

Tutor Views

Traditional Youth Music



YMI Tutor: Claire Hastings

Why is it important for pupils to participate in the YMI?

Many schools no longer have a music teacher, so YMI is the only time they get to learn about music. It makes music fun, and also teaches them about Scottish music in general.

As a tutor what have you gained from delivering the project?

I have gained confidence in my teaching and built up a decent repertoire of material. Teaching gives me a sense of purpose, and (most of the time!) I feel much more positive mentally after teaching a class.

A project highlight from 2019-20

Teaching with another tutor, Kaitlin Ross, at Troqueer Primary school was an all-round great experience. The teachers were very welcoming, keen for music and the kids were enthusiastic. Kaitlin was fantastic to work with and we got on well.

YMI Tutor: Will Marshall

Why is it important for pupils to participate in the YMI?

Many reasons. From working together and learning about Scottish culture, to having fun while making music, to pupils and teachers exploring their abilities both musically and personally. Working towards a goal in a performance is great for teamwork.

As a tutor what have you gained from delivering the project?

I am constantly learning working on these projects. The different ways children learn, and teachers. The way I deliver my sessions and discovering what doesn't work so well so I can change and hone my skills.

A project highlight from 2019-20

The constant interaction with the children and my instrument. When you walk into the school and the children are shouting in the playground "Hey Will, hey Boris" you know you have made a connection. That makes me smile every time.

"I think this is a brilliant project and, in my opinion, it should be Scottish wide in every school." Will Marshall



YMI Tutor: Emily Smith

Why is it important for pupils to participate in the YMI?

I feel it is hugely beneficial to children's health and wellbeing to experience this YMI project. Singing alone is now well known to benefit not only physical health but also mental health. The added opportunity for all pupils to learn an instrument is an experience that will stay with them throughout their memory of childhood and will perhaps, hopefully lead on to many of them seeking further musical education either as a hobby or perhaps even a career.

I am also passionate about the material that we use in this project. Children learn about their culture and history through the oral tradition of Scotland's rich musical heritage, a feature which I feel is very important. Scots, Gaelic and English songs are taught by ear which helps all pupils access the experience on an equal footing. Everyone is able to feel included regardless of ability.

There are many other subjects wrapped up in learning a song or piece of music, literacy and numeracy are constant factors. It also provides a platform for their creativity and imagination. The pupils often write their own verses and many of the songs taught have actions which enables them to get up and move around, act out emotions, interact with fellow pupils and dance!

As a tutor what have you gained from delivering the project?

Personally, I have gained a lot of enjoyment and satisfaction from the children I have worked with so far. Their clear enjoyment, particularly from singing together is hugely rewarding and I enjoy passing on my knowledge and love of music to them.

Professionally I have gained a lot of experience and enhanced my own teaching techniques from sharing material and approach working with other tutors. Having started as a song and group work tutor I now feel confident to teach whistle and ukulele classes too.

A project highlight from 2019-20

I taught a wide variety of classes this academic year in both urban and rural schools. There are many highlights but the one that sticks with me was a class of mainly P6/7 boys, playing ukulele while passionately singing a heartfelt song. That for me was a very special moment.

Other comments

I sincerely hope that YMI can continue to run Fèis Rois in Dumfries & Galloway. It is the only musical education being offered in many of the schools I have worked in and I feel that the experience is just too valuable to lose. Music is a much-needed comfort and release for children, especially during the unsettling times we are currently living in. As a local musician and parent to young children I hope that the project continues to run in Dumfries and Galloway for many years to come.

"It is the only musical education being offered in many of the schools I have worked in and I feel that the experience is just too valuable to lose"



YMI Tutor: Selina Ross

Why is it important for pupils to participate in the YMI?

Music (and music making) is an important skill for children to be exposed to - it aids them to think analytically and creatively. This YMI project is particularly important in Dumfries and Galloway as I feel a lot of tradition and natural heritage has been lost in this part of the country - it was surprising to learn that not many children knew who Robert Burns was let alone know he was from their neck of the woods!

