



Home Ground

Home Ground is the community magazine
for residents of Hyde Southbank Homes

Summer 2008

Connecting through music

One of the most joyful sounds you could wish to experience comes from St Peter's church in Kennington every Friday morning. Inside the church are a group of extraordinary musicians being encouraged to play instruments or just use their voices, by a dedicated team of carers and volunteers. They are part of the Joy of Sound (JOS), a group set up by William Longden in 2000.

William's inspiration for the group came when he discovered a young man at a day centre with profound, multiple learning difficulties. He was 'physically immobilized, without speech and was wrestling with a battered guitar which he was literally eating in frustration and anxiety'. William said, "I handed him my guitar, and we played together

briefly. At that moment everything changed. The young man and I became connected through our music. I felt such intense joy in feeling the connection, which we had shared without a word, that I decided to focus my creative energies into the field of musical exploration."

Participants and their carers are joined by up to 15 volunteers, mainly from south London. As word of the group has spread there has been a number of international visitors, researchers and students, and links are being made with other London based day care centres, organisations and universities. William explains, "All gain an opportunity to share in a social activity. It's non-discriminatory and everyone can participate regardless of musicality

or ability, in sharing music as a medium for personal and social transformation, rather than as musical performance."

William is totally committed to using his interest in the arts for personal and social development. He is currently a PhD researcher looking into the design of bespoke acoustic musical instruments for people with disabilities. Some participants have already had their instruments specially adapted to fit their personal requirements. "We use a system of music playing inspired by Indian 'Raga', using highly developed vocal techniques and bespoke acoustic instruments designed to suit each student's individual personality, dexterity and spirit."

William gives special credit to all those who take part in the JOS sessions including the volunteers. "They have been inspirational and have allowed this project to become a model of inclusive practice by their dedicated enthusiasm and ongoing commitment, without which JOS would not be able to continue."

Weekly sessions are held at St. Peter's Heritage Centre, Kennington Lane, Vauxhall. If you know of someone who would benefit from attending JOS workshops or you would be interested in volunteering, please contact: William on 07906 916 524 or Chris on 07866 139 692. Email info@joyofsound.net or visit www.joyofsound.net where you can also listen to music produced by JOS.

