

YOUTH ARTS FUND - SMALL GRANTS SCHEME



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Introduction

In 2021, thanks to the Youth Arts Fund – Small Grants Scheme, Fèis Rois funded 11 youth music projects, providing access to music activities to about 650 young people across Scotland as well as paid work opportunities for 33 freelancers including musicians and creative practitioners.

The projects ranged from song workshops with young refugees and asylum seekers to ceilidhs for under 5s and the impact these projects have had on the local communities they were based in has been immense. Taking place at a time when there was a lack of opportunities for children and young people to engage with live music due to the pandemic, these projects had a positive and important effect on participants' well-being and for the under 5s in particular, supported their social, physical and cognitive development.

The work carried out by these freelance musicians, and the impact it has had on communities across Scotland, has been impressive, and we are delighted to share these projects with you here.

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Development Of Early Years Show – Argyll & Glasgow

“It was a great learning curve in terms of thinking about dramaturgy, movement and storytelling and developed my understanding of the needs and requirements of early years audiences.”

Harpist and composer, Ailie Robertson, used her award to fund the creation and development of a performance for babies and toddlers, presented by a trio of actor/musician performers. The playful thirty-minute performance has been designed to introduce young audiences to traditional instruments, music, song and movement, all woven around a basis of storytelling.

Ailie worked with Starcatchers, Scotland’s Arts and Early Years organisation, for support on incorporating age and ability appropriate physical and cognitive activities into the performance as well as support with recruiting practitioners.



Whilst the project at this stage was just in the R&D phase, Ailie now has a near performance-ready show for early years audiences, which she is excited to perform as soon as possible. Ailie said: “This project has had a huge impact on my practise and development. It allowed me to work with a variety of new practitioners and partners, thus widening my professional network. It was a great learning curve in terms of thinking about dramaturgy, movement and storytelling and developed my understanding of the needs and requirements of early years audiences. It has resulted in a piece which now has huge potential for touring, both in its current form, and in a Gaelic translation version.”

Ayrshire Traditional Music Summer School – Ayrshire

“It is crucial that musical engagement is fun as well as educational, hopefully next summer restrictions will allow a more ‘normal’ approach. However I think we will have to keep the quiz; the students have expressed a desire for it to become a permanent feature, whether online or not!”



Emma Tomlinson has been running the Ayrshire Traditional Music Summer School for six years and in 2021 this had to be moved online. The summer school aims to provide young musicians across Ayrshire with the opportunity to learn about Scottish music from a variety of different tutors each year. In 2021 it took place online over 3 days with tutors Patsy Reid (Fiddle), Mike Vass (advanced group work), Adam Sutherland (Fiddle), Cameron Nixon (voice), Emma Tomlinson (fiddle/group work) and a guest dance workshop from Sophie Stevenson. This was a series of traditional music workshops for young musicians in the Ayrshire area aimed at teaching tunes and learning about Scottish

traditional music from experienced musicians and tutors.

There are high levels of poverty in the region and due to COVID-19 lockdown this was exacerbated and would've meant a lack of opportunities for aspiring musicians if the funding was not in place. Due to the different format in 2021 they were able to run a singing class for the first time which all students benefitted from and all students also gained understanding of traditional step dancing and playing for dancing. Emma said: “students thoroughly enjoyed the workshops, only wishing they can be in-person next year. As a consequence, all of the students that took part continued with their normal tuition during the academic year and many applied to join regional ensembles such as Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra, the Orchestra of West Scotland and the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland.”



It was important to find ways of allowing social interaction and fun throughout the online summer school so the addition of a quiz allowed all the participants to interact and laugh together. As a concert wasn't possible, a video was produced featuring all the participants, allowing Emma to further develop her skills of curating and editing videos. This can be watched [here](#).

Ceilidh Tots – East Renfrewshire Council

“Children were at the heart of the sessions and it was very much designed to make families feel comfortable in an environment where children could roam around freely and enjoy themselves whilst being exposed to live Scottish music.”

