



friends of the **martyn donaldson** music trust

Newsletter 6 | February 2006

Happy New Year to all our Friends! 2005 was a great year for MDMT, with our Celebrity Auction, Royal Reception and the visit of the party from Starehe. We look forward to 2006 with much excitement and hope you will enjoy this year's activities.

Thank you for your on-going support of Martyn's Trust.

Stephanie Donaldson & Jane Silvester,
Friends Co-ordinators

LIVE MUSIC NOW!

As part of MDMT's aim to support music in the local area, we sponsored 3 concerts in Macclesfield on the same December day organised by LIVE MUSIC NOW! This scheme enables young professional musicians to take their music into the community and share it with disadvantaged groups particularly. Unfortunately, the morning concert at Hollins View Nursing Home had to be cancelled because of infection.

The afternoon concert at the Peatfields Centre was a great success as was the evening one at Millers Court Retirement Home. The two performers were *Nicola Mills* (voice) and *Charlotte Wilson* (piano) who entertained with a wonderful selection of songs from the Shows, Gershwin, Mozart, Chopin and audience participation in some Christmas favourites.

Everyone enjoyed the experience and MDMT hope to arrange further events on these lines in the future.

MARTYN'S MUSIC WEEKEND!

WOW! What an experience the Martyn's Music weekend in September turned out to be. For those of us with a nervous disposition, hosting our Kenyan visitors, rehearsing with the choir and preparing ourselves to meet Princess Anne was a three-pronged attack! However we need not have worried – the Maestro's customary meticulous preparation of the choir, the gentleness and warm appreciation of the Starehe students and the thorough organisation for the Presentation event swept all jangling nerves aside.

Each of the three 'happenings' made their own impact on us. We never expected that absolutely everybody would be introduced to the Princess and imagined that the groups of ten would receive a 'blanket greeting'. Not so, HRH was very well-informed and seemed genuinely interested in hearing about the Lancashire Hotpot we had given to the students! She had a special word with Barbara Sutcliffe, in our group, representing her mother who was the first Friend of the Trust. As soon as the Royal visitor departed, the home team sprang into action, changing into their work clothes, cunningly hidden, to erect the stage for the concert on the following evening.

In a mixed concert such as this, the choir is entertained as much as the audience, because we never know what the other



HRH is bemused by one of our Chairman's jokes

items will be and it's always a most enjoyable revelation. We all really appreciate the musical ability and performances of our young friends, in the choir, band and orchestra. It was an enormous privilege and pleasure to meet *David Kisiaky* at the concert and hear his most moving words on Starehe and all that he had received from Martyn there.

Then came Sunday when the Kenyan students and David attended morning worship at Macclesfield Methodist Church – David leading the singing this time! In the afternoon the students were taken on a tour of Manchester United and then, sadly, their last evening in Macclesfield. Our visitors, *Kennedy Junior* and *Cavine*, lived and breathed the unmistakable ethos of Starehe – of sharing, consideration for others and quiet confidence. For us, getting to know them was a very powerful experience which we shall always remember.

Beryl & Colin North.

Operation HRH > Macc (Part 1)

In September 2004 our good friend *Kennedy Hongo* came to the UK on a mission. He wanted to establish an open-ended educational exchange programme between UK and Kenyan students, share good practice and revive the UK Starehe Association. He stayed at the Donaldson's on a number of occasions in between building up his contacts. He also fitted in a talk to the youth team at Manchester United with *Sir Alex* present and had a meeting with *Peter Kenyon*, Chief Executive at Chelsea! Kennedy is a man who doesn't like to take 'no' for an answer! In Macclesfield he shared with us his vision of a reception in 2005 to launch the initiative. Various schemes came and went until he decided that Macclesfield was the centre of the universe, not London, and that *HRH The Princess Royal* should be guest of honour! As President of Save The Children, Princess Anne has visited Starehe a number of times and is a great supporter.

The first practical decision was the venue. We visited the Town Hall – a thumbs down. We visited the Heritage Centre and that had some plus points. Finally we looked at the Methodist Church and agreed that it met all our basic requirements. We approached the church authorities and they gave unqualified approval so were underway. All that remained was signing up the guest of honour! One morning in early October I heard Kennedy on his mobile in our lounge engaged in an animated conversation during which a royal name kept being mentioned. The call ended and Kennedy calmly announced that he'd

arranged a meeting with HRH at Buckingham Palace to invite her to the reception and would I like to accompany him! Once I'd made sure he wasn't joking, I felt honoured that he'd placed his trust in MDMT to help. Through e-mail and phone calls we made our preparations, including submitting a pro-forma from the Palace requiring practical information about our proposals.

