

Music for Life

AN INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED CREATIVE MUSIC-MAKING PROGRAMME FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR FAMILIES, FRIENDS, AND CARERS



Our Vision

Our vision is a world in which the human rights of all people living with dementia are respected and upheld, where they are treated with dignity and fully included in society.

We play our part by creating music activity for and with people living with dementia, which is fully inclusive of people whatever their stage or type of dementia. Music for Life supports the wellbeing of everyone involved by creating opportunities to experience creative agency, meaningful social connection, and a sense of purpose and fulfilment. It also deepens understanding of the experiences of people living with dementia, helping to shift perceptions away from narratives of fear and loss, and highlighting the hope, joy, and possibility that remain.

Founded by Linda Rose in 1993 and led by Wigmore Hall since 2009, Music for Life encompasses projects in care and community settings, alongside worldwide training partnerships.





First and foremost an artistic endeavour, Music for Life is distinguished by its co-creative, in-depth, improvisatory approach which enables meaningful, 'in-the-moment' connections in which people with dementia are seen, heard, valued, and recognised as creative contributors.

This approach helps us to engage people who may be excluded from other activities, including those living with more advanced or rare forms of dementia. Led by highly skilled musicians and facilitators, Music for Life is underpinned by care, collaboration and integrity. The experience is often profoundly rewarding for practitioners themselves, fostering mutual learning, connection and growth.

'Suddenly you remember you're a person'
– Person living with dementia

Left image: Singing with Friends
Right image: Music for Thought
© James Berry

Our Projects

Projects in Care Settings

At the heart of the programme are our projects in care settings with groups of residents and staff: specially trained musicians improvise music with participants, valuing everyone's contributions equally. This enables creative communication with people with advanced dementia, drawing out their individuality and empowering them to make choices and express themselves. Care staff build skills and confidence in interacting with residents through experiential learning and reflection. They also have space to explore their own creativity, and the programme can help strengthen relationships within care teams. A dementia specialist supports staff throughout, helping them reflect on their experiences and embed learning and new approaches into everyday practice.

'It has brought us all together and has taught us to work as a team and get to know each other' – Member of care staff

'Music brings you back to life a bit, doesn't it' – Person living with dementia

Monday Afternoons

A warm and welcoming group that meets to support and inspire each other through music-making, made up of people living with a young onset dementia, their families and carers, and musicians and facilitators. Together, the group makes music that reflects them as a collective, with individuals' stories, experiences and ideas leading to shared conversation and creativity.

'When I come here it's an escape. As soon as the beginning music starts it's like weight is lifting … everyone needs this' – Family member of a person living with dementia



Monday afternoons © James Berry

Singing with Friends

A choir for people living with dementia and their families/supporters led in partnership with Resonate Arts. Founded in 2017, sessions are led in a responsive and person-centred way, drawing on the diverse heritages of its members and learning songs in many different languages. Whilst there is a strong focus on healthy vocal technique, Singing with Friends is just as much about connecting in the moment through singing, and each voice and personality contributes to the spirit and dynamic of the group. Sessions also include social time, movement, poetry creation and readings, improvisation and live performances from visiting musicians. The group meets weekly in-person at Wigmore Hall, and our online Singing with Friends choir meets once a fortnight.

‘Singing at Wigmore Hall has given us wings to fly into the sky’ – Person living with dementia

‘It wakes up your mind!’ – Person living with dementia



Singing with Friends
© James Berry



Music for Thought
© James Berry

‘It makes me feel alive and wanting. It’s a way for me of living’ – Person living with dementia

Music for Thought

Creative music projects led in partnership with Resonate Arts and the Royal Academy of Music. The projects provide a relaxed environment in which people who are often new to dementia services, or may be at risk of social isolation, can take part in a meaningful activity in their local community. Sessions are shaped collaboratively with participants and often use a theme for creative inspiration.

Out of the Ordinary

An innovative online project that brings together musicians, students from the Royal Academy of Music, and individuals from UCL’s Rare Dementia Support groups, creating space for everyone involved to explore ways to nurture their own and each other’s wellbeing through music and the expressive arts.

‘We are all total strangers, but we are also a family’ – Person living with dementia

Music for the Moment

A free monthly concert series led in partnership with the Royal Academy of Music, Resonate Arts and St Marylebone Parish Church. The concerts, which are performed by musicians from the Royal Academy of Music, aim to be fully inclusive of people living with dementia. Complimentary refreshments are served before and after the concert, creating space for conversation and connection between audience members and performers.

‘Inclusive, emotionally releasing and expressive’ – Concert attendee

Practice Sharing and Training

We strongly believe in the value of sharing our experience and knowledge with others: we continue to contribute to national and international research projects and offer training for individual musicians and organisations who are developing their own work inspired by Music for Life.

We lead dementia awareness sessions with our staff and musicians, and are committed to ensuring our environment, facilities, and programming are accessible to people living with dementia.



Music for Thought © James Berry

‘This work makes us better musicians, but most importantly, it truly makes us better human beings’ – Musician

MUSIC FOR LIFE

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