As a tutor what have you gained from delivering the project?

In terms of professional development, I have had the time to sought out resources (games, exercises etc) that can be used in the context of a classroom and also smaller lesson groups. My knowledge of primary school education has increased exponentially.

Personally, I have gained skills surrounding good timekeeping (especially within a class of enthusiastic young people) and how to use the time I have effectively.

A project highlight from 2019-20

Every time a child had a lightbulb moment was a highlight. Whether it was a child who found handling an instrument difficult who finally understood, or a child who learned to think outside of the box!

YMI Tutor: John Somerville

Why is it important for pupils to participate in the YMI?

Fèis Rois YMI teaching delivers workshops that cover so many learning outcomes and curriculum areas. Music, culture, language, history, physical skills all combine and at the very centre is the notion of having freedom to create and express yourself and also play together as part of a team.

As a tutor what have you gained from delivering the project?

I have continually reflected on and developed my working practice. Over several years I have gained vital experience from working with young people that not only has improved my own teaching ability but has also given me some really personally rewarding moments.

A project highlight from 2019-20

The end of term concerts/gatherings are a particular highlight with parents often joining us to see what all of the children have been working on. Personal highlights for me are more about seeing individuals develop and embrace the workshops. I remember one particular girl one week getting frustrated and misbehaving throughout class. We had a positive word and she came back next week and started playing the ukulele with a big smile across her face. The transformation was amazing. There are plenty of instances like this where you see children's self-confidence develop through the weeks' we are delivering workshops.

"Every time a child had a lightbulb moment was a highlight."

YMI Tutor: Sally Simpson

Why it is important for pupils to participate in the YMI?

Music teaching in schools is about so much more than just developing musical skills. Physical co-ordination, spatial awareness, teamwork, focus, social skills and cognitive skills are all improved through access to music, and involving these aspects is key in our approach with Fèis Rois.

Fèis Rois' programme of activities also teach about Scottish culture - often on a very, very local level- in such a way that is tangible and really teaches the pupils that there are songs, languages, words and traditions that really do belong to them, and that they have a part in shaping and evolving the culture of their class, school, locality and beyond. This sense of belonging is every bit as important - if not more important- than all of the many benefits listed above (and sadly, not cultivated in the family home in many cases), and most certainly helps to create a space in which the child will open up to learning/participating more fully.

"I have broadened my own musical horizons"

As a tutor what have you gained from delivering the project?

Through working in Dumfries and Galloway providing YMI music with Fèis Rois I have gained a huge amount! In developing relevant repertoire (be that to a school's local area, or topics as diverse as Hinduism and the rainforest!) I have broadened my own musical horizons, and from my colleagues I've learnt a lot about managing diverse classroom situations with a range of behavioural or social issues. I've been challenged to look deeper into my own musical knowledge and understanding in order to find ways to make it accessible for young people who have had NO time with music specialists until primary 5/6. I really value the training I've received through the inset days, as well as having a community of fellow freelance teachers who are practicing musicians too, who I can use to bounce ideas off.

A project highlight from 2019-20

In one ukulele class I taught there was a boy who spent a lot of his school days in 1:1 situation with a learning assistant. His class teacher said he may participate but often struggled in large groups doing practical activities and following instructions. After the first week he was always the first into the classroom when it was time for YMI, and he contributed really well to the class as a whole. It was very clear that he knew he had a place in this, and his physical coordination on ukulele improved greatly throughout the term. He was rarely without a smile too!





YMI Tutor: Ollie Rigg

Why is it important for pupils to participate in the YMI?

The children always seem happy and excited to spend time playing music. They love showing off new tunes and songs that they've learned and this in turn helps their performance, presentation and listening skills.

As a tutor what have you gained from delivering the project?

My ability to teach and to cater for a wider range of needs has increased. My professionalism as a tutor between schools has been boosted by the well-setup and maintained courses.

A project highlight from 2019-20

The kids waving to me from the playground and singing a song I've just taught them as I leave for the next school.

