

AFRICAN MUSIC SCHOOL **PROJECT 2012-13**



School children of Seat of Wisdom School in Accra, Ghana

The *African Music School* (AMS) project aims to bring African-style musical education to primary schools in south-east London – making music fun, accessible and inspiring to children of all abilities, whilst fulfilling all of the requirements of the National Curriculum.

- Both AMS and National Curriculum covered
- Cost: £3500 for school year 2012-13
- 2 hours weekly
- 60 hours per year, of which:
 - 16 hours (minimum) with African teacher
 - 2 hours: demonstration performances of traditional African music
 - 2 hours: whole-school performance by the kids, evening or assembly

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1. ABOUT AMS PROJECT

The *African Music School* is a brand new project launched by local professional musician and teacher Laurence Hill. Here is what Laurence says about the project:

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I was inspired to set up the *African Music School* project after returning from my second trip to Africa in 2011. Whilst there, I learnt various styles of West African music from inspiring master-musicians in Senegal, Guinea and Ghana, and witnessed their seemingly effortless approach to becoming a musician. This led me to the idea of setting up a project here in London that will adopt a West African approach to musical learning – an approach that will help young school children of all musical abilities to enjoy the rewards of rhythmical music making and to develop their musicianship skills.

For example, in Senegal, where *sabar drumming* is the most widespread traditional music, I studied with a renowned tama drummer called *Yatma Thiam*. During my stay with Yatma I saw his wife singing famous drum breaks to their 7-month-old baby, while his 6-year-old son, like all young Senegalese boys and girls, knew how to dance to these drum breaks as he sang the drum parts to himself. Other boys his age would pick up twigs and imitate their fathers and uncles (all musicians are men in Dakar) by drumming on large upturned empty water bottles. By the age of 13, boys play and perform for ceremonies with their fathers and uncles – only acquiring the required virtuosic technique to perform once they are intimately familiar with the huge variety of musical styles and phrases.

The African Learning System

Here is the order in which children from the countries I visited learn musical skills (a model typical of most countries with a strong folk music tradition), and the order which will be applied in our teaching:

1. Listening – as with Yatma’s wife singing to their child of 7 months.

2. Watching – You can imagine the excitement of hordes of children on the streets as they watch drummers perform for dancers at ceremonies and celebrations.
3. Singing – Singing folk and pop songs teaches children the framework of their music (i.e. the ‘elements’ of their music: harmony, melody and rhythm). Singing drum parts is also something that every child can do in West Africa.
4. Dancing – All African-influenced folk music is for dancing. Children dance from an early age, moving to music creates a strong internal pulse for all children.
5. Instrument Technique (for drumming) – This is the first formal educational stage and is the most rapid, having been immersed in the previous 4 stages of learning for a decade or more. Only the tone of the drum sounds takes time to learn.
6. Instrument Technique (for other instruments) – in Guinea and Mali, other instruments like the *African flute*, *kora* (21-stringed harp) and, more recently, the *electric guitar* are also instruments of master-musicians. The musicians who play them always have a deep understanding of traditional percussion music.

Why learn the African way?

You may wonder why the African learning system could be relevant to music education here in London, the capital city of a Western country, with a successful and far-reaching musical heritage of its own.

Here in the UK, our musical education processes are built around a *classical music* model. Children learn from reading music, attempting to simultaneously read notes while learning the technique of how to sound those notes on their instrument. Consequently, the notes are played out of rhythm, with no steady tempo to contextualise the sequence of notes that they have learnt to play. A child will learn the technique required to play the notes first, and only then will he or she attempt to perform the piece in rhythm.

This is the order in which children learn musical skills in the *classical music system*:

1. Reading music – this is how to read basic rhythms (crotchets and quavers), and how to read the notes B, A & G on the staff.

2. Musical technique – this is how to play the notes B, A & G on your instrument.
3. Perform in rhythm – this is how to read and perform “Hot Cross Buns” using the notes B A & G.

Recently, however, there has been less of an emphasis on reading music, as this has been deemed too difficult, and more of an emphasis on World music and aural learning. In spite of this, the *classical music system* has still been left in place – a system where instrumental technique is taught first, and rhythm is taught later – as, of course, many of today’s music teachers themselves learnt within a classical music context.

The children in south-east London’s primary schools today want the opportunity to learn the styles of music that they hear from day-to-day. In most cases, this is the music of popular artists from Michael Jackson to Katy Perry, Justin Bieber to Black Eyed Peas – that is to say, *pop music* with a groove for dancing. The introduction of *Wider Opportunities* programs in schools, and the changes in the National Curriculum, reinforce this shift towards popular music for all.