Mairi-Therese Gilfedder established Ceilidh Tots; a series of baby & toddler music sessions in East Renfrewshire. Taking to the stage, Mairi, along with two other musicians, delivered mini Scottish traditional music concerts with the added sensory element of toys, bubbles, blankets and parachutes to allow the children to engage and interact with music and movement. Success was evident in the fully booked sessions with a waiting list as well. Mairi-Therese said: “Many parents & guardians were so grateful to be able to be mixing again, having not had much opportunity over the last two years. Many commented on the

fact that they felt privileged that their little ones were hearing live music for the first time, and it did not matter if they were very little and not quite fully engaged – they were directly exposed to live music whilst playing with sensory toys and that was the main thing. Many of the older children were really engaged however and practised playing along on the instruments and really seemed to light up when the music started. The ceilidh dance went down well and as the session progressed, the children became more confident. It was great to see the children respond to the music with dancing, playing along with the instruments and just running around with excitement.”



Gaelic & Scots Song For Young Refugees & Asylum Seekers – Glasgow

“When they arrived at the first class, they appeared withdrawn and detached, but by the second week they literally skipped into the building with a big smile on their face.”

Gaelic singer Mischa Macpherson ran a series of Gaelic and Scots song workshops, classes and lessons for young refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow, working with a variety of partner organisations to ensure the needs and wants of children and young people were met, including Central and West Integration Network, a Scottish charity based in Glasgow that supports asylum seekers, refugees, migrant workers and black and minority ethnic people to access resources that improve their standard of living, Young Saheila, a mental health and well-being support organisation for black and minority ethnic women and girls in Scotland, and the Maryhill Integration Network.

A weekly parent and toddler music class at Garnethill Multi-Cultural Centre was attended by under 5s, largely from minority ethnic backgrounds and living, with their families, in nearby hotel accommodation. Mischa believes that this part of the project made the most notable impact. Housed in temporary accommodation, with each family just given one room to live in, the children were not able to register with a school until they were given permanent accommodation, with some families having lived in this situation for over six months and as a result, according to one of the mothers, the mental health of both the parents and children were suffering. Mischa said: “When they first arrived at the first class, they appeared withdrawn and detached, but by the second week they literally skipped into the building with a big smile on their face. It was wonderful to see them play, sing and come

along - a chance to be kids and meet other kids. One of the mothers of these families was not shy in telling me what a lifeline the weekly classes had become.”

The parent and toddler class, which was open to non-refugee and asylum seekers living in the neighbourhood too, provided many of the toddlers with their first experience of socialising with other toddlers, due to the pandemic. This class also provided the opportunity for asylum seeking and local families to connect and support each other.

Mischa experienced many heart-warming moments during her project, all of which demonstrated the importance of music. In one session, Mischa welcomed two sisters who had just arrived from Syria: “They didn’t have a single word of English and were very nervous at the beginning. They were instantly able to join in with the activities through the language of music. We began with body percussion exercises all together. No speaking was necessary, and suddenly everyone in the room were equals, learning something new together. Gaelic songs also worked particularly well in situations like this, as they were all learning from the same point and no one felt embarrassed about their lack of English.”

For a keen young singer from Zimbabwe, who was recently granted refugee status, 1-1 Gaelic song lessons with Mischa provided her with a beautiful way for her to develop her singing technique and connect more with Scottish culture and her new home.

Traditional Music For Highland Virtual Academy - Highland

“This project was a lifeline for the children involved. It gave them a safe space to attend each week as they could not attend school. All the participants gained confidence whilst having fun and experienced various activities including music, art and storytelling whilst learning about Scotland’s rich culture.”

Working with the Highland Virtual Academy, Gillian Stevenson delivered a fun, interactive traditional music and storytelling project for primary school children who were unable to return to school for a variety of reasons.

Delivered online, Gillian worked with Lillian Ross to lead creative workshops complimenting the class projects which included the Coast of Britain and European languages and dialects. Gillian said: “The project centred around the needs of the children and their opinions were vital to the success of this project. The children requested to attend both sessions and although they were originally quite shy and wouldn’t attend the sessions with their cameras on this changed half way through the first session and all cameras were on for all other sessions. Each week the rapport and trust built between myself, the children and the staff which helped to break down their inhibitions. The children became more involved each week and started to share their experiences and opinions. The children also voiced what they would like to do such as create instruments from stuff lying around at home which proved a fun activity.”