Well coordinated and supported teaching – I thoroughly enjoyed it and would be happy to do it again.

YMI Tutor: Suzanne Fivey

Why is it important for pupils to participate in the YMI?

These are vital years for young people to be inspired by the arts. I have strong memories of visit tutors delivering music and drama in my late primary school years, and it was very influential. In fact it is the one memory from primary school that is entirely positive. I hope we can give the pupils in these participating schools something similar; for them to create, to express, to mature, and to be empowered!

As a tutor what have you gained from delivering the project?

By having had regularity both in the short term and long term within these blocks of work, it has continued to give me confidence that I have a varied enough set of skills to adapt to any group of young people. This means I feel capable going into any unknown school scenario, by drawing on all my experiences with Féis Rois YMI.

A project highlight from 2019-20

It has to be the second last week with each class, because all the excitement and anticipation is there for everyone in the room for the following week when everything we've arranged will be shared with an audience!



YMI Tutor: Fiona Collins

Why is it important for pupils to participate in the YMI?

It is so important for children to connect with their cultural heritage and that of others through music. It is good for the soul!

As a tutor what have you gained from delivering the project?

I have met lots of new friends and have grown in confidence when asked to share some Gaelic language with other tutors. It has brought me lots of fun and joy and I always look forward to my Fèis days. Even in lockdown, I've been busy as have others, providing resources for schools via video and have learnt lots of new skills in this process.

A project highlight from 2019-20

Tutor training days, sharing ideas and resources and collaborating on the online Fèis Time videos.

Thanks for including me in this fab team. I hope to be involved for some time in the future.

YMI Tutor: Grant McFarlane

Why is it important for pupils to participate in the YMI?

It's a fantastic opportunity for all pupils, regardless of ability or experience, to gain valuable experience of Scottish culture and heritage. Through inclusive and participatory material, all pupils are given a positive experience of traditional music and Gaelic.

As a tutor what have you gained from delivering the project?

The project allows me to develop my own professional practise in a practical setting and share my own experience of traditional music with pupils across Dumfries and Galloway. Being part of the project, and the Fèis Rois tutor team, is an extremely valuable part of my freelance portfolio and an enjoyable part of my working year!

A project highlight from 2019-20

Working with pupils across all of the schools and seeing their skills develop across the block was a highlight for me. Pupils at Minnigaff Primary engaged particularly well with the sessions and, with the support of the class teacher, were able to complete all of the tasks set to them on a weekly basis and were always very proud to showcase what they had been practising / had achieved.

Other comments

The project gives pupils across Dumfries & Galloway an engaging and diverse experience of Scottish music and Gaelic. The pupils respond positively to the musicians visiting and are always excited to take part!



YMI Tutor: Wendy Stewart

Why is it important for pupils to participate in the YMI?

The value of having a live musician in the room with children is immense. The pupils really respond to seeing, hearing and joining in with our activities. Making the experience both fun and informative maintains interest through the lesson time for the wide range of abilities. It opens the children's minds to the life that you can have with music at any level.

As a tutor what have you gained from delivering the project?

It has honed my skills as a teacher of groups, the psychology of classroom instruction and given lots of feedback - whether asked for or not! Though hard work it is very rewarding and gives me a real sense of being part of many children's positive view the traditional arts. I also gave up working at the Conservatoire in Glasgow to spend more time in Dumfries and Galloway!

A project highlight from 2019-20

Working out a single note, rhythmic pattern on the whistle, to a Zimbabwean song that prompted one lad - usually a bit too cool to get enthusiastic - to say 'That was COOL!'

Other comments

Music is fundamental to so much learning and gives so much confidence to a child as well. Having been involved in traditional music for over 50 years I've come to realise that, if we just leave it up to a few strong but scattered family and community connections, we risk losing our young people's knowledge and regard for our Scottish traditions. If we don't teach this in every school, here in Scotland, who will?

"Music is fundamental to so much learning and gives so much confidence"

*Photos by: Christian Gamauf
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