

CONVO

YEAR 2 EVALUATION REPORT

Authors: Alastair Tallon and Katrina Duncan



tri-borough
music hub



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PARTNERSHIP FIRST

Convo: Year 2 Evaluation Report

Partnership First: *Creating better partnerships*

Partnership First provides expert and independent support for arts organisations to aid effective partnerships and project development in Music and the Arts.

Partnership First is founded on the expertise and in-depth knowledge of the arts/education sectors based on over 50 years of experience working in this field.

For further information contact:

alastair@partnershipfirst.co.uk

info@partnershipfirst.co.uk

www.partnershipfirst.co.uk

Convo: Year 2 Evaluation Report Authors:



Alastair Tallon, Co-Founder of Partnership First, is a highly experienced creative and strategic leader with over 25 years of working in the education and performing arts sectors. He has established education departments in many institutions, creating and shaping a bespoke strategy designed to deliver on the identified key priorities. Central to many of the successful projects has been the increased understanding of the value of strategic partnerships and how to construct, maintain and grow those partnerships over time.



Katrina Duncan has over thirty years' experience working in the performing arts – theatre, music, opera, dance and puppetry – as a project manager and producer, trainer and evaluator. Posts have included Coordinator of a national programme of out-of-school music programmes for Youth Music, and Associate Director, Learning and Development for live music producer Serious. Partnerships and collaboration have been key themes in her work, taking professional artists into education and community settings including schools, pupil referral units, prisons, hostels and supported housing.



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SECTION 1: Introduction

The Tri-borough Music Hub is the lead organisation for the provision of music to young people and schools across three London boroughs: Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. The work of the Hub is directed by the three local authorities, the Royal Albert Hall and the Royal College of Music.

Partnership First were commissioned by the Strategic Partners to evaluate *Convo*, a large-scale live music project that ran from September 2017 – March 2019. Partnership First were asked to measure *Convo*'s impact on the stakeholders and make recommendations where appropriate that would enable the Hub to plan and deliver other projects of this nature.

In April 2018, Partnership First produced the Evaluation Report of the Research and Development period covering September 2017 – March 2018.

This Report examines Year 2 of *Convo* – which includes the recruitment of the schools, the rehearsal process and the performance. It measures the extent of the impact of the project on the aims as identified by the Strategic Partners for young people (school pupils and ensemble members), teachers and for raising the profile of music in schools.

It also reports on the project delivery including the support offered to schools and the role of the Strategic Partners.

1.1 Methodology

Partnership First used the following evaluation methods to gather evidence:

July 2018	Interview with Composer
November 2018	Schools' Survey 1
	Ensemble Leaders' Survey 1
	Schools' rehearsal observations
March 2019	Massed Choir Rehearsals observations
	Massed Ensemble Rehearsals observations
	Schools' Survey 2

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Ensemble Leaders' Survey 2

Participant surveys (for pupils and ensemble members)

Interviews:

TBMH Vocal Team Lead for Convo: Sophia Allen

Tri-borough Music Hub: Stuart Whatmore

Royal Albert Hall: Paul Munday

Royal College of Music: Hayley Clements, Katy Hemmingway, Ruth Dewhirst

Rhythm Studio: Chris Hodges

Sonic Pi: Sam Aaron

Inspire-works: Mike Simpson

1.2 School Survey Responses

39 schools participated in *Convo*. 31 schools took part in Survey 1 and 36 schools took part in the second survey. All five ensembles took part in both surveys. (For full list of participating schools and ensembles see Appendix 1)

Number of schools responding to Survey 2 by type of school and Local Authority				
	Westminster	Kensington & Chelsea	Hammersmith & Fulham	Total
Primary	4	10	13	27
Secondary	3	2	1	6
SEND	3	0	0	3
Total	10	12	14	36

In compiling this Report, it became evident that as 75% of the schools that took part in the surveys were primary schools, in order to make specific findings and key recommendations it was important to break down the survey results by the types of school.

This has enabled Partnership First to make findings related to each type of school and their particular experience, as well as examine the extent that *Convo* has met its outcomes for different types of school. [see Appendix 2].

SECTION 2: Outline of *Convo*

2.1 Introduction

Convo was a hugely ambitious two-year project organised by the Tri-borough Music Hub, together with the Royal Albert Hall and Royal College of Music. The Hub commissioned a new work from composer Charlotte Harding to be performed at the Royal Albert Hall. It was funded by John Lyon's Charity, Children & the Arts, D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust and Blyth Watson Charitable Trust.

In Year 1 Charlotte Harding worked with eight schools and five ensembles to develop ideas, themes and lyrics for the specially commissioned work. Following the completion of the research and development phase in March 2018, Charlotte composed *Convo* - a 75-minute score for massed voices, three vocal and two instrumental ensembles, taking the audience on a journey from birdsong to coding and incorporating a range of musical genres. Each ensemble had its own feature and there were several solos for vocalists and instrumentalists. Charlotte also created special moments in the score for SEND pupils.

In April 2018 schools from across the three boroughs were invited to a meeting at the Royal Albert Hall to find out how to take part in Year 2 of *Convo*.

In its scope, scale and challenge Year 2 was a step change from Year 1 with 39 schools taking part from across Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. Throughout both years of *Convo*, the Strategic Partners ensured that SEND schools would be enabled to participate in the performance as part of the massed voices.

There were:

- 27 Primary Schools
- 8 Secondary Schools
- 4 SEND Schools

In addition to the schools, five of the Hub's Ensembles also took part:

- Young Singers
- Chamber Choir
- AKA Singers
- Youth Orchestra
- Folk Ensemble

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The Hub's Strategic Partners oversaw the project, with clearly defined roles for each organisation – including specific responsibility for different areas of the delivery. They met regularly to review progress and monitor what was happening in schools and the ensembles.

Teachers and ensemble leaders were supported by the provision of a wide range of resources, and schools received visits from the Tri-borough Music Hub Vocal Team to help with rehearsals.

There were two teachers' meetings: one at the start of the 2018 autumn term and another in January 2019, mid-way in the schedule. In these meetings as well as dealing with administrative matters, teachers sang through parts of the Vocal Score for Massed Voices, led by Charlotte Harding and supported by members of the Hub Vocal Team. Having this opportunity to meet together and work with the composer enabled teachers to fully understand the range and scope of the score and to raise any worries or concerns.

In the final week before the performance, there were borough-wide massed rehearsals for the schools. Ensembles were brought together for their own massed rehearsals in early February and in the week leading up to the performance. These were led by Conductor Ben Palmer or Assistant Conductor Matthew Hardy and assisted by Satellite Conductors Sophia Allen and Jane Da Costa from TBMH and accompanied by musicians from RAH's Albert's Band.

Given the particular nature of the Royal Albert Hall as a venue, the first opportunity for all schools and ensembles to rehearse together was on the day of the performance.

The world premiere of *Convo* took place on 7th March 2019 with 1052 performers in front of an audience of nearly 3000, including the families and friends of the performers, other schools, councillors and the Mayors of each of the participating boroughs, funders and other VIP guests.

2.2 Stakeholder Aims for *Convo* Year 2

At the outset of Year 2, the Strategic Partners agreed a set of outcomes for each of the identified Stakeholders:

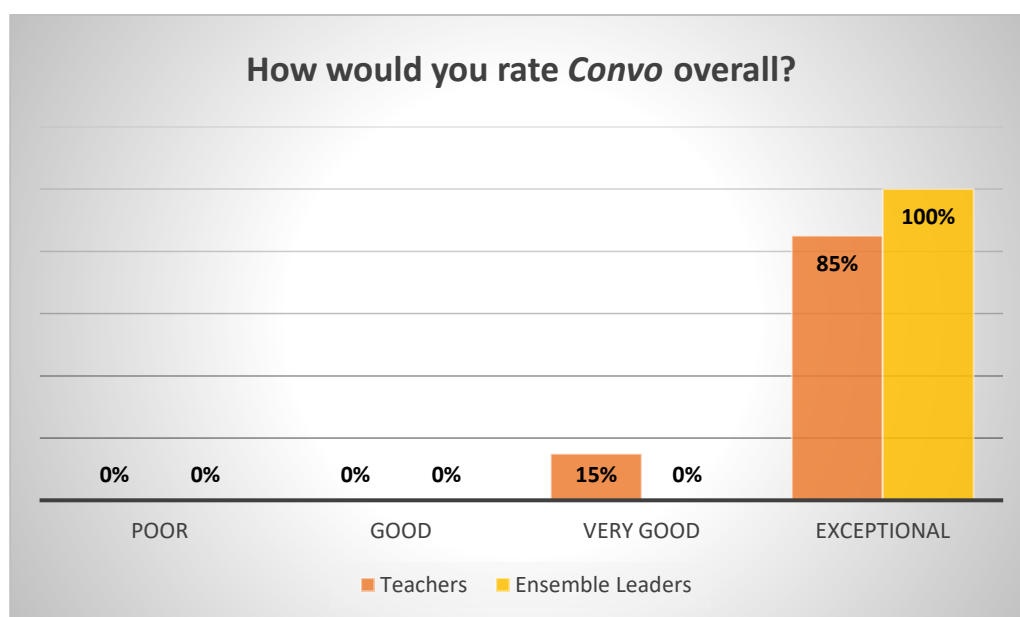
School Pupils:	To raise the standards of their musical skills through improvement in the following areas: vocal technique, singing in parts, following a conductor and performing with confidence.
Vocal Ensemble Members:	To raise the standards of their musical skills through improvement in the following areas: vocal technique, singing in parts, following a conductor and performing with confidence
Instrumental Ensemble Members:	To raise the standards of their musical skills through improvement in the following areas: instrumental technique, playing in parts, following a conductor and performing with confidence
Teachers:	To increase confidence and skills in teaching their pupils a vocal score and in preparing pupils for a live large-scale event
Schools:	To raise the profile of music in schools
Tri-borough Music Hub:	To increase the number of School Partners enrolled in the School Partner Scheme
Royal Albert Hall:	To raise awareness of the Royal Albert Hall's Education & Outreach work through the provision of the Hall for the performance, and Albert's Band supporting and mentoring the instrumental ensembles
Royal College of Music:	To raise awareness of the RCM to the members of the instrumental ensembles through the provision of RCM Sparks Mentors to support the participants

