



**Voices In Harmony**  
Project Report  
October 2022



**Project Funders:**

The Sarah Morgan Foundation, SCOPS Arts Trust,  
Co-op, Test Valley Arts Foundation, HDH Wills, Andover Trees United

**Other Funders** contributing to the success of the project (staff/ project leaders):  
Reaching Communities Big Lottery

**Project Dates:**

March - August 2022

### **The Core Aims of the “Voices in Harmony” Project were:**

- To explore place and connection to intergenerational community through song and sound, celebrating the natural environment in harmony.
- To discover, learn and perform local traditional song and understand how this connects people to place and embeds community resilience
- To enhance creative engagement with nature for the community – ‘People and Place in Harmony’
- Through combined arts, to foster a shared understanding and appreciation of the place in which we live – the people, the landscape, the culture, the history – creating a shared identity, raising awareness and connections
- To celebrate ecology and cultural heritage within a range of voices and environmental sounds
- To leave a legacy of creativity from the project and a deeper connection to the local environment
- For artists and professional session leaders, to undertake professional development, try out new approaches, reach new or different audiences, work with new people, create and commission new work

### **Who funded the project:**

- £5000 Scops
- £2120 Coop
- £1250 Andover Trees United
- £750 Sarah Morgan Foundation
- £250 Test Valley Arts Foundation (TVAF)
- £500 HDH Wills

Andover Trees United is most grateful for the financial support provided by all the funders and donors who enabled the project to happen.

### **Where the project took place:**

Andover, including Harmony Woods (Andover Trees United community urban woodland); Andover (Portway Juniors, Harrow Way Community), Appleshaw and Vernham Dean partner schools

### **Background/ context:**

‘Harmony Woods’ is a 12-acre community woodland, planted by 10,000 children from 27 local schools, supported by the wider community, 2012-2022. *Voices in Harmony* is in part a celebration of the community and its decade of environmental achievements.

In 2017, Andover Trees United established 'Six Trees and Six Flowers', a programme whose core aim is to support schools to combine the arts and nature to improve first hand understanding of and the opportunity to care for the natural world as part of mainstream teaching.

*Voices in Harmony* was designed to provide this through the element of music and, as with all ATU projects, to involve and flow out into communities beyond the schools involved.

### **What the funders enabled Andover Trees United to achieve in this project**

- **Commissioning Sound Artist Justin Wiggan to prepare, develop and lead:**



2x Community Woodland Workshops

3x half-day Workshops in 3 Schools (ages 7-11) – Portway Juniors, Appleshaw and Vernham Dean

Workshops introduced participants to the internal life of trees and other plants, made accessible as sound and vibration. Participants' responses and tree sounds were recorded to provide material for new collaborative compositions with Paul Sartin and Jackie Oates

### **Justin Wiggan**

A web-based livestream event and Q and A with the artist provided participants with further insight into Justin's work and the sounds created by the biorhythms of an array of plants.

- **Commissioning Folk Musicians Paul Sartin & Jackie Oates to prepare, develop and lead:**

4x Whole-day School-based Workshops, benefitting students (ages 7-12) at 4 schools in 3 locations – Appleshaw, Vernham Dean, Andover

1x Half-day Workshop at a Central Andover Location, benefitting any school who wished their students (ages 7-16) to attend

1x Whole-day and 1x Evening Community Workshop/ Rehearsal at Central Andover Locations (all ages)

All workshops taught and rehearsed traditional and new woodland- and tree-related folk songs and made possible the creation of an intergenerational 'pop-up' choir made up of adult and children singers (from complete novices to the more experienced), from diverse backgrounds in the local community.



