

## The Create Together Project

**An exciting and exhilarating residential performing arts programme for young people with Special Educational Needs**

Pro Corda's "Create Together" project is the largest special educational needs (SEN) residential music and performing arts project of its kind in the UK and is born from the core philosophy that lies at the heart of all Pro Corda's provision, namely; to maximise the wider educational, social and communication benefits of music and performance training. Pro Corda's passionate belief is to provide equal access to the performing arts, and its commitment is to provide all young people with the highest quality of music making opportunities, whatever their background.



*"I truly learnt so much from each individual group and also from the wealth of knowledge, commitment and understanding shared by those who were instructing / sharing. I feel very humbled by all I have seen today..."*

- Katharine Kent, HRH  
Duchess of Kent

### Project Outline: "A Creative Journey"

Each 5 day residential "Create Together" course takes place at Pro Corda's home Leiston Abbey in Suffolk. Throughout each course, participants explore every corner of a music theatre production in small groups. Sessions are designed to encourage skills of co-operation, negotiation, verbal and non-verbal communication to develop. Sessions include:

**Composition and Improvisation:** to boost creative and instrumental skills through composing new music based on a theme or a character from the show.

**Dalcroze Eurhythmics:** exploring pulse, phrase, musical shape and performance through movement together with creating and preparing choreography for the show.

**Technical Theatre:** sessions are participant-led from the outset and activities include costume making and scenery painting to animation and video. Sessions are collaborative where partnership and group work is encouraged and supported.

**Vocal and Stage Performance:** preparing presentation of songs, chorus and solo parts for the show.

**Production Meetings:** for all participants to come together on an equal level and plan the details of the final show. All strands of the curriculum come together to prepare a fully staged show in Pro Corda's barn theatre which is open to parents, carers and local people.



### Participants: "Taking ownership."

Each 5 day course caters for up to 30 young people between ages 10-18. The focus at all times is to increase self esteem and confidence to provide real and immediate opportunities for mainstream integration. Our participants are consulted at every stage of the creative process so they are truly in command of the shape and progress of their creative journey through each course. At all times, they are encouraged to have the very highest expectations of their abilities and to take ownership of their imaginations and work.

The SEN programme caters for young people:

- With autism
- From difficult or deprived backgrounds
- With communication or behavioural difficulties including those statemented as EBD.
- With a range of physical disabilities.
- Making the transition from an SEN environment to open society.

## Outcomes: “Responsibility – Independence – Leadership – Integration”

Through the creative process, participants are empowered to:

- Take **responsibility** and develop a greater sense of **independence**.
- Take the **lead**, **participate** in and **integrate** with mainstream educational and social activities.
- Develop more **positive** and more **meaningful** relationships with others.
- Tackle the barriers of participation and **counter negative views** of SEN.
- Integrate with **open society** through **tangible** and **immediate further opportunities**

## The “Create Together” Future

Pro Corda maintains a lasting and involved relationship with all partner schools so the “Create Together” process continues way beyond the course. Pre and post course workshops are delivered at schools and each production is staged at schools and community settings to give additional performing opportunities to participants. Reports and evaluations are gathered about all participants that feed directly into Annual Review Meetings (a crucial aspect of integration and future opportunities planning for young people with SEN statements). This process enables Pro Corda to work with schools, parents and carers to plan and tailor make further opportunities within the performing arts for each participant.

In addition to this, Pro Corda has launched a “Next Step” work experience apprenticeship scheme exclusively for our “Create Together” participants over the age of 16. This scheme gives participants the opportunity to work within their areas of strength and get a real sense of accomplishment and integration by being part of the staff team. It also gives a vital injection of confidence and experience (together with the development of new skills) at the crucial ages of transition in the life of a young person with special educational needs (at ages 16 and 18). “Next Step” participants receive a full backing of supervision but are also encouraged to take initiative and operate independently. They shadow classes on courses, helping course participants out with all aspects of the creative process. Placement holders also help out with “full company” rehearsals, pastoral activities, parties, and can also be involved with some of the behind the scenes administration work in the Pro Corda office and in the heritage and tourism aspects related to Pro Corda’s historic home, Leiston Abbey.



### An Inspiring Setting: A sense of Family and Belonging

Pro Corda’s home and setting for the “Create Together” courses is a vital part of developing the participant’s social awareness and sense of being part of something incredibly special but also homely. The atmosphere on all courses is a family

*“I have enjoyed every last minute – thank you for your support and guidance” - Max Mee, 16*

one, from the sessions through to the evening activities, and this adds to all areas of achievement from artistic to developing of areas of behaviour and self worth. Leiston Abbey is an English Heritage site, the medieval Leiston Abbey, set in open Suffolk countryside near the coast. The facilities, including rehearsal studios and barn theatre are accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities.

## Planning for the Future: Making Music and Performance at the heart of national priorities for SEN.

We operate an extensive Training and Mentoring Programme to accompany these courses which addresses directly the vast shortfall of specialist music teaching and provision in SEN schools. Music and the performing arts are areas where young people with special needs can truly excel and Pro Corda’s Training and Mentoring sessions for non specialist school staff cover all aspects of our SEN curriculum so that music and the performing arts can be taken back to school beyond the length of a course and provide performing opportunities to young people where there is little or no artistic provision.

Pro Corda also operates a trainee partnership with Greenwich University and Trinity Laban, London, to give those on their teacher training courses placements to develop specialist knowledge within music, performing arts and SEN.