SECTION 3: Overall Impact of Convo

3.1 Introduction

In Survey 2, teachers and ensemble leaders were asked how they rated Year 2 of Convo overall:

- **85% of teachers** stated that **Convo** was an **exceptional** project
- **100% of ensemble leaders** stated that **Convo** was an **exceptional** project



Source: Convo Year 2: Teachers’ Survey 2 & Ensemble Leaders’ Survey 2

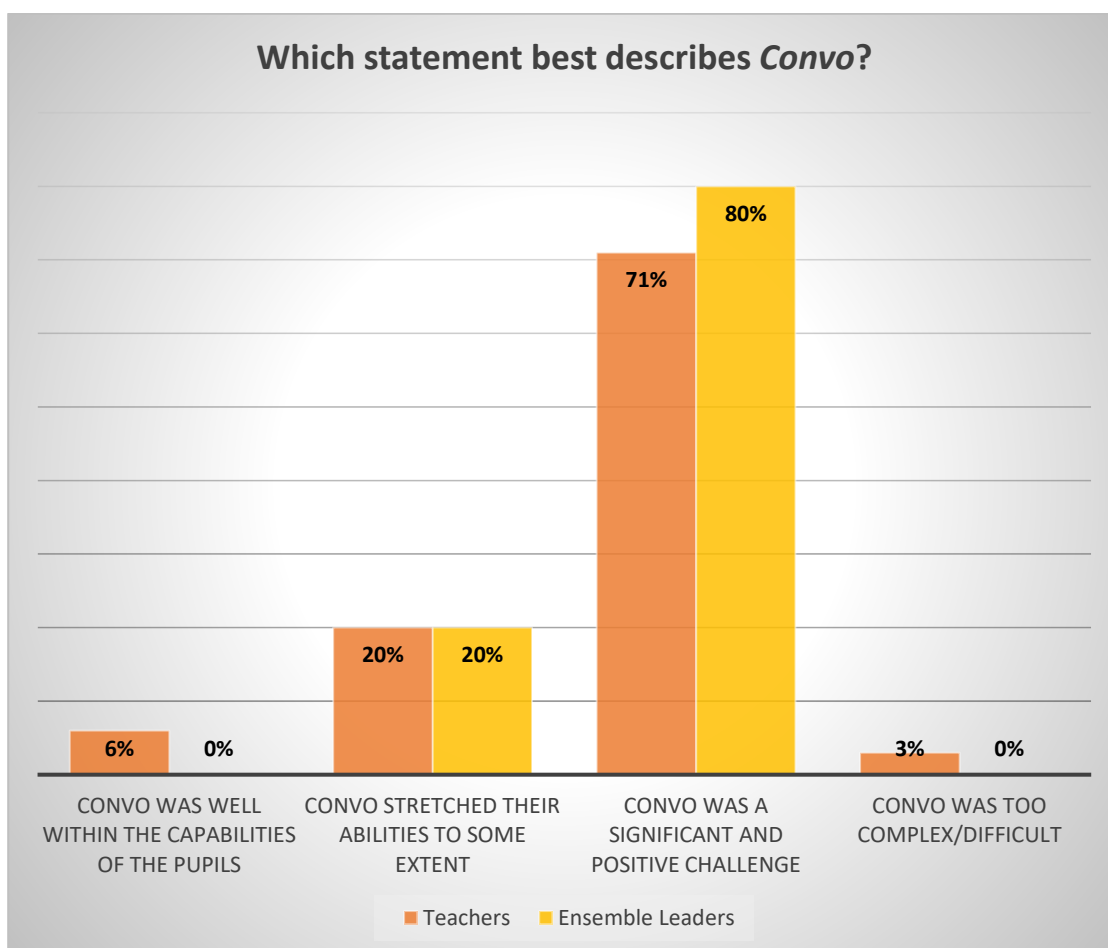
“... I thought it was incredibly professional... and of an exceptionally high standard. It was wonderful for our children to see such a breadth of talented young people perform”

“The inclusiveness of the project, seeing our pupils grow in confidence. Listening to the children’s feedback after the performance. The performance itself, which was so professional and impressive”

Source: Convo Year 2: Teachers’ Survey 2

“The final performance was of an exceptionally high standard. ... I thought it was so powerful that solos were given to the pupils”

Source: Convo Year 2, Ensemble Leaders Survey 2



Source: *Convo* Year 2: Teachers’ Survey 2 & Ensemble Leaders’ Survey 2

- **71% of teachers** said that *Convo* was a **significant and positive challenge for their pupils**
- **80% of ensemble leaders** said that *Convo* was a **significant and positive challenge for their members**

Teachers commented:

“The pupils already had a significant amount of singing experience, but Convo took it to a whole new level”

“They [the pupils] gained so much from this experience”

Source: *Convo* Year 2: Teachers’ Survey 2

Key Findings

- **Teachers and ensemble leaders** regarded *Convo* as an **exceptional music project**
- **Teachers and ensemble leaders** found that *Convo* was a **challenging score**; however, this was a **positive experience for their pupils/members** and has **raised their overall music standards**

3.2 Impact on School Pupils

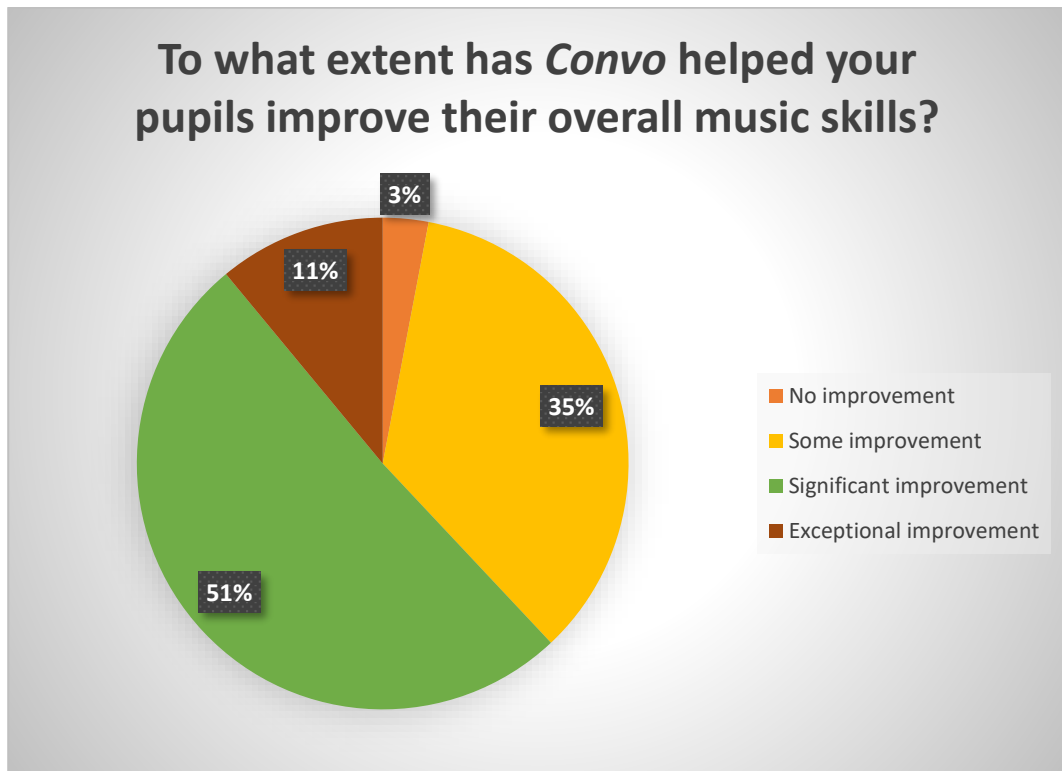
3.2.1 Introduction

Convo provided the Hub with a vehicle through which it was able to raise the standards of music and performance of young people from its schools.