**Paul Sartin**



**Jackie Oates**

- **All 3 artists were commissioned to collaborate on the composition of a new 'Tree Shanty' using material created at Justin's workshops in Harmony Woods and to prepare, perform and lead a final concert showcasing the results of the workshops that they had collectively delivered**

Material was shared and 2 new compositions were written, taught and performed

1x Morning Rehearsal for Youth Voices in Harmony Woods

2x Intergenerational Performances (Matinee and Evening) in Harmony Woods

- **Hiring venues for rehearsals – Purchasing refreshments for volunteers – Hiring straw bales for seating**

3x Church Halls were hired for workshop/ rehearsal spaces

Refreshments were purchased to ensure volunteers running and managing the events were looked after

Straw bales were hired (including delivery and collection) to provide seating at the final performances – the performance day was the start of the July heatwave and seating plans had to change with regard to how the afternoon performers and audience were looked after in the intense heat

**What happened during the project:**

VOICES IN HARMONY	Artist	Content	Projected numbers	Actual numbers
4 school-based workshops	Paul Sartin + Jackie Oates	Traditional, new and locally-collected folk song, up to 4-part harmonies	x200 ages 7-16	260 ages 7-16
1 combined schools' workshop (up to 25 schools)			x50 ages 7-16	x20 ages 7-16
1 whole day community workshop			x50 ages 16+	x45 ages 15+
1 evening rehearsal			x25 ages 16+	x30 ages 16+
			<b>325</b>	<b>355</b>
3 school-based workshops 2 community drop-in days	Justin Wiggan	Plant biorhythms as sound; collecting personal stories, connections to nature and memories linked to sound	x100 ages 5-11 x40 aged 16+	x90 ages 5-11 x25 aged 16+
Livestream concert 'Project Social' & artist Q&A			x25 aged 16+	X16 aged 25+
			<b>165</b>	<b>131</b>
2 performances Harmony Woods	All artists	Performers, audience, support volunteers	x160 all ages	x200 all ages
			<b>160</b>	<b>200</b>
			<b>650</b>	<b>686</b>

**March – July 2022**, twelve school and community workshops were delivered in Andover, Appleshaw and Vernham Dean by a trio of artists, culminating in two open-air concerts in Harmony Woods.

**March**

Justin Wiggan led workshops in 3 schools (Portway Juniors in Andover and village primary schools in Appleshaw and Vernham Dean, chosen because of established partnerships with schools in the 3 locations). These were supported by Andover Trees United (ATU) staff and volunteers.



Pupils were introduced to the biorhythms of plants and their responses to human interaction. The plants' responses were made audible as sound and simultaneously experienced as vibrations through subpac vests. Pupils' responses were collected and recorded.

### **March-April**

Justin Wiggan led 2 workshops in Harmony Woods, supported by Andover Trees United (ATU) staff and volunteers.

Participants were introduced to the biorhythms, including their responses to human interaction, of 2 significant oak trees:

- one planted November 2012 to launch the Andover Trees United Harmony Woods project, also marking the Diamond Jubilee of the late Queen Elizabeth II
- one planted February 2014 to celebrate the life of acclaimed folk musician Sarah Morgan, who died September 14<sup>th</sup> 2013. Sarah had led our first musical workshops in November 2012 and had sung the first oak tree into the ground in November 2012.

The trees' responses were made audible as sound and simultaneously experienced as vibrations through subpac vests. Participants' responses were collected and recorded.

### **March-May**

Paul Sartin and Jackie Oates led whole-day workshops in 4 schools (Harrow Way Community Portway Junior Schools in Andover and village primary schools in Appleshaw and Vernham Dean). These were supported by Andover Trees United (ATU) staff and volunteers.

Pupils and students were given the opportunity to sing together and were introduced to traditional and new tree- and woodland-related songs. The musicians played for the children, explained about folk traditions and their musical instruments and led a folk dance session.

The primary school pupils were invited to adapt the words of Sarah Morgan's tree planting song sung at the first oak tree planting, their version to be sung at the end-of-decade celebratory woodland concert in July.

### **May-June**

Justin Wiggan, Paul Sartin and Jackie Oates collaborated on the composition of two new 'Tree Shanties', the lyrics being formed from the responses of those who participated in Justin's workshops.

The content and format of the concert were agreed; London-based guest artists Musiko Musika ECCO (Ethnic Contemporary Classical Orchestra for young people) were invited to perform as part of our developing relationship with the group.

### **June-July**

Paul Sartin and Jackie Oates led:

- a whole-day Saturday workshop at a central Andover location for local residents of all ages. Participants were taught the 3-part harmonies for a number of tree- and

woodland-related songs selected to complement the children's songs at the planned July concert, including the newly-composed tree shanties.

