

Music in Prisons

The Irene Taylor Trust

Summer Newsletter 2007

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Where I'm Coming From

In June and July the Music in Prisons team worked with two groups of inmates at Frankland and Low Newton prison in County Durham on a combined music and photography project.

The Mayor of Durham attended the performance at HMP Frankland and commented: "The music was exciting and different, and the lyrics were quite poignant and personal, sung with feeling."

As well as the performances in the prisons, the music and photography created during the projects was transformed by photographer Lizzie Coombes into an installation entitled 'Where I'm Coming From' which was on public display at The Sage Gateshead for two weeks.

'Where I'm coming from' was a chance for visitors to The Sage Gateshead to glimpse into the

lives and aspirations of men and women currently serving time in prisons in the North East. The work created a powerful collection of music and images telling the stories of rarely heard members of our community.

One visitor to the exhibition wrote: "I was lucky to be in here on my own. I enjoyed the music and display. It reminded me that prisoners are just like you and me."

Dignitaries from across the region also visited the exhibition, including the Sheriff of Newcastle who wrote: "What an inspiring evening. Very well done!!"

The projects also provided Music in Prisons the chance to collaborate with The Sage Gateshead's Community Programme by offering their musicians traineeships. Two of The Sage Gateshead's

Apprentices and a local musician joined the team to develop their skills and experience of creative music making in prisons.

For one of the Apprentices, Ed Aldcroft, the experience of working in the prison has really changed the way he looks at music making: "It's been the best thing I have done since I started work. It's amazing working in an environment where people have been written off by the outside. But we are giving them a voice. The enthusiasm they all have and the lyrics they have written have been very powerful."

It is hoped that the strong relationships built and the experienced gained will enable the local musicians and The Sage Gateshead to better engage with the musical needs of prisoners in the North East in the future.

"You freed us from the monotony of this kind of environment for a week. You are truly inspirational."

Participant, HMP Manchester

"It was a real accomplishment for all the musicians to have got to performing standard in only four days and this is a reflection on the professional musicians who tutored them."

Ian Dewhirst, High Sheriff of Durham

Focus: Irving David A CHANCE TO MEET THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE TRUST



My Name is Irving David. I live in London during the week and Stratford upon Avon on the weekend.

I work as Senior Partner in the media law firm, David Wineman specialising in the music industry.

I first joined the Trust after being invited to attend an emotionally moving performance by prisoners and professional musicians at Pentonville Prison.

I realised then how much the prisoners were ordinary folk who had unfortunately just taken a wrong turning in life and that "here by the grace of God go I".

The most exciting thing about being a Trustee is discussing a proposed project at a Trustee's meeting; observing it as a work in progress at a prison, and then seeing the amazing reaction, especially from fellow prisoners who generally cannot

believe the sheer professionalism of their fellow inmates, when a completed project is performed for them.

The most challenging thing about being a Trustee is trying to get over people's initial reluctance and resistance to associate with and help convicted individuals and persuading potential supporters how rewarding and important the Trust's work is.

In the future I hope that as a result of the Trust's work many offenders will be rehabilitated - and perhaps continue to make music professionally.

Keep up to date with Music in Prisons at our new website: www.musicinprisons.org.uk

Working with young people

"At first I didn't really want to do anything but then I decided that I wanted to sing. I was really scared of doing it, but eventually built up my courage to do it in front of everyone's parents and staff. It was a great week and I would love to do it again some time soon."

Participant, HMPYOI Downview

"It was a great week - really fantastic. I don't think I've ever seen a team interact with them in the way you guys did! It's not the same in here without you all now!!"

Member of Staff, HMPYOI
New Hall

Although young people in prison make up only a small (yet rapidly rising) proportion of the total prison population, it is crucial that they are given positive opportunities to help them mature and develop into positive adult members of our society.

Over the past year Music in Prisons has developed a programme which makes a commitment to returning to work with young people to deliver 5-day creative music projects.

The projects that took place in units for 17-year-old girls were

especially rewarding as the team got to work alongside some extremely dedicated and inspirational members of staff.

Each unit houses 8 to 25 girls, the majority of whom have had chaotic and traumatic lives. The level of damage to these young women was clear to see as were the profound changes that happened to them during each project.

In each case the group of girls the team started with was not the group they ended with - self confidence improved, their ability to sit and listen and respond was remarkable and

the fact they received genuine praise from the project teams, the staff and the audiences that listened to them perform made a huge and hopefully sustainable positive impact on each of them.



Friends of Music in Prisons

As our newest patron, we were delighted to have the Rt Hon The Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers, Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, launch our new 'Friends of Music in Prisons.'

With the prison population now at over 80,000, there is an increasing demand for Music in Prisons' projects.

In order to meet this demand, Music in Prisons needs a firm footing from which to grow and is now looking to its friends for help and support. By becoming a Friend of Music in Prisons you will help us ensure that prisoners are given the opportunity to change their lives and become positive

members of the community. As a Friend, your donation will not only support the costs of running the charity, but also the direct costs of delivering projects. Music in Prisons runs on a tight budget, but support from Friends will prove crucial in ensuring that our work remains of the highest possible quality.

If you would like to find out more about becoming a Friend, please contact the office or visit our website at www.musicinprisons.org.uk

The Trustees are pleased to welcome Paul Meitner, our Treasurer for ten years, onto the board of Trustees.

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Contact Us

If you are interested in finding out more about our work, please feel free to contact us:

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