

The University of Edinburgh

Encouraging Sri Lankan music

A member of the University's teaching faculty has been helping war-affected children in Sri Lanka with music.

Dr Tanya Ekanayaka, of the University's School of Music, has been conducting music workshops for war-affected children in north and south Sri Lanka.

Each session has been attended by over 100 children, many of whom are orphaned or have lost a parent to the civil conflict in Sri Lanka.

The sessions are organised by SJC 87, a non-profit non-governmental organisation that works to help children in the country.

Healing with music

In the sessions, Dr Ekanayaka - who is from Sri Lanka and is an internationally renowned concert pianist-composer, linguist, and musicologist - helps the children to discover how to articulate their thoughts and experiences by inventing music themselves.

She encourages the children to play, perform and receive feedback during their music lessons before they are placed into mixed groups and helped to create a story using music - composing pieces that express how they feel in an effort to help them understand their emotions.

The children subsequently perform their own compositions and find how music can serve as a powerful resource for affecting empowerment and mutual healing.

The sessions, which began in September 2012, have been very successful, and Dr Ekanayaka expects to conduct more in the future.

My own background in linguistics and music has increasingly led me to think very deeply about the role of music and language in the lives of people and the connection between them. Music possesses immense potential for facilitating a healing process.

Dr Tanya Ekanayaka

Pianist and musicologist

Using music

The University has great experience in understanding and using music to help people across the world.

Since 2005, its Institute for Music in Human and Social Development has brought together researchers, theorists and practitioners from many disciplines in order to understand how to better use music as a therapeutic, educational, artistic and social tool.

The institute has used music in therapy and social reconstruction in zones of conflict such as the Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East, with a range of activities that is supported by strong community links with orchestras, schools, hospitals, prisons, NGOs and local authorities.

Related links

- [Tanya Ekanayaka](#)
- [SJC 87](#)