- a half-day weekday workshop open to children from all Andover schools following the same choral format of the 4 schools-based sessions
- two pre-performance rehearsals: an evening one for adults and older children, a Saturday morning one for younger children

## July

Justin Wiggan demonstrated his art via a livestream plant music concert with Q & A session.

Justin, Paul and Jackie led an intergenerational 'pop-up' choir made up of participants from the earlier school and community workshops in two concerts in Harmony Woods.



The audiences were entertained by 15 members of the ECCO youth orchestra, the virtuoso playing of Paul Sartin and Jackie Oates, Justin Wiggan 'playing' Sarah Morgan's Oak tree and 35 singers aged 8-70+, who performed songs old and new in 3-part harmony accompanied by the wood's resident skylarks.



## **Impacts and Beneficiaries: What difference has the project made?**

Evaluation was continuous.

Qualitative and quantitative data was collected. Methods of data collection included questionnaires and interviews. The artists, ATU officers and volunteers collated the data to share and produce this final report.

### **Quantitative data**

- 280 local children (7-16 years) were taught traditional, locally and nationally collected and newly composed 'tree and woodland' folk songs by high-calibre, nationally-acclaimed musicians
- 90 children (5-16 years) benefited from school workshops learning about plants as living beings through sound art and production with a high-calibre, critically-acclaimed sound artist
- 100 local residents enjoyed community choral workshops and woodland events, connecting to and exploring their natural environment songs led by high-calibre, nationally-acclaimed musicians
- 200 people took part in two woodland celebratory concerts "Voices In Harmony" in Harmony Woods. (performers, audience members, volunteers)
- 686 people (all ages) were involved.

### **Qualitative data**

#### **Most significant comments:**

- 50% were already familiar with Andover Trees United events and wanted to take part again
- 100% of singers who responded to the surveys and questionnaires stated they would like to join in future singing events linked to the natural environment.
- 100% of participants who responded said they enjoyed connecting with others through combined song and environmental events and would like to repeat the experience.
- 89% of respondents agreed the events had a positive impact in connecting people with their natural environment through song.
- 50% of singers participating in the workshops were unfamiliar with and had never sung folk music before
- 90% of respondents said these events had introduced them to new aspects of folk music
- More than 50% of respondents stated that the concert had introduced them to the multi-cultural and diverse music of Musiko Musika and more than 85% said they would like to perform with them in future multi-cultural concerts.



**Responses from choral participants, members of the audience and lead artists include:**

*"I enjoyed the music and the performance was joyful...Diverse and multi-cultural... Inspiring... Brilliant... Really enjoyed it... A wonderful mix of diverse music which I wouldn't normally get to hear..."* (Audience member)

*"It was a truly inspiring evening...so caringly created by those who have a commitment to nature and to the monarchs of the countryside, trees...Linda and I loved every second of the evening, meeting so many lovely and dedicated people, and listening to the harmonies and sounds provided by the musicians, performers and the trees..."* (Phil Lashbrook, Deputy Mayor, Test Valley Borough Council)

*"It was a very moving experience. I had only just lost a very dear aunt, and hearing the choir sing 'Rowan Tree' in such beautiful and peaceful surroundings had a profound effect on me helping me to come to terms with my recent loss."* (Audience member)

*"The Harmony Wood Celebration of 10 years of planting a new woodland was the most beautiful event where our singing of a new composition combining human and tree voices was accompanied by a skylark hovering overhead."* (Chorister)

**Paul Sartin:**

*"The final performances were superb outcomes for all involved!"*

*"The project achieved its aim of connecting local people/ communities to their local environment and learning more about their natural heritage and culture".*

*"As well as the skills acquired, the participants benefited from group work, social interaction, and the joy of making music."*

*"I've particularly enjoyed working with and learning from the other artists, and developing my professional skills with them and the participants."*

**Jackie Oates:**

*"We had a lot of fun working with children and inspiring them in the singing of traditional songs from their local area. I loved to see how engaged the children were."*

*"As the project progressed, I contributed a composition for the project, comprised of words that the children had written set to music, with the sounds of the trees as accompaniment...This was an extraordinary experience for me and I am very proud of the result."*

*"I felt that the children got a lot out of this experience. For the final performance we had the magic of singing songs in a tranquil and calm setting... a really beautiful experience".*

