

## Case studies: How have culture and creativity been supporting people in health, care and other institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Organisation: Orchestra of St John's  
 Region: South East, South West & London  
 Designed for: Schools, mental health wards and acute hospitals

"The staff and patients at Evenlode would like to thank all of your team that turn up every Wednesday to play for us all. We fully appreciate you every week and enjoy the different instruments that you all play. Without fail every Wednesday one of our guys ask are the music people coming today. Thank you all once again you are making a big difference and this difficult time. Please continue with your great work."



Image credit: Orchestra of St John's

### Introduction

We are an orchestra deeply committed to bringing the benefits of music to all. Our main activities are: concerts in Oxford, Dorchester and London; 70 Music for Autism event per year in SEN schools; community projects with the disadvantaged and refugees in Oxfordshire; our Young Performers scheme supports performance by talented young musicians from a range of ethnic and social backgrounds.

During Covid we have started a new weekly series of 'Serenading': live, in-person concerts for patients in the gardens of local mental health hospitals, and we are trialling remote concerts into staff common rooms at the John Radcliffe and Churchill hospitals. Our provision of concerts at SEN schools has moved successfully online, and in fact we reach now more children than we ever did!

### Funders

ACE, and a variety of private donors and smaller trusts.

## Partners

We work with Oxford Mental Health Trust, and Oxfordshire Hospitals Trust, and associated charities such as Artlink. We have support from Oxford City Council.

## Who is it for?

Children in SEN schools; patients and staff in mental health wards; staff at NHS hospitals.

## Are these people you have worked with before, or new participants?

We have provided Music for Autism concerts for 20 years. Playing to patients and staff in hospitals is a new project started in Covid.

## How many people took/are taking part?

Each SEN concert uses 2-3 musicians plus an amateur. The hospital concerts use single musicians and a chaperone. Our pool of musicians for this work is about 15.

## Where is it happening?

Now our concerts are online, we can reach SEN schools across the country. Our in person concerts are focused in Oxford.

## For how long has it been happening?

Both activities started during lockdown, on receipt of an ACE COVID grant. Both are ongoing.

## What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

Bringing access to music to all, regardless of their situation. Relieving stress and giving pleasure.

## Have you adapted existing work to make this happen? If so, how?

Yes, our SEN work has been adapted for remote provision on Zoom. We also provide online video workshops – available free of charge to schools to access as needed.

## Evaluation & Feedback

Feedback from the schools and hospital wards has been appreciative. We aim to commission formal evaluations of both projects – or advice on how we can effectively make our own evaluations.

From Evenlode ward at the Littlemore hospital, Oxford

“The staff and patients at Evenlode would like to thank all of your team that turn up every Wednesday to play for us all. We fully appreciate you every week and enjoy the different instruments that you all play. Without fail every Wednesday one of our guys ask are the music people coming today. Thank you all once again you are making a big difference and this difficult time. Please continue with your great work.”

From Castle special school, Newbury

“Just a quick one to say a massive thank you from all of us here at Castle school to you, Sam and John for putting together an amazing day of music for us all. The students get so much out of your concerts and they are a massive talking point for them throughout the year, especially due to current circumstances. Thank you for restoring some musical normality to our school lives and we hope that the prevailing situation doesn't continue too long and that we can all start making music in a more normal way soon.”

What is your own impression of how it has worked? What have been the challenges and successes for you?

We were surprised how well our SEN concerts adapted to online delivery. Some technical hurdles, but mostly finding new ways to perform.

Are you reaching more people/fewer people/different people?

We are reaching more schools, in a wider area, now that in-person visits aren't allowed. And we can play to multiple classes at the same time.

What new skills have you or your colleagues had to develop to deliver this work?

Technical skills in live streaming and use of computer technology. Also learning how to deliver concerts to a remote audience. The hospital concerts required a different selection of musicians with a wider repertoire, and some experience of working with patients.

What would you say has made this project possible?

Initially an ACE Covid grant, but also the enthusiasm of schools and hospitals to take advantage of new ways of working.

What would have made it easier?

With more funding we could expand our reach.

Further information

[www.osj.org.uk/work-in-the-community/](http://www.osj.org.uk/work-in-the-community/)

[www.osj.org.uk/osj-music-for-autism/](http://www.osj.org.uk/osj-music-for-autism/)

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