When asked the extent to which *Convo* had impacted on the overall musical skills of their pupils:

- **97% of teachers** stated their **pupils** had **improved their musical skills** with **62%** having made **significant or exceptional improvement**

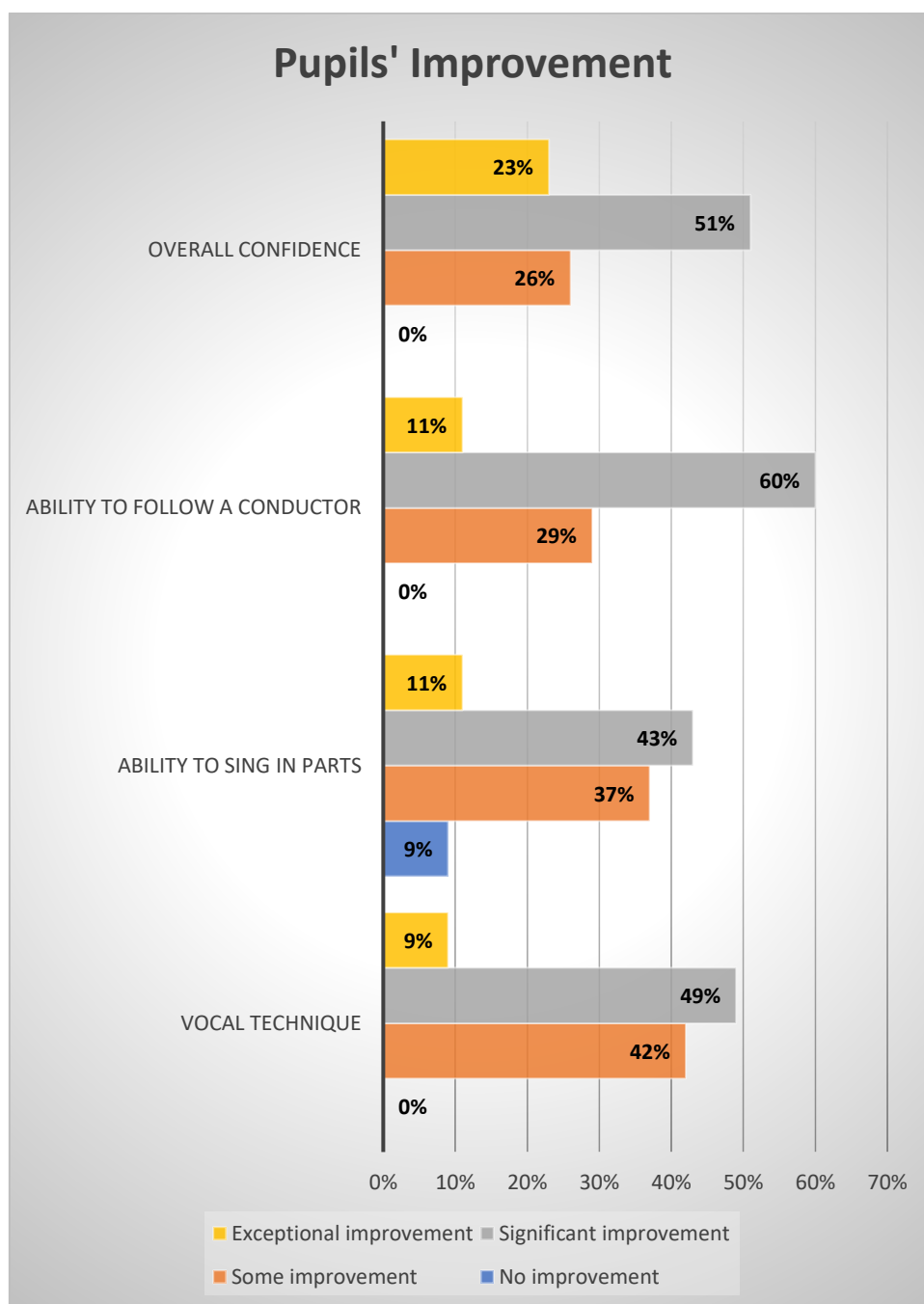
Source: *Convo* Year 2: Teachers' Survey 2



Source: *Convo* Year 2: Teachers' Survey 2

The Strategic Partners identified four main areas where they expected *Convo* to raise standards of specific musical skills:

- Vocal technique
- Ability to sing in parts
- Ability to follow a conductor
- Overall confidence



Vocal Technique: **100% of teachers** said their **pupils had improved** of which **56%** said it was a **significant or exceptional improvement**

Ability to Sing in Parts: **97% of teachers** said their **pupils had improved** of which **54%** said it was a **significant or exceptional improvement**

Ability to Follow a Conductor: **100% of teachers** said their **pupils had improved** of which **71%** said it was a **significant or exceptional improvement**

Overall Confidence: **100% of teachers** said their **pupils had improved** of which **74%** said it was a **significant or exceptional improvement**

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“They had not had much opportunity to sing in parts before and this really helped them improve their ear.”

“The experience of having a conductor for the children is very important in understanding the concept of ‘following the conductor’ and ‘taking cues’”

“The high expectations and clarity of the conductor”

“Many of our shy pupils gained confidence in performing throughout the project”

Source: Convo Year2: Teachers’ Survey 2

Some teachers worked with their class; others ran the project with a choir, in which case pupils would be more likely to have experience of learning a score and the teacher more likely to be a music specialist.

A key reason the teachers felt Convo was exceptional was that it presented their pupils with a high-quality music project that raised the teachers’ expectations of their pupils and raised the overall standards of performance.

Teachers from the Research and Development [R&D] schools that took part in Year 1 also commented on the importance of having been involved in the composition elements as a way of further engaging their pupils:

“As one of the R&D schools our children feel that this is very personal to them as some of their ideas have helped shape Convo. After the workshops this had such a positive effect on their confidence and realising that they too could be composers”

“Involved in developing for composition. Perform exciting and dynamic World Premiere in which they are invested”

Source: Convo Year 2: Teachers’ Survey 1

3.21 Additional Benefits for participants

Teachers identified a range of additional benefits for their pupils:

“It has given them [pupils] a real sense of pride, being part of something so special. Self-confidence and belief... have increased”

“Making their families proud”

“Encouraging pupils to be independent, practise from home and learn lyrics off by heart”

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“Joining pupils from different year groups and schools. A chance to sing with the staff”

Source: Convo Year 2 Teachers’ Survey 2

A substantial part of the success of *Convo* is the additional benefits it provided to the participants: by bringing together a diverse mix of children from different schools, different boroughs and different abilities it was a vital learning experience for them.

Teachers also highlighted the fact that mainstream and SEND schools were working together:

“Participating in a wider community project, building links between SEND and mainstream”

Source: Convo Year 2: Teachers’ Survey 1

All pupils have had an invaluable insight into the process of putting on a performance as noted by parents:

“This experience has taught her that practice makes perfect”

Source: Parent Feedback: St Charles’ Catholic Primary School

3.22 School Pupils’ Responses

Partnership First received feedback from the young people who participated: teachers recorded thoughts and comments of their pupils and some carried out surveys with their class. Through this method we received 557 responses.

The respondents were asked about how much they had enjoyed participating in *Convo*:

- **97% of young people** said that *Convo* was either the **“best thing I’ve ever done”** or **“I enjoyed it a lot”**

“Great energy, fun pieces, and superb camaraderie”

“It was incredible playing in front of an audience”

“I could show my special talent to my peers and also have fun. Convo helped me become more confident.”

“I really enjoyed how everyone came together to make one amazing piece of music using their voices and orchestra”

“I enjoyed my time at Convo because I had a chance to sing happily with my friends and in a wonderful famous building”

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“I got to hear different harmonies put together as one and our ideas were put in different songs and to hear us sing it was amazing”

“My favourite song was Roots because it was telling us that no matter where we go our homes would stay in our hearts”

Source: Convo Year 2: School Pupils' Feedback

3.23 Analysis: Pupils

Overall the primary schools felt the most impact of Convo. 76% of primary teachers stated that their pupils had made significant or exceptional improvement in their musical skills. In SEND and secondary schools 33% of teachers said their pupils had made significant improvement and none had made exceptional improvements in their musical skills. (See Appendix 2)

There are a number of reasons for this:

- Primary schools have more flexibility in scheduling rehearsals
- Resources were better suited to primary teachers
- Primary teachers were better able to make use of the visits from the Hub's Vocal Team

Primary teachers found that Convo was a complex score and stretched their pupils more and thus pupils made a greater improvement in their overall confidence and skills. (see Appendix 2). What is common to all pupils (and ensemble leaders) is that the experience of participating in Convo has had an important impact on them.