**Justin Wiggan:**

*"Truly inspired working with Andover Trees United, the local community and artists."*



### **Summary of achievements and conclusion:**

- Through song, the project brought together diverse individuals in shared celebration of cultural heritage, natural environment and community.
- Local residents were empowered to come out post-pandemic and connect with a diverse range of ‘others’, inspired by music-making linked to the natural environment.
- The project successfully connected people to their local natural environment through sharing both traditional and contemporary music making
- Young people learnt about a genre of music with which they were previously unfamiliar, from leading musical practitioners.
- Young people performed with older and more experienced singers, live to an audience
- Young people have been instrumental in the musical development of two new and lasting “Tree shanties”.
- Not all adults who took part had sung traditional folk music before; both novice and experienced singers who took part were introduced to a new genre of music
- All involved in the workshops gained new skills and many gained an increased confidence in their music-making abilities
- The woodland concert - the location and material performed - had a profound emotional effect on many respondents; all enjoyed the experience (although on a practical level, many found the extreme heat of the afternoon challenging)
- New cross-genre compositions were written and performed.
- The majority of respondents had not heard of Justin Wiggan and Jackie Oates prior to taking part in the project; these artists have benefitted by being able to raise awareness and profile of their work.
- Participating artists benefitted by experimenting in sound and music-making, collaborating in new and unfamiliar ways and working with a wider age range than they had before, developing their skills and experience in teaching their art and craft.
- A decade of community conservation achievements was successfully celebrated; traditions and connections between events and significant contributors from the past decade of woodland creation were reinforced

Delivering the creative arts element of the project has enabled Andover Trees United and local residents from Andover and villages to work with skilled musicians and artists from the local area and further afield – Oxford, London and Cornwall. It was a delight to see participant faces return to join us for the final “Voices In Harmony” celebration concert in July 2022.



**Legacy:**

1. A new body of work in the form of two new ‘Tree Shanties’ has been created
2. Musical horizons have been broadened as new people have been introduced to traditional ‘world’ music, a number of whom would like to continue and develop their participation in the genre
3. A body of traditional and contemporary folk song, linked to trees and woodland, has been created in participating schools and will be incorporated into ongoing teaching practice
4. A precedent has been set for an annual music performance in Harmony Woods that will incorporate the material collected and written for this project
5. Once funds have been raised, a sound installation of tree and human voices, sung and spoken, will be placed in Harmony Woods

## **What have we learned? Some Uptake issues and Learning Evaluation**

### **Schools**

Whilst this was a great success for the pupils taking part in the school-based workshops, it was sad that very few parents and school staff engaged in the full series of events outside of the school timetable, meaning that the number of children taking part in the final performance was less than we had hoped. It was particularly disappointing, because many parents have never visited the wood that their children have created and we had hoped that a celebratory performance would have brought more of them to experience it at first hand.

The main thinking behind our work has always been to provide opportunities for *all* children to receive and for their schools to deliver first class environmental education and an understanding of the environmental crises that we face in a hopeful and positive way. In so doing, we also have the opportunity, through the children and their school, to reach the community of families and neighbours that the school serves. It was an assumption that this would be a straightforward process and, although it has been disappointing to find that this was not the case, it has at the same time been a very useful process to have gone through.

Post-pandemic, schools have understandably become more inward-looking. Staff shortages in school and COVID sickness issues are still having a significant impact and it appears that the schools often struggled to make the time and focus their precious resources to champion the out of school events and opportunities for wider learning/ sharing in the community. Over the decade of our work, we have built excellent relationships with almost all of our local schools and this experience has given us a much better insight and appreciation of the support that we need to give schools to improve communication with their communities so that families, staff and neighbours become more aware of what is or could be on offer.

### **Important footnote**

It is with great sadness that we have to report that, since completing the project with us, Paul died, tragically and unexpectedly on September 14th 2022.

We are in the process of working with the artists who participated in the project with the aim of producing recordings of the compositions that were created and establishing an annual woodland concert, at which the songs learned throughout the project would be performed by and for children from our local tree-planting schools and local residents.

Recordings will be made public once they have been completed and signed off by Paul's co-composers, Paul's family and all who participated.