

5th May 2016

1,500 Berkshire children perform in gala concert at the Royal Albert Hall

For immediate release:

On **Sunday 1st May** Berkshire Maestros, the music education charity incorporating the Berkshire Music Hub, took over 1,500 children from Berkshire to perform in a rousing gala concert at the Royal Albert Hall. *A Celebration of Music in Berkshire* brought together primary and secondary school children from across the county to sing and play in what must surely be the most prestigious concert venue in the country.

Louise McGahon, Berkshire Maestros Head of Voice and project manager of the Royal Albert Hall concert, said:

“This is the type of event that children do not get to perform in through their normal school lives and the memory will stay with them forever. It will widen their musical knowledge and enhance their team-building and social skills. I have been delighted by the enthusiasm and engagement demonstrated by the children. They will gain a huge sense of achievement that will encourage them to not only explore music further but also to have the confidence to join local choirs and ensembles.”

The primary school choirs (who came from West Berkshire and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead) joined forces to sing songs from *Oliver!*, *The Jungle Book* and *Mamma Mia* by ABBA. Their singing was “beautiful” and “Raised the roof in the Albert Hall”. The secondary school choirs (who came from across the county) performed together as a massed choir, singing powerful pieces such as the *Hallelujah Chorus* by Handel and *Dies Irae* by Verdi from the BBC’s *Ten Pieces* initiative. The combined sound of the choirs was incredible!

Berkshire Maestros Hub partner Culture Mix brought a steel band to the stage. Their Berkshire Youth Steel Percussion Orchestra played two pieces to open the programme. The performance of the children in the steel band was uplifting and energetic, and truly demonstrated the diversity of music education available in our county.

Mary Genis from Culture Mix said:

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“CultureMix is delighted to have been involved in this fantastic opportunity for the Berkshire Youth Steel Percussion Orchestra to perform at the Royal Albert Hall. Working in partnership with Berkshire Maestros enables so many Berkshire children to benefit from such an inspirational experience.”

Also appearing were Berkshire Maestros showcase groups Berkshire Youth Guitar Orchestra, Berkshire Youth Choir, Berkshire Young Voices and Berkshire Youth Symphony Orchestra. They were supported by players from the BBC Concert Orchestra.

Berkshire Youth Guitar Orchestra performed the world premiere of a new work for guitar orchestra by Gary Ryan called *Kerry Tales*. The composer described the performance as “wonderful”.

Social media channels became very busy with responses from teachers and parents saying how good the concert had been:

Music_DWS tweeted *“Thankyou @BMAestros for giving DMS Choir such an amazing opportunity to perform at the RAH. A moment in time they'll never forget, I'm sure”*

Lmwtyler tweeted *“v proud Mum here. Fab concert and amazing opportunity for our young players. They had a blast!”*

Jquinnelq tweeted *“Brilliant performances by all musicians”*

Kate Maynard posted *“Absolutely stunning concert, and so inspirational for the young people. I don't think it's normal for an 11 year old boy to be saying 'Dies Irae, I absolutely love that one!'. You did that Berkshire Maestros! Thank you just doesn't seem enough.”*

In addition, The Castle School said *“It was so moving to see [the children] achieve at so many different levels. Social, emotional, literacy, mathematical and not forgetting music skills were all covered; by golly what a way to learn!”*

This concert will create lifelong memories for the children who participate. It is one of the many ways that Berkshire Maestros is teaching music in order to change lives.

Ends

Notes to Editors

Berkshire Maestros

- Berkshire Maestros is a charitable trust providing music education opportunities to children and young people in Berkshire. Established in 1982 as the Berkshire Young Musicians Trust, it rebranded as Berkshire Maestros in 2006 and is the provider of music tuition in schools and music centres for Bracknell Forest, Reading, the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, West Berkshire and Wokingham Unitary Authorities.
- We run hundreds of bands, choirs and orchestras to allow children to build on their lesson experience. These take place at our music centres based in Bracknell, Wokingham, Newbury, Reading and Windsor
- If you would like more information, please contact Vanessa Harbutt, Marketing Officer on 0118 901 2357, or email vanessaharbutt@berkshiremaestros.org.uk