I travelled down to London the evening before. The 28th Oct was a gorgeous autumn day so I didn't have to worry about my new suit being spoilt in the rain! A short tube journey took me to the Café Royal where I'd arranged to meet Kennedy. We strolled through Green Park and arrived at the palace gates ready for our 10am appointment.

We passed through 'security' with barely an eyebrow being raised and across the courtyard to the reception door at the right wing. Soon the Private Secretary, *Captain Wright*, appeared and took us to a fascinating lift that ascended silently to the first floor, all gilt, mirrors and red upholstery and highly polished wood you could see your face in! The Private Secretary's office was remarkably small and cramped but being in the centre of the Palace had superb views of the Mall down to Marble Arch. It must be very similar to the view the Royal Family have from the balcony on State occasions. Captain Wright quickly went through our proposals and briefed us about Royal protocol.

Then we were shown into a drawing room where

Princess Anne was waiting to greet us. With the minimum of formalities we sat down and Kennedy outlined the reasons for our visit and explained MDMT's involvement. HRH then asked some questions and made some shrewd and knowledgeable comments about Starehe and its role in Kenyan education. It transpired that in a conversation with the UK ambassador in 2004, who was under the illusion that Starehe was only for affluent students, HRH had had to 'educate' him! I couldn't help but be impressed by HRH's straightforward, uncomplicated manner and her grip of the issues.

It was 11am when we took our leave and returned to the office where the Private Secretary informed us that HRH would be coming to Macclesfield, although I'd not been aware at any stage in the meeting that she'd actually said 'yes!' We discussed possible dates in September 2005 and departed the way we'd come. Before leaving the office I enquired about a military hat and a medal ribbon on the table, to be told that they were ready for HRH's next engagement, a lunchtime reception somewhere in London – not the life for me! As we crossed the outer courtyard again a crowd was gathering at the railings, no, not to cheer us but waiting for the approaching band the changing of the guard! Nevertheless it made us feel ten feet tall!

To be continued...
Andy Donaldson

A Group Leader's Account

Andy Donaldson (father of Martyn) is obviously a man with great persuasive powers. Who else could persuade *HRH The Princess Royal* to come to a little town like Macclesfield and who else could persuade his local Church to act as host for the occasion. So when he decided that all the invitees would be split into groups with a leader for each, he found it quite easy to persuade certain people to be a group leader. Having 'persuaded' me to be a group leader he then told me what was involved. If he had done it the other way

round I might have refused – powers of persuasion again coming to the fore.

My first reaction was to be honoured but my second was 'Help – I've been lumbered!' I had to remember the names of all members of my group so that was the first problem and then, on the day, I discovered we were all wearing name tags so down went my blood pressure. I had to introduce each member of my group to HRH and then keep quiet whilst she talked to them. Those readers who know me will realise that this was the hardest bit! One the day I was introduced to my team which included a very senior representative from a corporate sponsor and his wife, a couple who were private sponsors and the parents of one of the younger members of the board of Trustees of MDMT. A very well-chosen, mixed bunch as they represented most aspects of the financing of the Trust. I made sure that I could read all the name labels and then we were locked into the church awaiting HER arrival!

She came, she spoke, I spoke and I have no idea what she or I said! However I do remember that she was very easy to talk to and I really did not need to introduce her to the members of the group. She glided effortlessly down the line as if she had an inbuilt clock that kept saying to her 'move to the next person'. The members of the MDMT must feel very proud that their efforts to improve the quality of life at Starehe and their sponsorship of various musical events in the UK have been recognised in such a magnificent way by a very regal person. I say Thank you to the Trust for inviting me to the event and also thank you for asking me to be a group leader, which turned out to be a far less difficult task than at first imagined.

Don Riseley (Friend of MDMT)



Friend of MDMT David Johnson meets HRH!



