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Musik Shak Project

Final Report

February 2011



Introduction: The Musik Shak Project was brought about by the perceived need for young musicians to have an outlet for meeting each other, jamming together, receiving support and professional level tuition, as well as being able to capture their own work/ performances through the ability to record on site and to a professional level.

These ambitious aims were initiated through the Innerleithen Folk Festival Association (IFFA) putting in joint bids to Awards for All and to the Leader Program (European sourced match funding), as well as supporting the Project through input of its own cash funds (see 'Costings' below)

IFFA was successful with both funding applications, Steve Almey acted as the Project Manager, and it was with great excitement that the Project was got underway with the recruitment of its two 'job-share' Project Co-ordinators – Susie Kelly & Kathy Stewart – in mid April 2010. The professional Sound Engineer tender was won by SoundStation Studios in Galashiels, run by Dave Little. The Project team was almost complete, except for its Artists in Residence. This was split between the main artist – Galashiels based singer-songwriter Craig Jeffrey – who headed up the recording sessions and appeared as support act for the Innerleithen Music Festival's headlining act Capercaillie; and Peebles based Alison Cameron, who worked alongside the two Project co-ordinators, took workshops and ensured that things ran smoothly within the 'jamming' aspect of the Project.

The Church of Scotland's Innerleithen Church Hall was identified as a very suitable venue, and all concerned with the Church were very supportive of the Project, and they even supplied the Project cafe and volunteers to run it.

Everything was now set for the Project to be announced to the world. This was done by various press and publicity methods, but by far the most effective means of communication, once word got around about Musik Shak, was the Project's Facebook page. This not only allowed us to get information out very quickly to all concerned, but also acted as a support/ meeting place for the young musicians to keep in touch with each other, both during and after the Project had formally finished.

Another aspect of the Facebook medium was that it allowed us to simply 'publish' the recorded material, so that the young artists could access this 'product' in a way that they were used to. A very effective communication medium and one that can be well utilised in the future – thanks to Susie Kelly for setting this up and overseeing the Facebook page. Everything was set to go!

Facts & Figures: Musik Shak took place 'live' over five formal sessions in 2010, and one 'end of Project' get together. The dates for these were as follows:

- Session 1 – 7th August 11:00am to 10:00pm
- Session 2 – 20th August 6:00pm to 10:00pm
- Session 3 – 21st August 11:00am to 10:00pm
- Session 4 – 22nd August 2:00pm to 9:00pm
- Session 5 – 2nd October 11:00am to 10:00pm
- Final 'get together' 8th January 2011 2:00pm to 7:00pm

Live recording was available for all the five sessions, but not at the final 'do'. Approximately 50 hours of live recordings were made and 'posted' on the Facebook page once Dave Little had 'mastered' them at the SoundStation studios. Overall there were 103 'visits' by young musicians to the Musik Shak live sessions, although there were many multiple visits, and hence the actual number of young artists who came through the Project's doors was 45; 32 males under 25 years of age and 13 females under the age of 25. The actual age range was predominantly in the 12 – 16 years of age, i.e. school age young people. There were 30 workshops and one-to-one tuition sessions organised, which resulted in 84 young musician gaining new skills; confidence; stage presence, etc. The average stay of the young artists coming through the Project's doors was 85% of the 'opening times', i.e. if the Project was open for 10 hours the majority of the young people tended to stay an amazing 8.5 hours, which was a clear indicator that they were valuing some or all aspects of what the Project was offering on the day.

With regard the Facebook community, towards the end of the live sessions it was noted that there were 110 'friends' signed up. The breakdown of this was roughly: 42 well respected adult musicians (37 of which were either professional or semi-pro); 3 media reps (2 of which having weekly programs on Radio); 5 Scottish Borders music based organisations; which leaves approximately 60 young musicians aged 7 – 25 years of age.

Costings: The overall maximum funding available for the Project was £16,180.00, the breakdown of these monies is as follows:

Awards for All	= £7,000.00
Leader	= £7,140.00 (a maximum available)
IFFA	= £1,040.00
In-kind	= £1,000.00
Total	=£16,180.00

To Project's final expenditure was: £14,788.88 (approximately, as reimbursement for the final Leader component is yet to be finalised)

Project breakdown of expenditure:

Insurance	=	820.00
Venue costs	=	375.00
Co-ordinators	=	2,610.00
Music tutors	=	555.00
Artists in residence	=	1,365.00
Workshop fees	=	890.00
Miscellaneous costs	=	353.76
Publicity/ design & print	=	746.05
Volunteer in-kind costs	=	1,000.00
Tendering costs	=	738.38
Sound hardware	=	2,281.69
Sound on site	=	2,054.00
Studio time	=	1,000.00
Total	=	14,788.88

The lesser amount spent on the Project was due to economies of scale and cheaper rates negotiated by the Project Manager and Co-ordinators. Participating in Musik Shak was free throughout to all the young musicians, as well as the workshop, tutoring and recording/ 'publishing' aspects of the Project. The Church volunteers kept the proceeds of the Project cafe as a donation to the church restoration fund.

Achievements: The Project was intended to reach young musicians so as to offer a way of bringing people together. The Musik Shak venue was designed so as to offer a walk-in-off-the-street creative and safe environment, so as to allow the young musicians to explore their music and to enter into collaborative partnerships so as to expand their repertoire and understanding of what they were wanting to achieve from playing music. It also offered, if the young people wanted to, opportunities to learn, improve and create around the musical theme. The final, but vital, aspect of Musik Shak was the on-site recording facility, which allowed many of the participants to hear their creative talents professionally produced for the first time. The Project Co-ordinators and the Artists in Residence displayed wonderful understanding of what courage it takes to play within a 'public' setting, and they nurtured and encouraged the wealth of young musical talent that participated within the overall Project from the first moment of opening the doors, right through to having to physically shut the doors to bring the Project to a close.

Finally, it should be reiterated that the 'on-line' aspect of the Project was vital in both giving and receiving information, in disseminating the 'product', and in just keeping people in touch with each other. This was a new learning experience for some of the Project personnel – not least the Project Manager – but one that leaves a lasting memory and lesson in how to keep people motivated.

Conclusion: The Musik Shak Project was very hard work for those running it, both during the live sessions, and also keeping on top of the administrative side of the Project. However, what everyone agreed upon was that it was both **exciting** and **fun** for all concerned. The way in which some of the young people developed both in skill and confidence throughout the lifetime of the Project was amazing to see. It brought home to all of the Project team just how much talent exists, not only in the young people we met, but also in young people overall, given the right support, encouragement and environment (free chocolate biscuits also helped)

The other great experience we observed during the Project's lifetime was how such a diverse group of young people learned very quickly that their one commonality was a love of music, and that this was all it needed to learn to treat each other, and their music, with respect.

It must also be recognised that, inevitably within the rural make up of the Scottish Borders, judging an initiative by participative numbers alone can be very misleading. The population is very dispersed with travel and transport costs sometimes being very prohibitive to allowing people to always turn up at a given venue at a given time. The 'on-line' aspect of the Project was vital in looking to overcome this aspect, and it is felt that it did so very successfully.

It was with sadness that we closed the doors on Musik Shak in early January of this year. But it is with great enthusiasm that we look forward to seeking new opportunities to let the music be heard.

Steve Almey
for: Innerleithen Folk Festival Association
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