



THE DACAPO STORY

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to give the history of DaCapo and then to look to the future and plan for greater strength and stability, succession for the founders and to make the very best of the wonderful community and organisation that DaCapo has become - with its dedicated team, great curriculum, wealth of resources and extensive, quality repertoire. The last page outlines how you may be able to help.

Background

It's our thirty-third year! We started as a small Saturday Centre in 1991. The music and training centre moved a few times to different school venues in North London, including making Wessex Gardens Primary School near to Brent Cross our home for over ten years, before settling at Wren Academy in Finchley in 2017. Wren provides the best environment yet, with great spaces and facilities - it's a good place to be.

Mission

The mission behind DaCapo was to establish a programme for children (initially very young children, but they grew up and we grew with them) based on the Kodály and Eurythmics principles of music education, both of which were studied and trialled by Jane when she started her career as a music teacher in the late '80s and early '90s. We started small but things developed and grew in unexpected ways.



Founders Jane and Michelle with Ali (our designer) in 1998



Teacher Training 2023

Training

We needed to train teachers so that they could join our team and so we developed teacher training courses. These were successful and we began to be asked to train others, including music services, local authorities, small and large music organisations and colleges, a nursery chain in Singapore and another in Mumbai; a post-grad course at the Conservatorium in Amsterdam; most recently the Yehudi Menuhin School - it's quite a list.

Getting into primary classroom music



A DCMS funded project in Northern Ireland got us interested in classroom music and the poor experience that so many children got (and still get) in their primary school music lessons. We translated our training for musicians into one for classroom teachers using layperson language. This has now been tried and tested in many schools over the past two decades and more. It received an award for best curriculum from Music Teacher magazine in 2014.

It's a skills-building, engaging and complex programme based on kodály and Eurythmics, with appropriate repertoire and use of quality instruments. It covers and exceeds the National Curriculum for music. The aspiration is that children will be able (by Year 6) to: sing from notation, write standard western notation as well as read scores while listening; convert their knowledge and understanding into the practice of playing instruments; begin to build an understanding of the traditional terminology used in music in relation to their knowledge and experience.

The programme engages the whole class and maintains an interest throughout a weekly 45 minute lesson. A class teacher or TA takes part in the lesson, acquiring skills along the way. If the budget does not allow for this, DaCapo offer a training course that enables classroom teachers or TAs with little or no musical expertise to teach the programme, with support from visiting DaCapo teachers just four times each term.

The DaCapo programme is a comprehensive 'ToolBox' of aims, objectives, plans and activities; age appropriate entertaining repertoire and quality resources; worksheets and resources for interactive whiteboard, etc, creative ideas, including going off-piste (!) sharing and performance.

Projects

Good classroom music lessons are the starting point for any school, but children, teachers and musicians also need and want more! There should be choirs, instrumental lessons, ensemble opportunities and performance experiences both from the children and also as workshops and concerts from top-notch players. In order to include these in our offering we have partnered with Fantasia Orchestra, the Proms at St Jude's Festival and Little Angel Theatre, giving us extra possibilities and exciting projects to offer in addition to musicianship for the classroom.

Projects

Project 1) Schools' Prom funded by Proms at St Jude's and held in the iconic St Jude-on-the-Hill. Participating schools receive workshops during the summer term to enable them to prepare for the individual and massed performance in St Jude's. Each Prom consists of songs and readings, specially commissioned by DaCapo. Schools come together to rehearse and then perform with players from Fantasia. The splendour of the setting and acoustics make this a memorable event for all.



Project 2) Take Note is a workshop and concert project focussing on listening, with Fantasia orchestra players. There's one for each instrument group: Strings, Woodwind, Brass, Percussion. It's an opportunity for the children to get to know a quartet of musicians and prepare to listen attentively to a 'concert'. Instruments are heard in combinations of 2, 3 and 4 and questions and answers help them to hear that they are all playing different music that sounds perfect when played together! Next, we take songs and rhythmic activities and learn how four separate parts fit together. The children then listen to the concert of 2-9 minutes and the slow build-up of activities means that their listening and concentration is impressive!



Project 3) Ready to Sing

This is a new choir delivering a top quality choral experience for KS2 children in a small number of Barnet Primary Schools. The weekly one-hour sessions will teach choral singing and musical skills, culminating in a performance at the end of the year, again in the beautiful venue of St Jude's. The concert will be led by renowned professional conductor Nic Chalmers and leader teachers in the field, Will Dollard and Alice Purton. Students will learn healthy singing techniques, part-singing and reading musical notation in a positive and enjoyable environment and through the use of high-quality repertoire. Musicianship skills will be emphasised by the implementation of kodály methodology. .



Photos from Proms at St Jude's and Wessex Gardens School 'Take Note'



Project 4) Tutti is a half-day workshop for schools or groups of children (or beginner adults) who learn instruments at beginner level. We bring a well-known piece of music, which we have arranged for the mix of pupils to play with professional musicians. Currently we offer: the finale of the Overture to Rossini's William Tell; the main theme from Grieg's Hall of the Mountain King and Ravel's Bolero. The workshop includes the children meeting the players and their instruments and listening to the piece. They all take part in a rhythm workshop to learn the rhythms from the piece Instrumental sessions follow - in groups with lead teachers and helpers. The groups depend on the instruments being learned such as: Strings - Guitars - Brass - Woodwind - Percussion. There's a play-through rehearsal and a final performance for the chosen audience. Families love it!