Our visit to Macclesfield

*One of the best moments of 2005 was the visit to Macclesfield not only of HRH Princess Anne, but also of six students and the Bandmaster from Starehe Boys' School, Nairobi. One of the boys, clarinetist **Kennedy Miruka** (or **Kennedy Junior** as he became known!) writes in his own inimitable style of his first trip to England:*

"Our visit to Macclesfield is one of those phenomena that I find very difficult to describe. Whenever someone asks me to describe the visit I always feel I have stunted vocabulary for that. Should I say it was marvellous? exhilarating? unforgettable? superb? varied? or what? On arrival to Maccles my first impressions were that we were at home away from home. Immediately we stepped out of the train we were all infested with smiles. The smiles coming from our hosts emitted a homely warmth that spread amongst us like bushfire. Never before and never again have I met such a friendly, homely and lovely people! One incident that I vividly recall is when I left my suitcase in the train to Manchester and Sue, Colin, Beryl and Vin had to take a lot of trouble until they found it.



The Starehe boys sing Jamba Bwana – Kennedy is in the middle.

My most memorable activities were The Reception of HRH Princess Anne, the concert by MDMT, the visit to Silk FM, the numerous trips around the countryside of Macclesfield especially to Jodrell Park and Quarry Mill Park. The reception was fantastic. Something very special about it was that the Princess was able to start up a conversation with every individual in the big congregation. Something else very striking about Macclesfield is the numerous performance of concerts. By the time we left Maccles I had already incalculated a few pieces by MDMT in my memory (Our bandmaster is very good at that, he can hear a tune once and play it exactly the same way after three years without using any script!) Most memorable were Macavity The Jellicle Cat, In The Mood and Misa Luba.

When we went to Silk FM with Mr. Donaldson, he told me it was his first time to a radio station, so was it for me. It was therefore fantastic to hear our voices on air the following morning. It was such a great experience one would not easily forget. One particular visit to Quarry Mill Park really impressed me about not only Cheshire but the whole of the U.K. I realised that history is really valued in the U.K. as we were able to see items that are actually many centuries old but well maintained. In Kenya it is hard to come by things that have more than a century of recorded history. What I will not forget about Quarry Mill Park is the large wheel driven by water power. We also noticed a big difference in the colour of landscape. We really wondered what you give to the grass to make them so green and Stephanie told me that you give them a lot of rainfall, a fact that was confirmed to us by Colin and Beryl and by our own observations.

We never missed out on the legendary Old Trafford City. The stadium was so astonishingly galactical and the pitch was so green we wondered if footballers really stepped on it during the match. We were even astonished to learn that the grass is usually sold periodically. We were all equally surprised by the populace of Macclesfield. Contrary to our expectations and contrary to the state at Kenya, the majority of the populace consisted majorly of old people. We kept wondering where the teens were. More surprising was that the congregation by the local standards was regarded as big while in fact it was just a small fraction of the numbers we are used to in Kenya. John Squares, the church minister even surprised us more by telling us that the Macclesfield Methodist Church was one of the biggest churches around.

I have very many comments about the food. By the way, the first time we went to a hotel I ordered hot chicken wings and guess what I was brought, cold steamless chicken wings with a lot of pepper and other spices. I only came to learn later what hot food meant. The food was generally very good but had low temperatures. The only thing we had to adjust to was the salad. We never eat vegetables uncooked, it was therefore very funny for us to start eating salad which we considered as uncooked vegetables.

The visit to Macclesfield was a great opportunity that exposed us to such a wonderful experience that none of us would easily forget. With the musicality of the area and the friendliness of the families, we would have all wished to stay there forever but all that has a beginning also has an ending and so the last day for us in Macclesfield finally came and we all had to leave. We will never forget that last day because it was the most difficult part of our lives. Parting ways with our hosts was the most difficult thing to do then but we hope we shall meet each other again. We would like them to visit us in Kenya and also enjoy another home away from home as we did."

Kennedy Miruka

Music for Youth Awards

The National Festival of Music for Youth was held in Birmingham in July 2005, a move out of London whilst the Royal Festival Hall is refurbished. MDMT sponsored two awards, for Outstanding Performance in Jazz (school bands) and for Highly Commended performance in the senior choirs category. Our jazz award was taken home by *Northampton School for Boys Big Band*, whilst the choral award went to *St Aidan's Chamber Choir*. By happy coincidence, *St Aidan's Jazz Band* received our jazz award in 2004, so the Trust is not unknown to them!



We hope to invite the award recipients to give a concert in aid of the Trust later in 2006.