The project provided these children with the opportunity to learn about Scotland’s culture whilst also developing new communication and listening skills and giving them the chance to express themselves through music and storytelling.

Music At The Hub – Highland

Charlie McKerron and Ilona Kennedy developed a project working with Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) in The Hub in Aviemore. Facilitating drop-in workshops for young people to attend during the school day, Charlie and Ilona worked on a variety of different musical activities, ranging from sound recording to percussion and a variety of instruments.



Instruments and sound recording equipment were left in The Hub so that the young people could access this freely, outside of the organised workshops. Charlie and Ilona also supported a lunchtime ceildh band for young people in S1-6. The sessions were designed to meet the needs and preferences of the young people and the young people were encouraged to develop their own musical ideas and projects.

Music In Nurseries – Highland

“It was impressive how developed their sense of rhythm was as a group and it was really inspiring and exciting to make music with them. They just spontaneously joined in, quite naturally.”

Nurseries in Lochinver, Achiltibuie, Ullapool, Leckmelm and Scoraig received traditional music sessions from Anne Wood. Many of the nurseries receive minimal or no music support so Anne’s sessions were greatly appreciated by the children and staff, particularly after the initial Covid lockdowns.

Anne introduced the children to different instruments and encouraged them to express themselves and share their own stories related to the songs she sang. The children had the opportunity to explore music, song and dance and Anne drew on musical material she had learned when her own children were in Rudolph Steiner parent and child sessions, Steiner kindergarten and Colourstrings Kodaly classes. She said: I found all of these to be very valuable for the musical development of my own children and helped me learn how best to have musical interactions with very young children and babies. Each child was addressed individually, according to how they were feeling and given space to express themselves in the hello, name and goodbye songs. Some children wanted to dance in the dancing sections, others just wanted to focus on listening to the music and watch me playing.”

KinderCroft Nursery in Leckmelm is an outdoor forest nursery so the sessions were delivered outdoors, allowing the children to make use of their existing music making area, with built-in sound-making objects. The children played their own natural instruments along with Anne or used forest materials to make sounds and rhythms; surprising and delighting Anne with their ability to join in and make music together, adding: “It was impressive how developed their sense of rhythm was as a group and it was really inspiring and exciting to make music with them. They just spontaneously joined in, quite naturally.”

Wee Folk – Highland

“The children were very excited to spend time developing their music skills with Lilian and it was lovely to see the relationship between Lilian and the children develop over time.”

Lilian Ross devised and delivered ‘Wee Folk’, a project for nursery children, encouraging active play through traditional games, songs and storytelling.

Working in two nurseries, Mulbuie and Beauly, Lilian’s sessions presented a variety of experiences for physical active play which encouraged the children to acquire and build on skills such as problem solving, sharing, developing language and helped them take responsibility both collectively and as individuals. Many of the games presented opportunities for each child to experience success and self-expression which in turn developed their self-esteem.

Lilian developed new strategies for working with young children, simplifying instructions and content to match their abilities. Zoning outdoor spaces for certain activities, such as a polytunnel for storytelling, arbour for puppetry, hedge maze for circle games, helped make the most of outdoor spaces during the pandemic when many visiting tutors were not able to teach inside the school. Lilian also created a nursery resource which was given to each child and nursery, leaving an invaluable legacy of her project.



A nursery staff member said: “The pupils will be making glove puppets as a result of Lilian’s visits as the children enjoyed playing with them so much. Staff will now use puppets more often as part of their general practise, in activities such as What’s the Time Mr Wolf and other games across the curriculum. The staff will continue to develop the exploration of musical instruments, and now feel much more confident to do this, by using Lilian’s songs, rhymes, books and ideas. The children were very excited to spend time developing their music skills with Lilian and it was

lovely to see the relationship between Lilian and the children develop over time. The children were excited to receive their booklets and the staff plan to continue to use these in nursery.”