With this in mind, I think that young school pupils deserve to learn in a way that will instil rhythm and groove as the central foundation for their journey into the world of music. The African learning system recognises the crucial link between music and dance, and at every stage of learning, provides a direct link between the music and the musician.

The *African Music School* project aims to teach children using this African learning system, encouraging and supporting their on-going passion for music, and giving them the skills and inspiration to continue their involvement with making music in later life.

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2. OUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To give children an enjoyable and inspiring introduction to music and music making

2. To informally educate and prepare school children from the ages of 5-8 for an African-style musical education by encouraging *observation* and *appreciation*, and using song and dance

3. To help children learn musical skills both formally and informally by using a wide variety of media and activities

4. To give children aged 8-10 a firm understanding and grounding in vital elements of music, namely *rhythm* and *melody*

5. To give children aged 8-10 a chance to learn a musical instrument from inspirational music teachers

6. To give children the opportunity to be creative, with the ability to compose and perform in a variety of styles

3. AFRICAN MUSIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM

- We will provide 2 hours of weekly tuition for 30 weeks per year – 60 hours music tuition per year
- Pupils will receive a minimum of 16 hours tuition from an African master-musician, learning the rest of the time with a professional musician and teacher from London
- We incorporate all National Curriculum requirements in our lessons. See *National Curriculum – Key Stage 2* chapter for further details

Local teacher – AMS curriculum (weekly):

- **Years 1-3:** watching, listening, dancing, singing, clapping total: **20 mins**

Formal learning: Pupils in Years 1-3 receive 20-minute music lessons on a rotation basis, each class learning once every 3 weeks. In lessons, children will learn songs, clap rhythms and learn basic dance steps, exposing them to the early stages of an African music education.

Informal learning: Classes are encouraged to watch Years 4 and 5 performances during their lesson time. Class teachers will also be given material to share with the children outside of class time, including DVDs, CDs and quizzes.

- **Year 4:** same as above + learning to play drum/flute, history, NC total: **50 mins**

Formal learning: Pupils in Year 4 receive 50-minute music lessons once a week for 30 weeks per year. In lessons, children will learn songs, clap rhythms and learn appropriate dance steps. Pupils will also learn a rhythmic instrument, such as the djembe, and a melodic instrument, such as the African flute. Students will learn some of the history of African music, and the cultural significance of the music and instruments that they learn. Additionally, musical theory and other aspects of music that fall under the National Curriculum (NC) will be taught – see *National Curriculum – Key Stage 2* chapter for more.

Informal learning: Support material will be provided for class teachers, including appropriate listening material and inspiring videos, as well as multimedia support on our *AMS website*. Role models will be sought within the class, who will be able to help lead learning both inside and outside of the classroom.

- **Year 5:** same as above + drum ensemble, mixed ensemble total: **50 mins**

Formal learning: Pupils in Year 5 receive 50-minute music lessons once a week for 30 weeks per year. In lessons children will learn songs, clap rhythms and learn appropriate dance steps. Pupils will form drum ensembles, learning traditional African music such

as *Guinean* djembe ensembles or *Ghanaian* kpanlogo ensembles. Ensembles of mixed instruments will also be taught using melodic instruments such as the flute, learning more diverse styles of music such as *Pop*. Students will continue to learn the history of African and African-influenced music. Musical theory and other aspects of music that fall under the National Curriculum (NC) will be taught – see *National Curriculum – Key Stage 2* chapter for more.

Informal learning: Support material will be provided for class teachers, including appropriate listening material and inspiring videos, as well as multimedia support on our *AMS website*. Role models will be sought within the class, who will be able to help lead learning both inside and outside of the classroom.

- **Year 6:** AMS-approved list of peripatetic tutors to teach guitar, keys, drums, trumpet, saxophone etc. (*optional, not included in AMS project cost*)

Children at the school will be given the chance to continue to receive musical education throughout Year 6 as we provide a list of AMS-approved peripatetic tutors to teach other popular instruments. Providing ‘progression routes’ for keen, gifted and talented children is of vital importance to the *AMS Wider Opportunities* programme – however this part of the project is not included in the *Wider Opportunities* programme price.

