

**Composer Russell Hepplewhite writes music for use in the classroom, the theatre, concert halls, and the church performed by solo instruments, small groups, choirs or even full-on operas.**

**His music is often inspired by politics and things that affect our daily life. This might include writing about climate change, rainforests, rivers, plants and the natural world as well as stars, space, galaxies and the universe.**

**Russell's Laika the Spacedog is a children's opera that highlights the story of 'Laika' the first dog in space!**

**So how does a young lad from a little village in Sussex, with a very beautiful duck pond, grow up and find himself as a Friday Afternoons composer? Well, for Russell his main inspiration was the hustle and bustle of London! Walking around London in his youth, Russell would see all of the concert halls, theatres, cinemas, street performers and vibrancy that came with that and think 'I want to be a part of that!'**

**But it's not just as simple as saying 'I want to do that' when it comes to being a composer – you have to be prepared to put in quite a bit of practice! Russell started piano lessons at around the age of 5 and at the end of his lessons, he would put the sheet music to one side and start improvising. He quickly discovered that making your own music was more fun than playing someone else's! As he got better and better, he was able to play more chords and more rhythms and he could express himself even more. Now, he knows how to write for any number of different instruments in any number of styles. He has mastered his craft!**

**For Russell, collaboration is key. A composer is nothing without a great story to tell and a great team to tell it!**

**Russell's Friday Afternoons songs were written in collaboration with the poet and author, Michael Rosen. Together they wrote 12 songs as part of a set called EVERYTHING. In them, they focus on literally, EVERYTHING! From going on a journey down to the size of an atom; analysing water, earth, fire and air; looking at the beauty of language; our life cycle and even seeing how frogs legs can be used to conduct electricity! There really is a bit of EVERYTHING in there.**

**Russell's songs are a welcome addition to the Friday Afternoons family. We now have EVERYTHING in there (until next year's ones are added...!).**