St Aidan's Jazz Band

The afore-mentioned St Aidan's Jazz Band travelled from Harrogate to give a fantastic concert in aid of the Trust in November. A capacity audience enjoyed toe-tapping big band numbers, swing standards and a dazzling variety of solos, both jazz and classical, showcasing the young musicians' versatility. Thank you to both the young musicians and their musical director, *Vicky Elliott*, and the audience for coming to support the event.

Martyn's Music CD

A recording of 'Martyn's Music 2', the concert given on 10th September, is now available. The programme included excerpts from 'Cats', Parry's 'Blest Pair of Sirens', Haydn's Violin Concerto, 'In the Mood' and an unforgettable version of 'Cagney and Lacey'. We have also included David Kisiaky's moving and memorable tribute to Martyn. CDs cost £5 each and can be ordered through any Trustee.

Martyn's Pupils

We have been privileged and fortunate to make contact in the last few months with two of Martyn's Starehe pupils. **David Kisiaky** now lives in Sheffield and many of you will remember his moving speech at Martyn's Music in September. **Norbert Ngethe**, Martyn's prize piano student, now lives in Chicago and is studying at law school. Here is an extract from David's e-mail, more from Norbert in the summer newsletter.

I was born in the shores of Lake Victoria to a poverty-stricken family. My father died while I was young. If he resurrects today I wouldn't recognise him! Our single-parent family comprised 4 girls and 3 boys. Save the Children Fund sponsored all my primary school education. 3 of my sisters have since died in their early thirties due to treatable diseases, poverty-aggravated nervous breakdown... May the Lord keep their souls in peace.

Ideally, I am meant to be dead by now. Most members of my age group are now dead or struggling through life with their wives and gravely sick children! I escaped from the claws of doom and death and Mr Donaldson, to an extent, played a part in that escape!

While at Starehe I studied Music for 4 years. I was in the school choir and I played the euphonium in the school band. I spent most of my time in the Music Centre practising playing the piano and tried alto saxophone too. Mr Donaldson had

the key to the Music Centre and he so kindly allowed us to disturb his sleep by waking him up at 7 am to get the keys to the Centre. Sometimes he stayed late (past midnight!) and worked occasional Saturdays and Sundays teaching the choir (mixed with Moi Girls School), instrumentalists, the quartets, the solos, the duets, the trios, and the list is endless. Mr Donaldson actually sat beside me teaching me the music scales and preparing me for my Music exams in 1997. I got the highest grade in Music - A and left Starehe with top class Kenya Music Festival certificates.

At 26 years of age, I am currently a Human Resources Officer with the Department for Work and Pensions; and a Member of the Institute of Legal Executives. Yet I was meant to be dead from poverty, unprotected sex, drugs, HIV Aids or living close to the grave on my knees without the knowledge of music leave alone



David shares stories of Starehe with the Princess

English Law - the Mother of most global legal systems!

Please picture yourself walking and running to primary school barefoot in brown khaki shorts in scorching sunshine for 12 km over a period of 7 years without hope of a better future and then contrast that with driving for 10 minutes to a next door Law School full of hope for a very bright future!

Our Visitors from Starehe

We were privileged to welcome into our home Starehe Bandmaster *Yahya Sebit* and pupil *Edward Mbogo*. Whilst they shared a common love for music they were very different characters not surprising in view of the age differential, approaching 80 and 17. Sebit's pride and commitment to the quality of music produced was matched by the style displayed when he put on his Bandmaster's uniform, a sight to behold! Edward provided the counterpoint through his quiet, unassuming personality, yet no less dedicated to his own standards of musical, and indeed personal social, performance. Their frequent expressions of gratitude were unnecessary in view of the sheer pleasure their visit gave us and our family. Both would be warmly welcomed back, anytime.

Sue and Vin Thomas. (Friends of MDMT)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Music for Youth Birmingham Regional Festival

Sunday 26th March 2006

MDMT is sponsoring the Music for Youth Regional Festival being held in the Adrian Boult Hall at Birmingham Conservatoire. We had hoped to organise a regional event in Macclesfield but there are already similar events taking place in the vicinity. The Regional Festivals are the first round in the Music for Youth year, open to anyone and everyone who wishes to bring a youth ensemble of any variety to have a go at performing in front of an audience. Expect a heady mixture of brass, jazz, choirs, infant groups, chamber music, world music and more! Admission is free and the festival runs from 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm.

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