

2010 is a national year of singing; JAGS Director of Music Leigh O'Hara has shown how eager he is to celebrate this memorably in partnership with our local community.

UK composer and conductor, Alexander L'Estrange, led 200 primary school children in a performance of 'This is Our World' commissioned for the national Sing-Up project, at a Primary Schools' Singing Festival organised by JAGS on Tuesday 13 July 2010.

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'It was really fun! I want to sing all the time now – on my way home, on the bus, even in my sleep.' Chelsea, Bessemer Grange School.

The Holst Hall at JAGS echoed with the voices of 200 primary school children at its first Primary Schools' Singing Festival. With his special magic, composer and conductor Alexander L'Estrange led choirs from 7 local primary schools in a rehearsal of his 3-part song, skilfully weaving the enthusiastic voices into something fast-approaching glorious harmony. 'This is our time, this is our world,' sang the children. 'We hold its future in our hands,' the huge group declared. 'Celebrate variety – it's the spice of life.' Click [here](#) to watch a video clip.

The piece 'This is our world' (words & music by Joanna Forbes and Alexander L'Estrange) was commissioned by the national singing programme, Sing Up, and had its first, outdoor performance by 1000 voices in Birmingham earlier in July. Sing Up was launched 5 years ago to encourage children everywhere to sing, and to provide great resources for teachers, experienced or not,. The choirs from Heber, Bessemer Grange, St Jude's, Goose Green, Dulwich Hamlet, Rosendale and Elm Wood Schools rose beautifully to the challenge from page to stage in a few hours, taking inspiration from Alexander's fun rehearsal techniques. 'What a brilliant day!' he said, clearly relishing the energy and discipline of the different groups.

While he enjoys working with young voices like today's choirs, Alexander also loves cross-age collaboration. His most successful piece to date is 'Zimbe' ('Sing!' In Swahili) for an adult choir, primary school choir and a jazz quintet. Since he wrote it 18 months ago, it has enjoyed 20 performances including in Kenya and New Zealand.

Composer and arranger, workshop-leader and conductor, he draws on an eclectic background: New College, Oxford chorister and comprehensive schoolboy, professional countertenor and jazz doublebass player for a start. No wonder he could find the right pitch to draw the best from children. And they loved his charisma and warmth. It was a heady day and the audience of teachers, assistants and parents were thrilled with the concert at the end. The children were lit-up from the warm-up onwards. 'Alexander makes the rehearsal fun!' 'It was a fantastic, excellent.' The Heber children agreed. 'And the sumo wrestling – when Alexander got us to make different sounds with our voices!'

'I really liked being able to sing **and** perform.' Aaliyah, Bessemer Grange School

'I liked the warm-up, especially making the rain sounds with our hands. It was hard to learn but I like the sound of the song and the harmonies.' Clara, Rosendale School

'I enjoyed learning the different parts,' Niamh, Rosendale School

'I liked being in a big school and being with other schools.' Tia, Rosendale School

'I liked singing 'This is Our World' and eating the lunch!' Amy, St Jude's School

'Singing the rhythm is good,' AJ, St Jude's School

'It's like caramel –it sticks in your head'.