

****Press release – for immediate release****

What can we do about the state of music in our schools?

Does a new education initiative, *Roots*, led by University of Cambridge, VOCES8, Cambridge Early Music, Cambridgeshire Music, Anglia Ruskin University and The Brook Street Band hold the answer? #Roots



Roots Revival

Cuts in funding, reduced participation and falling numbers taking music have created an “existential crisis” (Lord Black, House of Lords, 18 October, 2018)

Ahead of the newly appointed government panel’s first meeting to develop a model music curriculum ([meeting on 5 February](#)), and in response to an ever-deepening crisis which has seen only 295 teachers signing up to train as music teachers this year (a drop of 55% in the last 8 years), a new initiative has been launched this week by a unique partnership of leading research institutions, professional musicians, education providers and charitable bodies in Cambridgeshire.

The three-year project, **Roots**, trials a new model for music provision within primary and secondary schools across the region. Despite Cambridge’s outward prosperity, the disparity in wealth and opportunity across the county is broad. Areas of Cambridgeshire are among the most deprived in the U.K. and many of its schools struggle to make provision for music.

Roots draws together all ages in teaching music. The vocal strand is led by internationally acclaimed educators, **VOCES8**; the group is Associate Ensemble at the University of Cambridge and on 18 January



released its latest album, *Enchanted Isle*, on Decca Classics. The strand trains teachers, university and school students in the VOCES8 Method, encouraging learning through participation in a series of vocal and rhythmic exercises. In turn, teachers and older students train younger students to become leaders in their own communities, developing their confidence as young leaders.

New resources and opportunities are also provided for classroom teaching. Researchers at the University of Cambridge work alongside teachers to develop lessons informed by the latest insights. Towards the end of the project, participating students have the

chance to visit college libraries to see for themselves some of the historical sources they have studied.

Curated by **Roots** partner Cambridge Early Music, the first phase of **Roots** concludes on 19 March with a public concert in celebration of the European Day of Early Music given by VOCES8 in Trinity Chapel, Cambridge. Secondary school students from across the county will have the chance to sing alongside VOCES8 in a concert in an aspirational setting. New skills developed by students will be put into practice in a programme that celebrates singing from Renaissance motets through to *a cappella* arrangements of Pop songs. So begins the longer task of introducing a new generation to the richness and diversity of its cultural roots at a time when the educational benefits of music are widely known, but its place in school life and society more broadly is increasingly under threat.

A parallel strand within the project, as developed by Anglia Ruskin University and The Brook Street Band, seeks to establish a legacy for early instrumental music in the region by founding a period instrument ensemble specifically for under 18s. Specialist coaching will also be provided through workshops and access to historic instruments.

The first phase of **Roots** is generously supported by the [Helen Hamlyn Trust](#), the [Humanities in the European Research Area](#), and Cambridge Early Music. Further funding is being urgently sought for years 2 and 3 of the project.

**** Press release ends****



The Roots partnership (click each name for partner website & biography)

[Cambridgeshire Music](#)

[University of Cambridge](#)

[Anglia Ruskin University](#)

[Cambridge Early Music](#)

[VOCES8](#) (recently announced as Associate Ensemble, University of Cambridge)

[The Brook Street Band](#)

Roots Press Contact: to arrange interviews, or for more information about 'Roots' or to talk about funding opportunities for 'Roots' through Cambridge Early Music, please contact [Libby Percival](#) or [Dr Sam Barrett](#) together on emails sjb59@cam.ac.uk & libby@percival.co.uk. For urgent enquires call Libby on +44 7718 752 481.

For University of Cambridge press enquiries please call:

Dates:

18 January - Members of VOCES8 appear on Sky News, talking about VOCES8 & VCM Foundation's education work across the world

18 January – new album 'Enchanted Isle' released by VOCES8 on Decca Classics

21 January - New Cambridgeshire-wide, three-year education project 'Roots' with Cambridge Early Music, VOCES8/VCM Foundation, University of Cambridge, Cambridgeshire Music, Anglia Ruskin University, The Brook Street Band launched in Cambridge. VOCES8 is Ensemble in Association, University of Cambridge for the Faculty of Music's revised M.Mus including specialist outreach through 'Roots'

19 March - VOCES8 presents some of the first results from the project in a concert on 19 March in celebration of European Day of Early Music. <https://www.cambridgelivetrust.co.uk/tickets/events/voces8-sing-joyfully>

Video Resources:

- a performance at the Gresham Centre featuring VOCES8, students from a London Academy and students from an American High School <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZjRonVvPk8>
- a VOCES8 Method video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1KhW2xf4s8>
- a creative response to one of the Friday Afternoons Songs – Baiskeli <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrMwOjGqYKM>

Notes for Editors:

Decca artist **VOCES8** is the leading ensemble for the VCM Foundation. With a high profile international touring schedule throughout Europe, the USA and Japan, VOCES8 places a great deal of emphasis on creating an inclusive, wide-reaching, innovative and sustainable education programme. Over the last decade the team has worked with nearly 400,000 students worldwide and provided CPD training for many thousands of teachers. It has published a school resource with Edition Peters, the VOCES8 Method, which is available in English, German, French and Japanese - a Chinese translation is in process. This resource is being used in more than 3000 schools in many different countries. Additional learning opportunities and legacy are crucial too. One of VOCES8's key projects in recent years has been its Young Leaders programme, which has now trained over 1000 teenagers in how to visit local primary schools and lead music workshops. VOCES8 already has links with European partners in both France and Germany who are keen to work with Cambridge Early Music and its partners.

The award-winning **Brook Street Band** has established itself as one of the country's foremost interpreters of Handel's music. The name comes from the street in London's Mayfair where George Frideric Handel lived and composed for most of his working life. Supported by The Brook Street Band Trust, the BSB has run innovative education projects throughout the UK including for Dartington, Jackdaws, Wigmore Hall, universities and Music Hubs. Over the past four years BSB has worked extensively with many thousands of young people in both East Anglia and London, much of its education and performance work tied to **love:Handel**, the BSB's new immersive Handel Festival. BSB is passionate about inspiring and involving young people in music-making, and BSB is the group who the partnership believe will best deliver the instrumental side of the project.