Seamab Workshops – Kinross

“When the tutors played together in the session, the calming effect was noticeable; the point was made that music can often be used in this way to help deal with stress or anxiety. Hopefully our sessions have re-enforced the idea that music can be used as a way of improving mental health.”

Charlie Stewart worked with Seamab, a charity which provides care and education for children and young people from across Scotland who have more complex needs and require specialised intensive support, to deliver a series of traditional music workshops along with a team of freelance musicians including Luc McNally, Megan MacDonald, Callum Edwards, Ross Miller, Mischa Macpherson and Alistair Paterson. Workshops covered subjects like how the instruments worked, tune types, rhythms and melodies, Gaelic singing and language. The pupils also had the opportunity to try the instruments and were encouraged to join in with the music.



Teachers at the school noticed several pupils growing in confidence, getting involved in sessions when they might normally sit out – the music allowed the pupils to focus and interact with the musicians and their friends.

Charlie said: “When we played together in the sessions the calming effect was noticeable and the point was made that music can often be used in this way to help deal with stress or anxiety. Hopefully our sessions have re-enforced the idea that music can be used as a way of improving mental health. Working together when making music and sharing instruments can strengthen ties between pupils, and being able to ask questions and lead the music making could help their confidence. It was

great to get to know them and see their interest increase as the weeks progressed.”

Traditional Music For Early Years – Perthshire

“One pupil who didn’t speak for the first 5 sessions, and the nursery staff said doesn’t generally speak at all, was singing along by the final sessions, which was amazing to witness.”

Over 10 weeks, nurseries in Perthshire benefitted from fun, interactive traditional music sessions with Catriona Hawksworth. With each class tailored to the needs and abilities of the children, Catriona delivered sessions including singing and dancing in four nurseries. Taking into consideration the different stages of development and needs of each class, the sessions were tailored to each nursery to ensure the children were getting the most out of each class.



One class particularly enjoyed being outdoors so Catriona led classes which involved using sticks to clap along with the music and stamping in the mud in time to the music! Post lockdown, listening and communication skills were one area which was particularly important to reinforce so Catriona incorporated activities to support this area of development, adding: “One pupil who didn’t speak for the first 5 sessions, and the nursery staff said doesn’t generally speak at all, was singing along by the final sessions, which was amazing to witness.”

Traditional Music Workshops – Renfrewshire

“The impact on wellbeing for pupils was evident – each week we visited, it was very clear how happy they were to have us there.”

Grant McFarlane was joined by Ron Jappy to deliver traditional music workshops to primary school children in four schools across Renfrewshire. The children were given the opportunity to select what activities to get involved in such as body percussion, musical phrases and rhythms and Gaelic language.

For many children, this was their first experience of traditional music and seeing and hearing some of the instruments. The teachers highlighted how special an opportunity it was for them to have professional musicians in the classroom with them, teaching them about their culture and heritage in such a fun and engaging way.



Although Grant and Ron have worked together many times on youth music projects, they developed their teaching methods during this project, with Grant saying: “Ron and I were able to develop some of our previous teaching material with the pupils leading on what they would like to learn. Many of their ideas have allowed us to take away learning from the project and use it in future work.”

Acknowledgements

In early 2021, Fèis Rois distributed £40,000 to twelve musicians across Scotland to devise and deliver their own youth music projects through the Youth Arts Small Grants Scheme as part of a Scottish Government Covid-19 Funding Package to support the arts.

The grants, administered by Creative Scotland, aimed to create work opportunities for freelance musicians and to provide arts activities for children and young people, especially those most affected by Covid-19.

One musician was unable to go ahead with their funded project, so this money was redistributed to extend the project in Highland for Care Experienced Young People living in Badenoch and Strathspey. In total, 11 projects were delivered.

Fèis Rois is grateful to Creative Scotland for their continued support in projects like this which allow us to provide paid work opportunities for freelancers whilst also providing high quality music tuition to children and young people across Scotland.