Teachers have pointed to a range of other benefits including improving self-confidence, a sense of achievement, a greater understanding of the creative process and has encouraged pupils to get further involved in music activities such as joining choirs.

Key Findings

- **TBMH have fully met their aim to raise the musical skills of school pupils**
- **R&D schools gained additional benefit from being involved in the initial workshops with Charlotte.** This meant that those pupils had an insight into the process from composition to final performance.
- **Convo provided a range of additional benefits including improvements in self-esteem and confidence and a sense of achievement**
- **Primary pupils demonstrated greater improvement than secondary or SEND pupils**

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Recommendation

- To differentiate the approach and support offered to different types of school, particularly in terms of the abilities of the pupils, to ensure the best level of support to improve outcomes

3.3 Impact on SEND Pupils and teachers

3.31 Introduction

From the outset, TBMH made special effort to include SEND schools as part of *Convo*. This included:

- Specific number of spaces reserved for SEND schools to participate
- Charlotte Harding created a specially adapted workshop for SEND schools in Year 1
- Charlotte produced a specific set of resources for the teachers
- Charlotte and Sophia Allen of the Hub's Vocal Team also offered additional support for SEND schools in Year 2
- Charlotte composed special moments within the score for SEND pupils.

3.32 Impact on SEND pupils

For the detailed breakdown please see Appendix 2.

All of the SEND teachers in the survey said their pupils had made some or significant improvement in their overall music skills.

SEND pupils' improvement in two of the specific skill areas identified by the partners, were broadly the same as their counterparts in mainstream schools: following a conductor and confidence in performing in a live large-scale event.

However, it can be seen their improvements were less than their peers in those skills related to singing specifically:

Vocal technique:

- **72% of primary** teachers said **pupils** had made **significant** or **exceptional** improvement
- **33% of secondary** teachers said **pupils** had made **significant** improvement
- **100% of SEND** teachers said **pupils** had made **some** improvement, **none** said it was **significant** or **exceptional**

Singing in parts:

- **64% of primary** teachers said **pupils** made **significant** or **exceptional** improvement
- **33% of secondary** teachers said **pupils** made **significant** improvement
- **100% of SEND** teachers said **pupils** made **some** improvement, **none** had made **significant** or **exceptional** improvement

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3.33 Impact on SEND teachers

The teachers in SEND schools were also less confident about preparing their pupils for a large-scale live performance:

Confidence in preparing your pupils:

- **60%** of **primary** teachers made **significant or exceptional improvement**
- **67%** of **secondary** teachers made **significant or exceptional improvement**
- **33%** of **SEND** teachers made **significant improvement**, **none** had made **exceptional** improvement

3.34 Analysis: SEND outcomes

The participation of SEND pupils sends an important message to everyone about the value of inclusion and a focus on the abilities of the participants and not their disabilities.

A project like *Convo* can deliver a range of different but important outcomes for SEND pupils. The next step for such projects, is to identify outcomes that are specific to SEND pupils. They need not be the same as for mainstream pupils, but something relevant to the overall aim of improving their music skills or some other aspect of their development and well-being.

This could also be applied to the skills and confidence of the teachers in SEND schools: once the outcomes for the pupils are agreed, further discussion with the teachers would assist in putting together the appropriate support package, including specific resources or additional CPD.

Key Findings

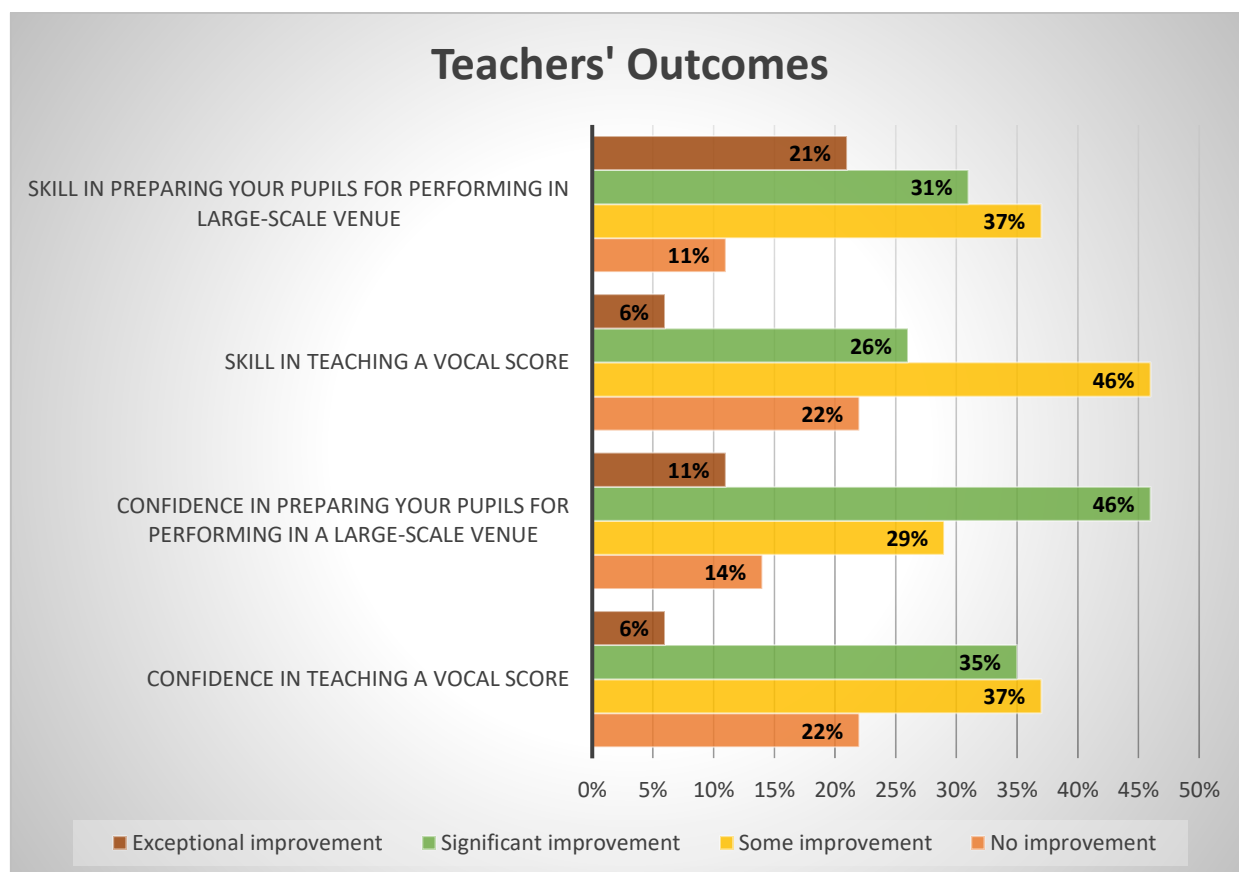
- SEND teachers reported that their pupils had made progress, but this progress was less than that of pupils in mainstream schools
- SEND teachers also felt they had made less improvement than their counterparts in mainstream schools in preparing their pupils for the performance

Recommendations

- Work with SEND teachers and specialists to devise specific outcomes for SEND pupils that take into account in what ways the project can assist in improving their achievement and well-being

3.4 Impact on Teachers

The Strategic Partners identified key outcomes where they expected teachers to benefit from their participation.



Source: Convo Year 2: Teachers' Survey 2

Skills

- **89% of teachers** said their **skill in preparing their pupils for a live large-scale music performance** had improved. **51%** had made significant or exceptional improvement
- **78% of teachers** said their **skill in teaching a vocal score** had improved. **32%** had made significant or exceptional improvement

Confidence

- **86% of teachers** said their **confidence in preparing their pupils for a live large-scale music performance** had improved. **57%** had made significant or exceptional improvement
- **78% of teachers** said their **confidence in teaching a vocal score** had improved. **41%** had made significant or exceptional improvement

Source: Convo Year 2: Teachers' Survey 2

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Teachers commented:

“Mine and all my colleagues’ confidence...has improved significantly due to Convo”

“Convo stretched me without a doubt”

“Good to have to teach different styles ... which was outside my comfort zone”

Many of the teachers who took part in the project were experienced class or specialist music teachers, and thus had a high level of skill and confidence to begin.

“I’m used to doing this – that’s why I would say there wasn’t an improvement – not because of anything done by the organisers”

Source: Convo Year 2: Teachers’ Survey 2

There were also some teachers who had significantly less experience of teaching music and preparing their pupils for a performance such as Convo:

“I can not read music and teach Morse code and hum tunes. I don’t know if provision has been made for schools where class teachers will be doing most of the rehearsals with [the]children”

“Although we can both read music this is our first experience of teaching for an event of this scale, so we are feeling slightly overwhelmed at first”

Source: Convo Year 2: Teachers’ Survey 1

This range in experience is an explanation of why some teachers felt that they had made less improvement, and others made significant or exceptional improvement.

