

INSTRUMENT STORIES 2024



Stories illustrated by Rebecca Price

A New Year - A New Young Arts Project!

Our new project, Instrument Stories, is the brainchild of Emma Johnson, MBE, international clarinettist and a former winner of BBC Young Musician of the Year. Emma has spoken to the Arts Society Blackheath twice: humour in music and the origins of Jazz.

It has long been Emma's ambition to introduce children in state primary schools to instruments of the symphony orchestra. Unlike in private schools, the teaching of orchestral instruments and appreciation of classical music is rather patchy. Emma has written a series of stories and composed accompanying music featuring an

instrument in each story. The stories are illustrated by the children's illustrator, Rebecca Price.

The Arts Society Blackheath is delighted to partner Emma in bringing Instrument Stories to John Ball, our local primary school where in June, as a treat after the SATS exams, it is proposed that there will be a workshop for Years 3 and 4 pupils. There are 3 classes in each year potentially benefitting up to 180 children. There will be a narrator telling the stories with live musicians playing Emma's compositions on their particular instruments against a backdrop of Rebecca's illustrations. In the workshop there will also be singing and clapping games. The instruments featured will be the clarinet, the cello, the trumpet, the oboe, the viola, and the double bass.

When Emma first described her idea in a sunny garden last summer, the benefits were immediately obvious. The Arts Society Blackheath is very happy to contribute towards the cost of the project.

Applications to our parent Arts Society and the Greater London Arts Society for grants were also successful. The costs are mainly for the illustrations and the musicians. Emma herself has contributed, without a fee, her time in writing the stories and composing the music.

Beyond the immediate benefit for the children of John Ball School, the beauty of this project is that it can be repeated in other schools in the borough or more ambitiously, anywhere in the country using

the same template. In the longer term, success can be rated by the seeds sown by this workshop: a lifelong love of classical music or an interest in orchestral instruments, having seen them played up close.

For us the sponsors, we have our profiles raised from the publicity from the workshops. We also will have the halo that comes from knowing we have helped bring to fruition an excellent thing!

Kim Causer

January 2024

UPDATE

The first performance of *Instrument Stories* took place at John Ball School on 12 June 2024, with an audience of about 200 children.