African teacher – AMS Curriculum (weekly):

- **Years 1-3:** same as local teacher

Our African master-musician, who will teach Year 1-3 pupils for a minimum of 160 minutes per year, will continue to teach the same programme with Years 1-3 as the local teacher, using his or her expertise to teach more African dance.

- **Years 4-5:** singing, flute, drumming and dance ensembles (for performance)

The African teacher, who will teach Year 4-5 pupils for a minimum of 400 minutes per year-group per year, will help Year 4 and 5 pupils prepare for a concert performance of African and other styles of music. Pupils will learn African dance to accompany their drum and mixed instrument ensembles, with a chance to be creative in making their own music and dance performance for a concert at the school.

AMS Curriculum Repertoire Examples:

Core Repertoire

- **Reggae** – e.g. Bob Marley: Three Little Birds, I Shot the Sheriff
 - Reggae Swing
 - Bass lines
 - Singing with movement
 - Playing with movement
- **Soul/Motown** – e.g. Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, James Brown, Curtis Mayfield: Superstition, I Wish, Thriller, etc.
 - Listening, dancing
 - Singing (while clapping with movement)
 - Playing with movement
- **Pop** – Contemporary songs and artists – e.g. Beyonce, Amy Winehouse, Cee Lo Green
 - Singing (with accompaniment)
 - Clapping
- **African** – Traditional Ghanaian, Malian, Guinean
 - Clave (sing and clap with movement)
 - Singing (with accompaniment)
 - Playing djembe, Ewe, kpanlogo, highlife and dancing

Optional extra repertoire

- Other African-influenced options: listening, singing, playing
 - **Samba** – Magalena, Meu Carro de Boi
 - **Calypso** – St Thomas, Soul Limbo
 - **Jazz** – Herbie Hancock: Watermelon Man, Canteloupe Island
 - **Rock and Popular styles** – The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix etc.

4. NATIONAL CURRICULUM – KEY STAGE 2

Local teacher – National Curriculum

All aspects of the National Curriculum will be incorporated into lessons for Years 4 and 5 and principally taught by our local teachers.

- Controlling sounds through singing and playing - performing skills
- Creating and developing musical ideas - composing skills
- Responding and reviewing - appraising skills
- Listening, and applying knowledge and understanding
- Breadth of study (i.e. through varied activities)

(full description on the *www.education.gov.uk* website)

National Curriculum Repertoire Examples:

(Core repertoire same as AMS curriculum)

Additional Repertoire

- **Western Classical music** for listening and study, e.g.:
 - Film Music – John Williams: ET, Star Wars
 - Gustav Holst: The Planet Suite
 - Beethoven: Ode to Joy
- **Folk music and Nursery Rhymes** for listening and singing:
 - English and Irish folk tunes e.g. Lord of the Dance, Scarborough Fair, Danny Boy
 - A range of nursery rhymes e.g. London's Burning, Simple Simon, Bobby Shaftoe

We will also consider any special requests from the school concerning additional repertoire.

5. AFRICAN MUSIC SCHOOL CHARITABLE PROJECTS

The AMS project not only aims to provide high quality African-style music education for schools here in London, but also aims to give back to the communities who provide it.

African teachers

In taking up the AMS project, your school will already have helped a fantastically talented and knowledgeable master-musician from West Africa to travel to a Western country. Our teachers, although outstandingly gifted, come from poor countries where opportunities to travel are scarce due to the relative high costs of passports, VISAs and plane tickets.

The AMS project will help these incredible musicians to gain a sense of achievement in spreading their vast knowledge of African folk music beyond the borders of their home country. Our project will fund 100% of their travel costs, while paying them a fair Western wage.

Partner Schools

Your school will also be partnered with a school from your guest African teacher's home country – giving pupils the opportunity to learn about school life for children in West Africa.

- **Learn and connect from across the globe**

Classes will be able to send and receive photos, videos and messages from West African schools.

- **Raise money to help out**

We will also provide an opportunity for school children to help raise money to help their partner schools for whom basic equipment such as textbooks and pencils are constantly in short supply.

6. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED...

...Fill in an Application online

Please fill in our Application Form available on **www.drumafrica.co.uk** (click on 'AMS' page) to register your interest in our *Wider Opportunities* programme and email it to theAMSproject@hotmail.com

...Phone to arrange a meeting

Alternatively phone Laurence Hill on **07817 769 029** to find out more information or to arrange a meeting at your school.

...Email for more information

Email us with any questions or enquiries about the AMS project at:

theAMSproject@hotmail.com

We look forward to hearing from you... Thank You