3.41 Analysis: Teachers

When looking at the impact on teachers, the results show different levels of success, this was determined less by the type of school, but the type of teacher involved.

In primary schools, teachers ranged from relatively new class teachers to those with more experience and music specialists. Secondary school teachers were more likely to be specialist music teachers.

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This is supported by the fact that 44% of primary teachers made significant or exceptional improvement in their overall confidence and skills compared with 34% of secondary teachers and 33% of SEND teachers who had made similar progress.

Key Findings

- **Convo has met its aim to improve the confidence and skills of the teachers**
- Teachers started the project with a range of skills and expertise – particularly in the case of the primary teachers, some of whom had had limited experience of teaching music leading towards a live large-scale performance
- Teachers that made the most improvement were those who had less experience at the start of the project
- Specialist music teachers have an already high level of skills and expertise and therefore made less overall improvement

Recommendation

- To differentiate the approach and support available to specialist music teachers, class teachers or those in SEND or mainstream schools

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3.5 Impact on Ensembles

All of the ensemble leaders rated *Convo* as exceptional.

The project has offered the ensembles the opportunity to work together to perform the world premiere in the Royal Albert Hall.

The ensembles were involved in the research and development phase of *Convo*, when Charlotte ran workshops with each ensemble. Ideas and themes that emerged from the workshops were then incorporated into specific sections in the final piece for each ensemble.

This involvement in Year 1 meant that the impact of *Convo* on the ensemble members was significantly enhanced.

The ensemble leaders recognised the importance of having been involved in the Research and Development phase of *Convo*:

“Learning a new contemporary piece of music... performing a work that they contributed to in the development phase of the project”

Source: *Convo* Year 2: Ensemble Leaders’ Survey 1

“Working with Charlotte in the initial stages of the project... Hearing the students’ ideas in the final work”

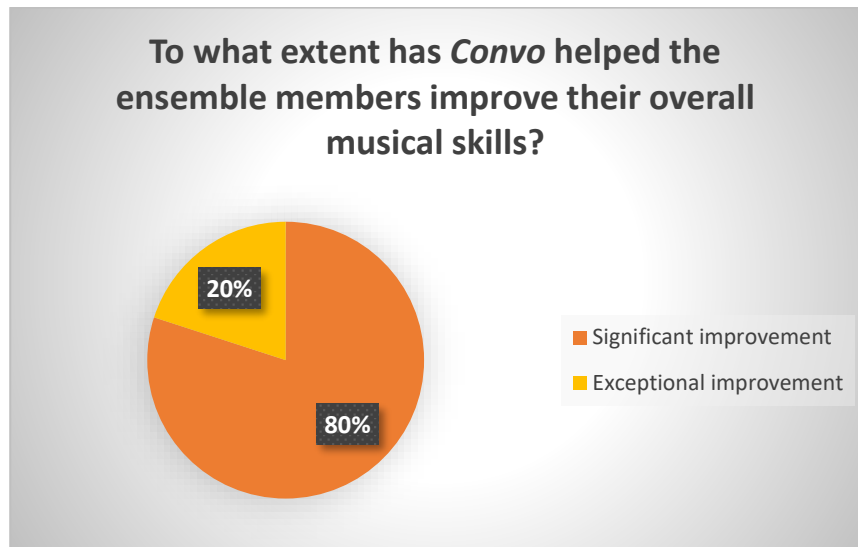
“The students really valued and appreciated having their ideas included in the final work. I could see their excitement when they recognised something they had come up with in Vibe”

“I think the input from Charlotte was really useful, particularly as she relates so well to young people. Those children who were involved with the initial process certainly seemed to accept the piece and understand it more at the beginning.”

Source: *Convo* Year 2 – Ensemble Leaders’ Survey 2

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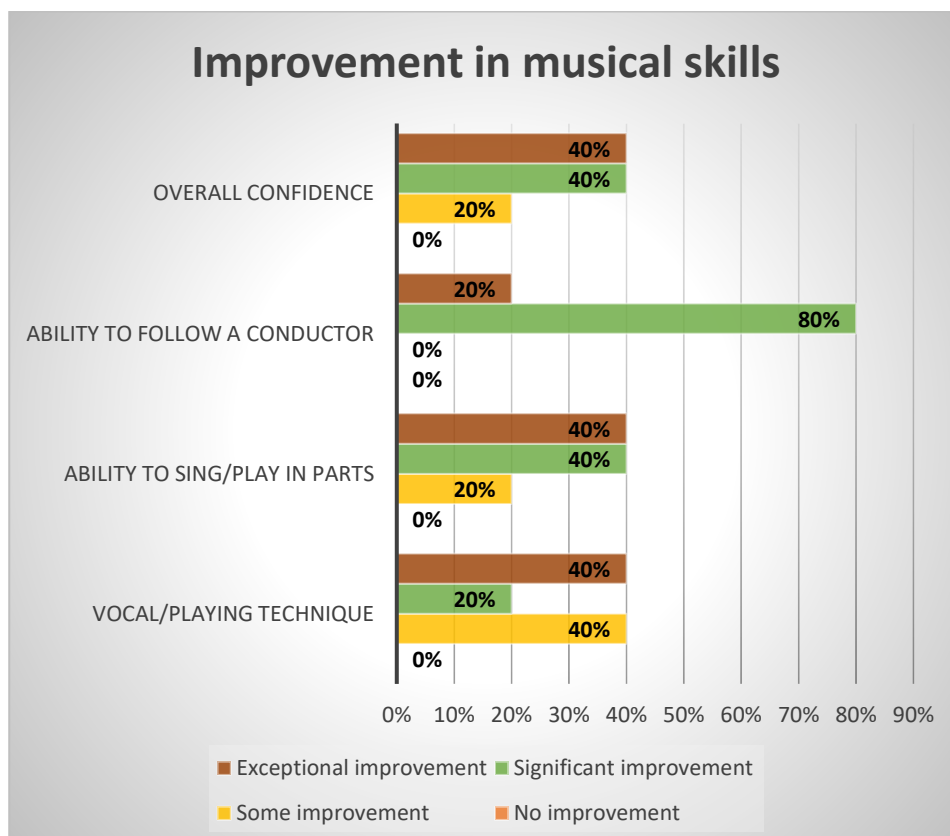
Ensemble leaders were asked about the extent to which *Convo* had improved the overall music skills of their members:



Source: *Convo* Year 2 – Ensemble Leaders' Survey 2

- **80% of ensemble leaders** said their **members** had **made significant improvement** and **20%** made **exceptional improvement** in their **overall music skills**

There were four main specific skills that had been identified by the Strategic Partners that *Convo* was intended to improve:



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<i>Overall confidence:</i>	100% of ensemble leaders said their members improved , of which 40% made significant improvement and 40% made exceptional improvement
<i>Ability to follow a conductor:</i>	100% of ensemble leaders said their members improved , of which 80% said their members made significant improvement and 20% made exceptional improvement
<i>Ability to sing/play in parts:</i>	100% of ensemble leaders said their members had improved , of which 40% made significant improvement and 40% made exceptional improvement
<i>Vocal/Playing technique:</i>	100% of ensemble leaders said their members had improved , of which 20% made significant improvement and 40% made exceptional improvement

“... working with Ben Palmer was extremely beneficial. He had high expectations which encouraged them to raise their standards.”

“This was such a wonderful and important project- it was a joy to be part of. I think having such high expectations of the children is vital to encourage them to achieve their potential”

Source: Convo Year 2 – Ensemble Leaders’ Survey 2

3.51 Ensemble Members’ responses

Partnership First received 135 survey returns from ensemble members:

- **95% of ensemble members** said **Convo** was either **“the best thing I’ve done”** or **“I liked it a lot”**

“It was a life-changing opportunity and experience”

“I felt so privileged and honoured to be part of something that was so spectacular and phenomenal. I enjoyed every second of it. I also had a great time learning the music for it because it was very unique and beautiful.”

“The experience was amazing and the feeling was incredible. I want to do it every day.”

“Incredible! and a memory to treasure”

“Thank you! Charlotte created an amazing piece. Ben helped to 'shape up' everything. Philip helped us in the long term. Stuart caused everything to happen!”

Source: Convo Year 2 Ensemble Members’ Feedback

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3.52 Analysis: Ensembles

Ensemble members, perhaps unsurprisingly, benefited the most of any of the participants in *Convo*. These were young people who had already demonstrated a high level of commitment to improving their musical skills by joining the ensembles in the first place: their marked progression throughout their participation in *Convo* was impressive.

“The composer perfectly judged the ability of each group to rise to a challenge which would stretch them in musical and technical ways without breaking them”

Source: *Convo* Year 2: Ensemble Leaders’ Survey 2

Their rehearsal schedule required out of school attendance on some afternoons, evenings and weekends and this commitment was amply rewarded by the opportunities that *Convo* has given them – to perform, as part of a massed choir and orchestra, a world premiere at the Royal Albert Hall.