Teacher Training Courses

We have a wide range of courses in music teaching ranging including Babies and Toddlers; Early Years; Infant & Junior Classroom/School teaching; Musicianship, Instrumental; Teens and Adults (including Reading for Rock Stars). They are tried and tested and feedback is always very positive, but again, marketing to bring enough bookings to make them viable isn't easy.



Flagship School and satellites

With our office and Saturday Centre both based at Wren Academy, this is definitely 'home'. The weekday teaching means that Wren has become our flagship of school work. Here we run weekly classroom music sessions and singing assemblies, choirs, instrumental lessons, orchestra and project work. It's a true example of a musical school and we are proud of the variety and quality of work being carried out, although it's always 'work in progress'. The same quality and effort go into classroom music in a small number of other schools but without the additional full-school responsibility that not all schools can afford or manage.





We can't easily expand our in-person school work - it takes considerable training and even more management to look after both teachers and schools and we decided (after some difficult experiences) that doing a good job in a small number of schools was better than doing a mediocre or bad job in lots!

But it was important to try to get our curriculum and range of activities and repertoire to as many children as possible. We know it works. We know that teachers and children love it. We needed to find a way.

And so, we added an extra dimension - a new company, DaCapo Primary Music (DCPM) has developed and just launched (October 2023) DaCapo Online. It's a digital platform that gives primary schools the DaCapo programme without the need for a music teacher in the room. Class teachers can follow our trusty dog conductors, Coda and Rondo who will guide the class through the music lesson. You can read about here:

<http://email.schoolcommunications.co.uk/rsp/m/bR1yKi90VUk9-zUpSb76Rw>

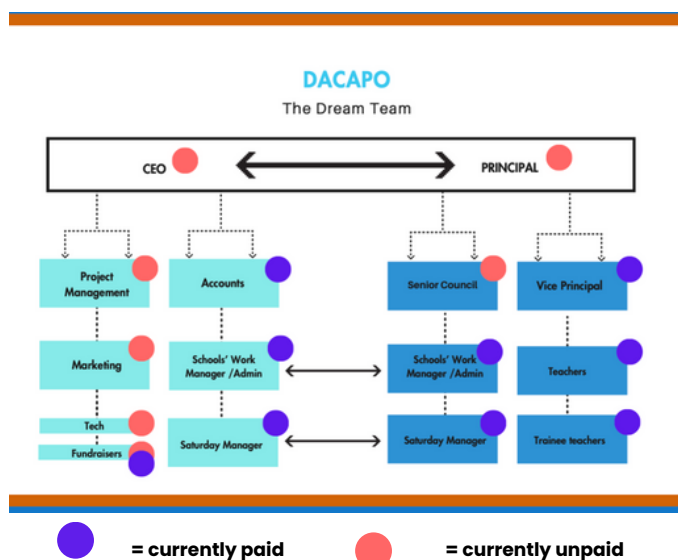
The Foundation and DCPM are inextricably linked. All of the intent and content come from the same place - a desire to establish a quality programme for children, based on the Kodály and Eurythmics principles of music education and with a no-pressure ethos steeped in high-calibre materials and repertoire.

We are proud and excited by what we have achieved and have over 40 classes either subscribed or trialling. It should be thousands - we need a marketing manager! We are also looking to see how the Foundation and DCPM can work closely together, utilising this wonderful new resource for the good of children's music education across the country.

Finance

DaCapo has always been run on a shoestring. Fees charged to families for the Saturday Centre, to schools for teaching sessions and workshops and to those attending training courses barely cover the payment of teachers and other overheads.

We have grown enough to afford paid part-time bookkeeper and administrator, but much of the work has been carried out by volunteer Principal and CEO and a board of trustees who oversee the charity. This needs to change if we are to have a viable and valuable future.



The Future

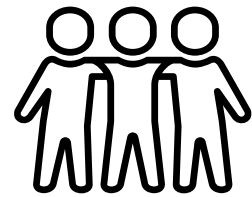
Planning for long-term strength and stability, we are working with the board of Trustees and 'Vantage Fundraisers', not least in preparing for our succession as founders. We are now both in our sixties and replacements will need to be found over the coming years. We are both active and still fully involved and plan to support the organisation into its next phase. We need to build a team to include CEO, Principal, Project Manager, Marketing and Social Media Manager. Our wonderful team of senior teachers will also take some extra responsibilities; they are key to the work and many have been with us for over twenty years!

The plan includes fundraising a six-figure sum, leading towards being self-funding across our main activities within three to four years (some project funding would always be sought by an organisation such as ours).

How you can help

This is our plan - in simple bullet point form! Please see what you might be able to do from this list - who you can talk to - what connections you might be able to make. Help us to build a strong future for DaCapo!

Grow the Saturday Centre - starting with our Summer '24 campaign 'Thirty-three'



Bring a friend to visit or trial

Write a google review



Follow us and share on social media

Donate (website home page)



**Offer a primary school a free trial of [DaCapo Online](#).
Come to the launch party on Thursday 23/5/24
to find out more (email us to book a place).**



Michelle Groves and Jane Cutler
DaCapo Founders
March 2024

