that they would pay a participation fee for either the project (excluding the final animation) or for the final animation as an optional add on to a free project. However, 62.5% of these schools felt that the fee would need to be below £100.

Three schools (18.75%) indicated that they would not pay a fee at all for the final animation, while only one school indicated that they would not pay any overall project fee.



■ Fee for Project
■ Fee for Animation

Three schools added a comment which were all in a similar vein stating that they thought the project was worth paying for, but restrictions on school budgets might make this impossible at higher rates of contribution:

'I think you should be paid a realistic amount to reflect the amount of work that goes into this however this is directly impacted by funding and there is not a lot of spare cash in schools at the moment.'

Based on this feedback, ENO may wish to consider a dual pricing strategy with low participation fees attached to both the overall project and an optional add on for the final animation film, with bursaries available for schools with high pupil premium numbers. If possible, the overall fee should be kept below £100.

Celebration Event

Schools were asked to respond on a 10-point scale how much they would value 'an end-of-project celebration event with ENO at the London Coliseum to bring together all participating schools' (assuming no Covid-19 restrictions).

Responses ranged from the mid-point of 5 to the maximum response of '10' (Extremely Important), with the average of responses falling at 8.4 on the scale.

How much would you pay for an end-of-project celebration event with ENO at the Coliseum in London to bring together all participating schools?



Meeting Project Aims and Objective

The project succeeded in meeting all its stated Aims and Objectives of allowing children and their teachers:

- To access authentic, high-quality materials and resources to develop their musical listening and making skills, using opera as a starting point.
- To engage in the process of composing their own music, including developing ideas from a stimulus; interpreting music; exploring and creating sound; and finding different ways to record their work.
- To broaden knowledge of genres of music, by experiencing opera in an expected way.
- To increase self-confidence, creativity and sense of achievement.
- To provide a collaborative experience of being part of an ensemble to offer the opportunity of reconnecting with their peers and the curriculum with a fun, unique learning experience.
- To see their music 'come to life' through animation and exhibition to the public across ENO platforms.

Recommendations

Importance of structure. The structure and resources were judged by teachers to be of extremely high quality and the crucial components that made this project a success in their school. A clear structure should be maintained alongside the flexibility to adapt the project to the needs of individual schools and teachers.

Retain elements of creativity, purpose, independence, freedom to explore and create. These qualities were not only valued by teachers and children, but they also set the project apart from other musical experiences. It is crucial that the project retain these elements while maintaining the scaffolding that has allowed children's creativity to flourish.

Educational consultant on the Artistic Team. The use of an education consultant in planning and creating the structure and learning resources had a considerable impact on the success of the project in schools and its popularity with teachers. Other members of the artistic team also commented on the success of this aspect. An educational consultant should be engaged to advise on the creation of any additional learning resources.

Options for the animated 'reflecting back' of schools' final pieces. The animation response was hugely popular and motivating for schools. An aim should be to reduce the cost associated with this in order to allow a standard animation response to be included within an overall project fee.

Approaches to consider include:

- Reducing the level of animation needed for each piece by incorporating still photographs supplied by schools
- Investigate methods of auto-animating which allow schools to create their own videos, while bearing in mind the importance schools placed on a collaborative element with a real artist (rather than a fully automated and impersonal process).
- The animation response to be an optional extra at an additional cost to schools (although this has implications for equality of access)

Project Fees. Consider a dual pricing strategy with low participation fees attached to both the overall project and an optional add on for the final animation film, with bursaries available for schools with high pupil premium numbers. If possible, the overall fee should be kept below £100. A participation fee of <£100 would ascribe value to the project, while also keeping it within reach of most school budgets.

Create additional resources and interactive videos to aid experimentation for teachers less confident in delivering specific areas of the project. For example, the use of graphic scores; the use of different instruments to represent different ideas; blending the sounds from different instruments together.

Utilise examples from classroom-based composers (children) as well as professionals. Examples of finished pieces and elements of the creative process that have been created by children will be useful supplementary resources, e.g. children and teachers from the pilot demonstrating or explaining an activity; final pieces created by students; word clouds and graphic scores created by children.

Interactive extension video content to include opportunities for children to reflect on the performances/interpretations of others. For example, a professional musician playing three different versions of a response to a graphic score and children having to assess which was the best one, stimulating their own reflection and critical thinking skills.

Address noise levels associated with experimenting with instruments. Consider steps to help with noise levels while maintaining the sense of freedom that children experienced through sound experimentation. Initial thoughts from the focus groups included:

- Introducing children to instruments as a precursor to the project with an experimentation session to get them thinking about sounds and how they might be used;
- Utilising larger spaces for the sessions in which instruments are introduced;
- Awareness that children who are vulnerable to sensory overload may benefit from special adaptations such as ear defenders or a quieter space in a large room during the sessions which involve experimentation with instruments. Further discussion with the creative team around this point may be helpful.

Emphasise the flexibility of delivery timeline. Utilise case studies from the pilot to demonstrate the flexibility of the project and many ways in which it was delivered by real teachers over an extended or compressed period of time, e.g., as an intensive 2-day activity across an arts week, or with extension activities taking 8 weeks or more.

Allow for a rolling timeframe of submission dates. If flexibility of delivery is encouraged, a rolling timeframe of submission dates will be needed in a wider rollout so that schools do not drop out if they feel they cannot meet a submission deadline.

Pre-recorded additional CPD. Overall, there was a general preference for online pre-recorded CPD for reasons of convenience. Pre-recorded CPD in relevant topics should be offered in a further rollout in order to support those teachers with low levels of musical experience.

Tips on what to expect for new schools. Drawing on the experience of pilot schools, let new teachers know what to expect concerning points highlighted in this report such as:

- 'organised chaos' around noise levels which was strongly linked to the very important positive of children's freedom to experiment with sounds ('no right or wrong')
- the appropriateness of adapting the format, timescale and lesson plans to suit individual schools: 'not thinking of it as lessons and instead thinking of sessions'

Toolbox and badges. Despite some teachers noting that children fiddled with the lanyards and that the Toolbox was a large item to have in the classroom, these elements were tremendously motivating for children, creating a sense of excitement and the importance of their role. They should be retained.

Nancy Gillio-Terry, 1 March 2022