“When we put all the orchestras, bands and choirs together it sounded really good.”

“It really brought us together and was a great motivation for us while we were practising.”

“It was a great team-building experience and it was fun performing different pieces with different people.”

*“It was really nice to hear all the hard work that had been put into *Convo* at an amazing performance. “*

Source: *Convo* Ensemble Members’ Feedback

The addition of the RCM Sparks Mentors, and later in the process, Albert’s Band, enabled the ensemble members to work alongside experienced and talented musicians which has provided them with a better understanding of potential career opportunities in music.

In post-project interviews, both RAH and RCM expressed greater desire for their musicians to extend their involvement in projects such as *Convo*:

- RCM stated they would like to examine the possibility of including singing students in their mentoring programme
- RAH would also like to use Albert’s Band to increase the opportunities to work with schools and ensembles

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This would enhance some of the key messaging for young people about progression in a music career, giving them opportunity to work with students of a leading conservatoire and professional musicians.

Key Findings

- **TBMH have fully met their aim to raise the overall music skills of the ensemble members**
- The ensemble members had an exceptional experience taking part in *Convo*, and have raised their musical and performance skills over the lifetime of the project

Recommendation

- Consider how RCM Students and Albert's Band could have greater involvement

3.6 Impact on Schools

The Strategic Partners identified the importance of raising the profile of music in schools as one of the key aims of *Convo*.

Teachers have said that their participation:

“... has raised the commitment to music”

“Taking part in these wonderful opportunities like Convo shows our school community that music is a high priority in our school”

Source: *Convo Year 2: Teachers’ Survey 2*

As a result of *Convo*, teachers said:

“There is a buzz about the music happening in our school right now – knowing their peers have performed at the Royal Albert Hall has inspired many pupils to sing more”

“The parents and governors who attended the concert had no idea that the children were capable of so much, or that the school could prepare them for such an occasion”

“Numbers at choirs have risen and pupils are more enthusiastic about singing (and music) in general”

“This will really help going forwards, in gaining support for musical opportunities for our pupils”

Source: *Convo Year 2: Teachers’ Survey 2*

Convo has also enabled schools to build on their relationships with the parents and families of their pupils:

“It also had a positive impact on the school’s relationship with parents – as they were so impressed with the performance”

Source: *Convo Year 2: Teachers’ Survey 2*

“I would like to say thank you for giving my child the opportunity to sing at the Royal Albert Hall and for all your efforts”

“Keep it going – [Convo] is a wonderful opportunity for all children”

“Thank you to all involved, especially Mrs Sebuyira as she worked so hard and made Convo a very exciting positive experience for our daughter”

Source: Parent Feedback: St Charles’ Catholic Primary School

3.61 Analysis: Schools

The Strategic Partners wanted to raise the profile of music in schools as identified in the aims of the *Convo*.

As noted in Section 4.1, the application process for schools ensured that schools were aware from the outset of the parameters of the project and the expectations of the Strategic Partners. The form itself required the signature of both Head and Chair of Governors, and this ensured that teachers were supported by the Senior Management Team in school.

One area that could be developed further in future projects is around cross-curricular work. The Strategic Partners clearly had this in mind when creating the Teacher Resource Pack. However, it was not used frequently, and not at all by some schools.

One option to extend the reach of *Convo* to pupils who are not performing, would be to integrate cross-curricular elements into the overall project (e.g. creating an exhibition to be displayed; creating a logo; costume design).

Teachers have noted that *Convo* has generally increased the awareness of music in school and the opportunities that singing can provide to their pupils. This was brought home to parents when they saw their children take part in the performance at the Royal Albert Hall. This was an important experience for families and has reinforced their relationship with their children’s schools.

Key Finding

- **TMBH has fully met its aim to raise the profile of music in schools**

Recommendation

- To identify how the cross-curricular elements can be incorporated as part of the final outcomes and as a way to extend the reach to other non-performing children.

SECTION 4: Project Delivery

4.1 Introduction

The project was overseen by the three Strategic Partners: Tri-borough Music Hub, Royal Albert Hall and Royal College of Music. As a group they were responsible for conceiving the project and putting together a plan for delivery which included:

- Fundraising
- Project Planning
- Recruitment of other Project Delivery Partners
- Recruitment of key personnel such as Charlotte Harding, the composer and Ben Palmer, the conductor
- Putting in place a process for schools to apply to join *Convo*
- Project timetable – to include two sets of rehearsals in schools led by the TBMH Vocal Team, massed rehearsals for schools and ensembles
- Provision of resources to schools and ensembles
- Marketing and ticketing of the performance
- Staging and production of the performance
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Licensing
- Compiling and editing the souvenir programme
- Photography and filming

4.2 Project Planning

The planning and complexity of *Convo* was a massive undertaking. It involved constant communication with teachers, ensemble leaders, RCM Sparks Mentors, parents, the Hall's event and front of house teams and various partners.

The Strategic Partners had built flexibility into their planning so that they were able to react quickly if something unforeseen arose, such as the unavailability of the Conductor for a couple of the rehearsals. From the outset they had identified someone who would act as Assistant Conductor and

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who took over those two rehearsals, ensuring that neither the ensembles nor schools lost the opportunity to rehearse together.

Comments from teachers and ensemble leaders commended many aspects of the project planning and delivery:

“The day was organised brilliantly”

“The staff in t-shirts were so helpful ... he was brilliant”

“[The information provided] was very thorough and all very useful”

Source: Convo Year 2: Teachers' Survey 2

“In my experience of the final six months ... nothing could have improved their overall experience”

“The rehearsal schedule was, in my view, brilliantly calibrated: the Orchestra was fully prepared but had not peaked before 7 March.”

Source: Convo Year 2: Ensemble Leaders' Survey 2

A further reflection of the effective project planning is that no school dropped out of the project. This is significant because projects of this scale and often have schools withdrawing. There are two main contributors to this:

Application Process for Schools

In April 2018 all schools in the Tri-borough Music Hub area were invited to attend a meeting at the Royal Albert Hall to launch the next part of *Convo*. At this event the scope and ambition of *Convo* was outlined to the teachers, together with the timetable and the support that teachers could expect. They also heard from teachers from the R&D schools about their involvement in Year 1 and what impact the project had on their pupils.

From the start this ensured schools were aware of the scheduling and commitments they would need to make in order to participate. Schools then had to complete an application form outlining their proposed involvement and required the signature of the Headteacher and Chair of Governors. Obtaining the active consent of the Senior Management Team means they are more likely to fully commit to the project and make the necessary adjustments to be able to participate – such as rehearsal time/space; support staff.

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Support for Teachers

The package put together by the Strategic Partners ensured that teachers felt supported, and even relatively inexperienced ones were able to deliver the project in school. This support included:

- *Resource materials:* including scores, lyrics, audio guides, video guides
- *Teacher meetings:* at the start and mid-way point of the rehearsal period
- *Vocal Team Visits:* Each school was offered two rehearsals with a partner school led by a member of the Hub Vocal Team. The first visit took place Oct/Nov 2018 and the second in Jan/Feb 2019
- *Borough-wide massed rehearsal:* held in the week of the performance

Charlotte Harding incorporated the ideas of Year 1 participants in the final score and lyrics giving pupils and ensemble members a very special sense of ownership. She also led on the creation of the resources, attended Teachers' Meetings, offered additional assistance to the SEND schools, attended all the massed rehearsals of the schools and ensembles as well as being there to help with the final rehearsal on the day. She was a very important role model to the young people:

"Charlotte really helped me understand what music really is and means"

Source: Convo Year 1: Teachers' Survey 2

"...the workshop was fun, but you still learnt a lot. It was also enjoyable and there wasn't a single moment when I was bored"

Source: Convo Year 1: Ensemble member feedback

"...schools... got the chance to perform music by a young female composer in one of the best concert halls in the world"

Source: Interview with Sophia Allen, Convo Vocal Lead

Key Findings:

- **Strategic Partners' project delivery was exceptional and demonstrated very effective planning and monitoring**
- **Strategic Partners' communication** with schools and ensembles was **very effective**
- The **inclusion of SEND schools** and special provisions made to ensure their participation **were effective** and demonstrated the practical application of **an inclusive agenda**

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4.2 Resources

Teachers and ensemble leaders were provided with a hard copy of the score together with a range of resources on a USB stick in September 2018, and additional resources were made available in January 2019, some planned and some in response to requests from teachers.

- **Audio Resources:** recorded at the Royal College of Music and performed by members of the Tri-borough Music Hub Vocal Team
- **Video Resources:** for Makaton Sign (by Sophia Allen) and for *Talking Drums* by Charlotte Harding and Mike Simpson of Inspire-works
- **Scores and lyric sheets:** RCM produced all the scores for the schools, and for each of the ensembles, together with lyric sheets.
- **SEND:** There were also a specific set of resources provided for the SEND schools.

