

CLASSICAL

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Singing campaign gets under way

Clare Stevens

Several important steps have been taken towards implementing the government's £10m national singing campaign launched at the music manifesto's 'State of Play' conference in January.

Following a tendering process that attracted more than 80 enquiries and five 'strong bids', a consortium of Youth Music, the Sage Gateshead, Faber Music and advertising agency Abbot Mead Vickers has been invited to manage the national singing programme, which will be led by singing ambassador Howard Goodall. The consortium will be expected to develop a national singing resource (the 'songbook' referred to by Goodall at State of Play), run a media and schools campaign to highlight the benefits of singing, and work towards training an increased number of singing leaders to take the initiative forward. The partners will also work with other national and regional organisations to promote singing.

Some elements of the proposed programme are already in development. Pilot work is under way with the Choir Schools Association to expand its existing outreach programme, and with Youth Music's early years project Music Start, created by the Healing Arts organisation in the Isle of Wight. The third strand of work to be set up is an extension beyond the north east of the Sage Gateshead's Vocal Force project, which aims to provide 'inclusive, learner-centred

First wave: Howard Goodall



training for teachings and community musicians, with an emphasis on encouraging and exemplifying healthy, musical singing.' Vocal Force will work with vocal leaders and potential vocal leaders in selected areas of England between September 2007 and March 2008. 'This is a tremendous opportunity to work in partnership with teachers and musicians right across the country,' said Katherine Zeserson, director of learning and participation at the Sage. 'We're proud to be able to share the insights we've gained through the music manifesto pathfinder programme, and to promote and disseminate the excellent practice we know we'll be encountering in

schools and organisations in the target areas.'

Howard Goodall described the roll-out of the Vocal Force programme as 'the first wave of a series of dramatic interventions into primary school singing as part of the music manifesto's singing programme'. He said that the programme's immediate and urgent task had been to upscale initiatives that were already proven to be working well with large numbers of children. To help keep him in touch with work at the chalk face of music education he has set up a group of 37 'virtual advisers' who will take part in mail discussions on different topics and will be encouraged to

Patrick Rowe

take the lead in sharing best practice and ideas to support the singing programme. They are giving their time on a voluntary basis. Debate so far has covered topics such as numeracy and singing, kite-marking and the use of technology to share and celebrate singing between schools.

Speaking at the annual 'Singposium' event in run by the Association of British Choral Directors in tandem with the National Festival of Music for Youth in Birmingham, Leonora Davies, outgoing chair of the Music Education Council, said that this initiative represented the best opportunity that had existed for supporting singing in schools for many, many years, but that it was up to practitioners to 'work their socks off' to take it forward. 'On the back of Rafael Nadal's trainers at the Wimbledon final was one word: *Vamos*,' she said, 'It means "Let's go!" and that's what we must all do.'

Meanwhile the new secretary of state for children, schools and families, Ed Balls, and schools minister Andrew Adonis lent their voices to the campaign by joining schoolchildren and members of departmental staff choirs in an impromptu performance of 'My old man said follow the van' as part of the Sing London festival. They used the occasion to confirm to Howard Goodall the government's commitment to supporting the music manifesto.

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