

Foreword

Con Tutti: Music Education & Autism

Inclusion refers to the right of all people to be fully involved in all aspects of community life. It is not a concept that refers to education alone, but reflects a desire of a society to respect all. Music Generation believes that it is the right of every child/young person to have the choice of access and the chance to participate as a musical citizen, regardless of circumstances. We believe in inclusive access for children/young people and place inclusion at the centre of our approach.

In the first few years of our development in 2012 and 2013, Music Generation Sligo (MGS) worked briefly in the Mercy Plaza and Summerhill College where our music educators had the interest but not necessarily the skills or knowledge to respond to children and young people with special educational needs (SEN). **We did so as music education specialists.** More recently, in 2014, we were asked by Sligo County Childcare Committee to deliver a programme in Holy Family Special Pre-School. At this point we recognised that we needed to bring in external expertise. We were enabled to do so, with funding from Sligo County Childcare Committee and the whole-hearted co-operation and support of the amazing staff at Holy Family Pre-School and Principal Mary McNasser. Music Therapist Maria Ward was invited to mentor the current music tutors in facilitating music workshops for the children at the Pre-School. This was the first step on our road to developing a considered long-term approach to inclusive music education.

The long-term approach led MGS to The Centre for Special Educational Needs, Inclusion and Diversity (CSENID) at St Angela's College who responded positively and enthusiastically to us. In 2015 we established an innovative Research, Training and Programming Partnership with regard to the delivery of music programmes to children and young people with SEN, with an initial focus on children with autism. This was to build on the complementary strengths of both organisations and provide opportunities to develop mutually beneficial relationships.

The Partnership sought to:

- Promote quality music education in the lives of children and young people who need special support;
- Research the efficacy of a new Special Discovering Music programme in increasing participation of children and young people with SEN;
- Provide professional training/education for Music Generation Sligo tutors and other practitioners working in music education for children and young people with SEN;
- Educate/inform teachers and carers on the impact of music education for children and young people with SEN;
- Produce a Resource Publication and CD;
- Actively disseminate partnership and research outcomes to the academic and music communities through research papers and presentations at education conferences.

Which brings us to December 2016! We are about to deliver a third programme at Holy Family Pre-School, in our second Con Tutti year at Our Lady of Mercy NS *Plaza* and Ransboro NS *The Glen* and in our first Con Tutti year at St Brendan's NS *An Cuan* and St Edward's NS *The Ark*, we feel ready to produce this Resource Pack and disseminate our Research Report – a separate report available from CSENID.

The materials and resources used here have been compiled by the authors Roisin Egan, Fiona Jennings and Ailbhe O'Halloran following the implementation of the first Con Tutti programmes. Roisin has done so, working alongside her Music Generation Sligo colleagues Karl, Giulia and Heidi, all exceptional music educators who have drawn deeply on their professional and personal selves in delivering music education. Fiona and Ailbhe have been inspirational in sharing their expertise and guiding the work of our music educators. We are especially grateful to the teachers and children at Ransboro and Our Lady of Mercy National Schools for engaging openly and enthusiastically with our tutors as they delivered the first Con Tutti programmes there in 2015/2016.

Furthermore, an opportunity arose in early 2016 to collaborate with Music Generation National Development Office, and our partner Music Generation programmes in Cork City and Laois to organise three themed Professional Learning Events to explore different aspects of inclusive practice and initiate a professional learning network. Con Tutti: Music Education & Autism is the second event at which we launch this Resource Pack on Friday 2nd December 2016 at St Angela's College, Sligo.

We hope you find this Resource Pack - the booklet & CD - a useful and enjoyable resource in bringing music into your classroom or youth setting. The activities are geared towards primary school children, in particular the younger age category 4-10, but can be further progressed and developed to respond to the upper age category.

In line with the Music Generation National Strategic Plan 2016 - 2021: Music Generation Sligo is committed to enabling transformation in children/young people, ultimately leading them to develop their future possible selves in music.

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