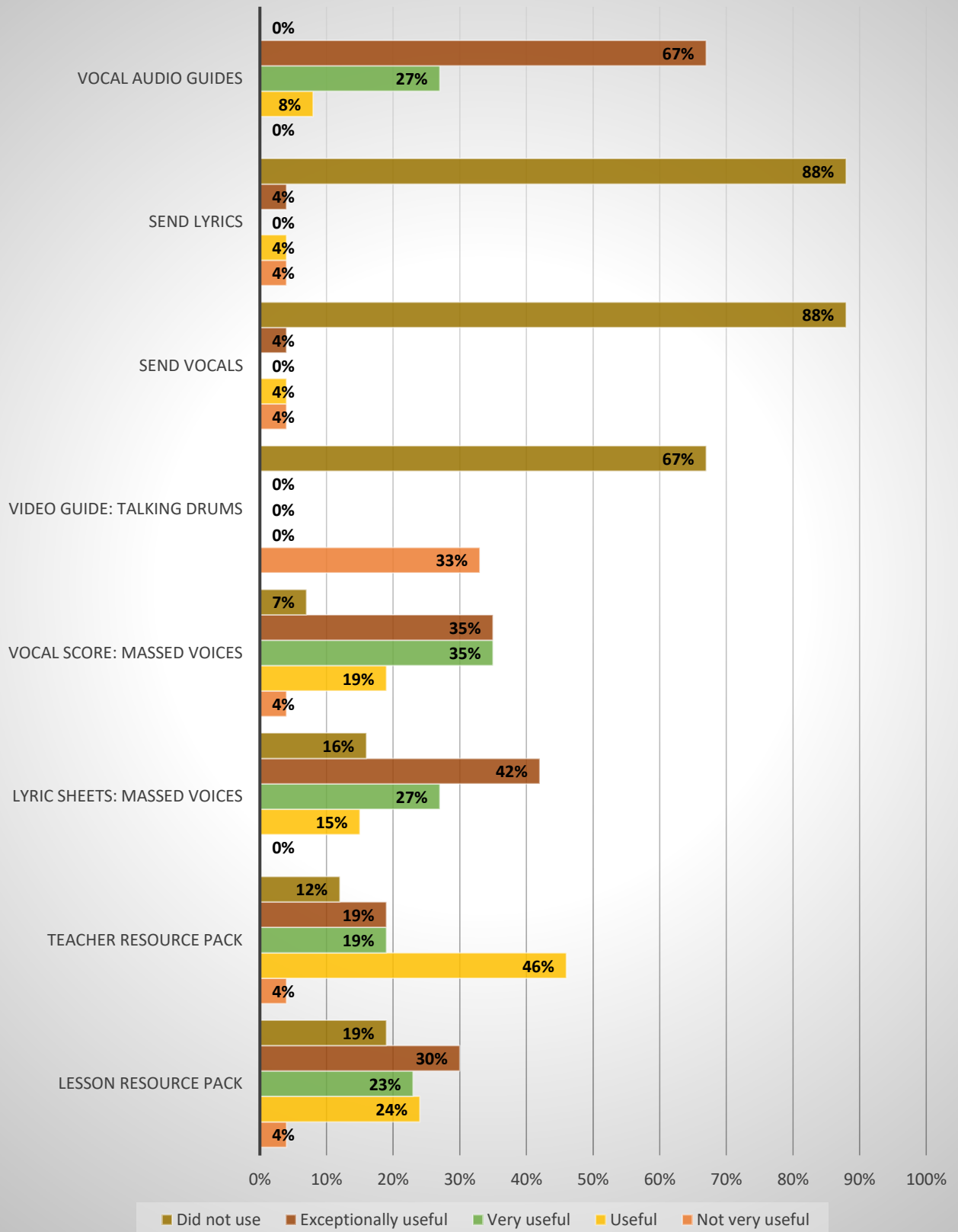
To further embed the project in schools, Charlotte also wrote two other resources:

- **Lesson Resource Pack:** music-focused and included exercises relating to composition, listening, lyric writing and group discussions
- **Teacher Resource Pack:** included further cross-curricular activities related to *Convo*

Teachers were asked how useful they found the resources:

- **100% of teachers** found the **Vocal Audio Guides** useful, of which **67% said they were exceptionally useful**
- **100% of SEND teachers** said the **SEND Lyric Sheets** and **SEND Vocal Score** were **exceptionally useful**
- **92% of teachers** said the **Talking Drums Video Guide** was **useful**, of which **75% said it was very or exceptionally useful**
- **89% of teachers** said the **Vocal Score for Massed Voices** was **useful**, of which **70% said it was very or exceptionally useful**
- **86% of teachers** found the **Lyrics Sheets for Massed Voices** useful, of which **70% said they were very or exceptionally useful**
- **78% of teachers** said the **Teacher Resource Pack** was **useful**, of which **34% said it was very or exceptionally useful**
- **72% of teachers** said the **Lesson Resource Pack** was **useful**, of which **47% said it was very or exceptionally useful**

How useful did you find the following resources?



Source: Convo Year 2: Teachers' Survey 2

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“All resources were really useful and used consistently throughout the school rehearsals”

“[The Vocal Audio Guide] were hard to rehearse with for Avian and Dashes and Dots... this was flagged up and a solution provided”

“It was difficult to use the scores with children and adults who did not read music”

“The resources were excellent. I would have liked to use the Lesson Resource Pack, but ... I could only pull the pupils out for singing rehearsals. There was no opportunity to use the lesson resources...”

Source: Convo Year 2: Teachers' Survey 2

Ensemble Leaders were also asked about the resources:

- **2 out of 2 instrumental ensemble leaders** found their **Ensemble Score very or exceptionally useful**
- **2 out of 3 Choral ensemble leaders** found **Vocal Score for All Voices very useful, and 1 useful**
- **2 out of 3 choral ensembles leaders** found the **Vocal Audio Guide useful, and 1 very useful**

As highlighted in Appendix 2, the usefulness of the resources for teachers depended on a number of factors:

- Age range of the pupils
- Abilities of the pupils
- Confidence and skill level of the teacher

The resources were more useful in the primary and SEND schools than in secondary schools.

Key Findings

- The **resources produced for the rehearsal process** (scores, lyric sheets and video and audio guides) were the **most frequently used**, and this is reflected in the number of teachers who found them **very or exceptionally useful**
- The specific **SEND resources** were all found to be **exceptionally useful**
- As each school involved their pupils in different ways, many of them not class based, the Lesson and Teacher Resource Packs had less application and therefore were used less by schools

SECTION 5: Partnership Working

5.1 Working with other Partners

TBMH has a range of Delivery Partners, and they worked with The Rhythm Studio and Inspire-works on discrete parts of *Convo* to add value to the project.

5.11 Inspire-works

Inspire-works provide drumming workshops, courses and CPD and have an extensive award-winning collection of online resources. Mike Simpson of Inspire-Works worked with Charlotte Harding and advised on how to incorporate *Talking Drums* into the score of *Convo*, and together they produced the *Talking Drums* video resource. 75% of teachers rated it as very or exceptionally useful.

This was a highly successful partnership it produced an excellent on-line resource which helped the schools learn the body percussion elements of *Talking Drums*, and with many teachers saying they would use it again.

From Inspire-works' perspective, Mike Simpson said:

"It was a privilege to work with the Hub... it is one of the most progressive Hubs in the country"

Source: Interview with Mike Simpson

5.12 The Rhythm Studio and Sonic Pi

The Rhythm Studio is a music academy that has a specialism in music technology. Charlotte Harding wanted to incorporate a music technology element into *Convo*. Sonic Pi, a technology using coding to create sound, was created by Sam Aaron who works with The Rhythm Studio. Charlotte and Sam worked on the coding for *Vibe*. Sam, along with tutor Gianna Gehlhar and two young people from the group they work with at the Lyric performed in *Convo* with the coding being projected onto the screen in the auditorium.

This partnership was valued by The Rhythm Studio and Sam Aaron as it gave them a chance to demonstrate the use of music technology and it brought a very different element into the performance of *Convo*.

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For Inspire-works and The Rhythm Studio their involvement in *Convo* is a good model of partnership working:

“It was a big success for us, and helped raise awareness of music technology”

Source: Interview – Chris Hodges: The Rhythm Studio

5.2 Role of Strategic Partners

All the Strategic Partners made a substantial commitment to *Convo* by their involvement in its delivery both in funding and in-kind support.

They identified other partners that would add value to areas of the project and took on their own specific roles in the project:

5.2.1 Tri-borough Music Hub

The Hub led on the overall project delivery – through the Vocal Team they monitored the progress in schools and were able to respond quickly when requests were made by teachers for additional resources.

The Vocal Team maintained contact with the schools throughout the project. They scheduled pairs of schools to rehearse together with support from a member of the Vocal Team and offered extra assistance to schools that required it.

- **76% of teachers** said the **Vocal Team’s** visits either **greatly or exceptionally helped** them **in preparing their pupils for the final performance**

Teachers commented:

“It was really helpful to have Sophia visit our school and go through the songs. It gave the children (and teachers) confidence that we were moving in the correct direction and helped to iron out any small issues”

“The TBMH support we received was of the highest quality”

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“We did enjoy the joint rehearsals with George Eliot School. If this could be expanded in any way it would enable the children to have closer links with other performers”

Source: Convo Year 2: Teachers’ Survey 2

In the lead-up to the event itself the Hub put in place all the arrangements for the massed rehearsals and the schedule for the day of the performance.

They were also responsible for organising the seating of the performers, distributing the t-shirts that each performer wore, Child Protection, organising the collection of children at the end of the performance. Bearing in mind that there were over 1000 young people involved on the day of the performance, this aspect was exceptionally well organised by the Hub team.

- **95% of teachers** said the **pre-event information** sent by the Hub was either **very or exceptionally useful**
- **96% of teachers** said the **event day organisation information** was either **very or exceptionally useful**
- **95% of teachers** said the **event day timetable** was either **very or exceptionally useful**
- **86% of teachers** said the **Safeguarding, safety and access arrangements** were **very or exceptionally useful**

“The day was organised brilliantly, so efficient and well-staffed”

“Organisation was tip-top”

“All very thorough and useful”

Source: Convo Year 2 – Teachers’ Survey 2

The Tri-borough Music Hub has significantly increased its engagement with teachers and schools, and the confident delivery of the project will ensure a receptive audience when embedding their relationship with their Partner Schools.

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5.22 Royal Albert Hall

RAH provided the Hall for the performance; including stage management, front-of-house and box office; led on the fundraising applications, provided Press and PR and used Albert's Band to work alongside the other musicians in the massed rehearsals and performance.

The opportunity for local young people to perform in a venue like Royal Albert Hall was a vital ingredient in the success of the project overall.

At the start of the project teachers identified this as a key reason for their participation in the Convo:

"Thrill of performing in such a venue"

Source: Convo Year 2 Teachers' Survey 1

"The first introduction to the Hall was exciting"

"The awe of being at the Hall and performing in such a space"

Source: Convo Year 2 Teachers' Survey 2

"I wish every child would have the opportunity to perform at the Royal Albert Hall"

Source: St Charles Primary School – Parent Feedback

The professionalism of the front-of-house and event staff meant that both performers and audience felt valued and treated with respect.

The high quality of the sound and lighting design also added to the whole experience of the participants and the audience. This all adds to the impact of the project on the young people – and helps extend it to their families, giving them the opportunity to see their children perform in a major landmark venue.

"I felt special as I was performing in one of the world's best theatres with my friends"

Source: Convo Year 2 – Pupil Feedback

"It was really exciting to play on the big stage of the Royal Albert Hall"

"I was the first person in my family to perform in the Royal Albert Hall. (I beat my big brother.)"

"It was a good experience and I performed in the Royal Albert Hall. It was awesome!"

Source: Convo Year 2 – Ensemble Members' Feedback

5.23 Royal College of Music

RCM's involvement included organising RCM Sparks Mentors to assist in workshops in schools and with instrumental ensembles in Year 1 (further details of RCM's participation in Year 1 is outlined in the previous report) and on-going support for the ensembles and participation in the performance in Year 2.

In both years instrumental ensemble leaders have noted the mentors' importance as role models to the ensemble members. Both said the RCM Mentors' support greatly helped the ensemble members prepare for the final performance:

"in the final six months ... [they]proved very helpful in filling textures, lifting the corporate level of the orchestral sound"

"RCM student musicians were... well prepared and completely professional"

Source: *Convo* Year 2: Ensemble Leaders' Survey 2

RCM also worked with Charlotte Harding in the production of some of the resources for schools and ensembles, created the souvenir programme for the performance, provided rehearsal spaces and managed the Twitter Account #Convo2019.

Key Findings

- **Tri-borough Music Hub** have **increased** their **School Partners by 52%** from 58 to 88 schools in the period July 2018 – April 2019
- **Royal Albert Hall** have **fully met** their **aim to raise awareness of the Hall's Education and Outreach Dept**
- **Royal College of Music** has **fully met** their **aim to raise awareness of the RCM and the Sparks programme**

SECTION 6: Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

As has been noted, every teacher and ensemble leader rated the project as either good or exceptional. Further and more detailed questions in the surveys revealed that the impact of the project was different in the different types of school involved.

In Appendix 2 there is a more detailed breakdown of the responses from teachers from which Partnership First have made specific key findings and recommendations for different aspects of the project.

This difference was not so pronounced between the choral and instrumental ensembles— whose experience of the project to a large extent mirrored each other.

6.2 Summary of Key Findings

- **TBMH Strategic Partners have fully met their aim to raise the musical skills of school pupils**
- **TBMH Strategic Partners have fully met their aim to raise the musical skills of ensemble members**
- **TBMH Strategic Partners have substantially met their aim to improve the confidence and skills of teachers**
- **TBMH Strategic Partners have fully met their aim to raise the profile of music in schools**
- **TBMH has fully met its aim to engage with new school partners**
- **Royal Albert Hall has fully met its aim to raise awareness of the Hall's Education and Outreach Department**
- **Royal College of Music has fully met its aim to raise awareness of its role in career progression opportunities in music through Sparks Mentors**

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Other Findings:

- Teachers and ensemble leaders rated **Convo** as an **exceptional** project
- Teachers found **Convo** was a **challenging score** and a **positive experience** for their pupils
- Teachers and ensemble leaders said their pupils/members had **raised their overall confidence**
- **Primary pupils** demonstrated **greater improvement** than secondary or SEND pupils
- **Strategic Partners' project delivery** was **exceptional** and demonstrated **very effective planning and monitoring**
- **Strategic Partners' communication** with schools and ensembles was **very effective**
- The inclusion of **SEND schools** demonstrated the **practical application of an inclusive agenda**

6.3 Summary of Key Statistics

Overall impact of **Convo**:

- **85% of teachers** said **Convo** was an **exceptional project**
- **100% of ensemble leaders** said **Convo** was an **exceptional project**
- **97% of young people** said **Convo** was either "**the best thing I've ever done**" or "**I enjoyed it a lot**"

Impact on Participants

- **97% of teachers** said their pupils had **improved** their **musical skills overall**, with 11% having **made exceptional improvement**
- **100% of ensemble leaders** said their **members improved** their **musical skills** with 20% having **made exceptional improvement**
- **77% of teachers** said their **confidence** and **78% said** their **skills in teaching a vocal score** had **improved**
- **86% of teachers** said their **confidence** and **88% said** their **skills in preparing their pupils** for a **live large-scale performance** had **improved**

6.4 Overall Conclusions

Many of the teachers stated that *Convo* had pushed them out of their comfort zone, however all of them recognised the value of this approach to raising the standards of performance.

The young people from schools and ensembles raised their overall confidence and performance skills. They have understood the importance of rehearsal and experienced the excitement of performing while creating a memory that will be an important part of their cultural education.

For many families the performance opened their eyes to the abilities of the young people involved, this is also an important achievement of *Convo* – as it has strengthened relationships in families and between them and the schools and ensembles.

Teachers and ensemble leaders have seen a demonstrable improvement in the young people's musical skills and their pupils/members have had an exceptional and memorable opportunity to perform a brand-new work in world famous venue.

In *Convo*, the Strategic Partners created and delivered a highly successful project which can serve as a model of how partners can work together to bring very special opportunities for their schools.

Convo demonstrates the importance of participation as part of a child's education, as it has increased their overall confidence and general sense of achievement and given them the chance to be part of something very special.

Partnership First have made some recommendations that might assist in further extending the opportunities provided, but these should not detract from the very positive impact that *Convo* has had on all concerned.

Partnership First would like to thank all those who took part in the evaluation, particularly teachers and ensemble leaders, whose observations and comments have been the primary source of data and evidence.

We would also like to particularly thank those teachers who gave us feedback from parents and families – this enabled us to demonstrate how important projects like this can be for family/school relationships.

We would also like to thank the Strategic Partners: Stuart Whatmore, Jane Da Costa and Sophia Allen, TBMH; Flo Schroeder and Paul Munday, RAH; Katy Hemmingway, Hayley Clements and Ruth

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Dewhurst, RCM, Charlotte Harding, all the TBMH and school staff and the pupils and ensemble members who took part in surveys.

It has been a privilege to be able to evaluate *Convo*. To be a part of the audience for the performance at the Royal Albert Hall was a very moving experience. It demonstrated the importance and value of opportunities like this in providing young people with a rich and memorable experience of the process of rehearsing and performing.

To be able to do so in a venue of such iconic, cultural and artistic importance with the support of a world-famous music conservatoire is an added benefit that will stay with the participants for a lifetime.

One of the school pupils summed up the experience for the participants:

“I felt alive while performing because I was singing the songs with all my heart”

Source: *Convo* Year 2 – Pupil Feedback

Alastair Tallon and Katrina Duncan

May 2019

