



# friends of the martyn donaldson music trust

Newsletter 10 | Jan 2008

Happy New Year to everyone! We hope you will enjoy reading about our activities in the last six months and looking forward to our plans for 2008.

Please also read our 'Friends Make Friends' article and encourage your friends and family to join up, as it is the support of people like yourselves that makes our work in Kenya, the UK and Macclesfield sustainable.

*Stephanie Donaldson  
Friends Co-ordinator*

## 'Oliver', Kenyan Style!

*MDMT Volunteers produce show in Nairobi*

In January 2007, MDMT sent out for the first time music volunteer teachers to not only Starehe Boys' School in Nairobi, but also to the newly-opened Girls' School. Chris Walters from Northampton was to work at the former and Niamh Molloy from Dublin at the latter. In the following months, besides lots of other work, they brought students from both schools together to mount the musical 'Oliver!'. That may be quite run of the mill in English schools, but in Nairobi it was quite extraordinary.

It was the first time on stage for these teenagers, the first time the schools worked on a joint project, the first time our volunteers had produced a show and the first time that the two student audiences attending the dress rehearsals had watched a live stage show! Linda and I wanted to show MDMT's support for all these endeavours by attending the dress rehearsals in early July, prior to the public performances in Nairobi later in the month.

We flew from Manchester on Qatar Airlines via Doha in the United Arab Emirates and an unscheduled and slightly unnerving detour to Tehran. Our friend Kennedy Hongo met us at the airport. He also arranged for us to visit for the first time Starehe Girls' School, which opened in 2004. It is a distance from the city and, although well situated in pleasant woodland, is difficult to access without a car. By Kenyan standards the facilities are good, although Niamh explained that the digital piano MDMT sent out only works when the electricity is on!

Another logistical problem was finding transport for the 15 girls in 'Oliver!' to regularly attend rehearsals at the Boys' School. That evening found us at the Boys' School and Chris putting the cast through their paces. The hall is big and holds over 1000 and the stage is big but with nothing on it!

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*A number of Trustees were delighted to meet with both Chris and James (Mr Bumble!) in early January to hear first-hand about musical activities at Starehe. It is clear that Chris is doing an excellent job as James testified, commenting on the abilities and confidence that the pupils have discovered whilst singing and acting for the first time. Now at Keele University, James continues with his new-found interest in singing, having joined no less than 4 choirs!*

## STOP PRESS: Kenya

As we go to press you will all be aware of the problems in Kenya following the recent elections. Thankfully our two volunteers, Chris and Niamh, were back in the UK before the elections. Niamh has now finished her time at Starehe Girls' School.

Chris returned to Nairobi in January and are keeping in touch with him via e-mail. We have not had any reports of Starehe pupils being affected by the violence.

## 'Oliver', Kenyan Style!

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For this occasion, new blackout curtains had been bought for the back of the stage so the cast could move freely behind and the basic lighting system had been given a bit of an overhaul. The MDMT digital piano, played by Chris, was the accompaniment, with Niamh on cello. We quickly learned that the rehearsal schedule was really every available free moment outside school hours, but mainly 9-11pm each evening, Saturday afternoon/evening and all day Sunday after morning services! No wonder Chris looked shattered. During the last month he'd been ably assisted on the production side by Sarah, a friend from college. We also learned that the general factotum, who made sure the cast turned up for rehearsals, found the props, organised the costumes and so on, was the student playing Mr Bumble – James Kisiah. Without James, Chris said, the show would not have happened. Remarkably James has just started a degree course at Keele University in Computer Science and Maths and has already been to Macclesfield for a visit.

Friday evening, and the hall was full of Boys' School pupils for the first dress rehearsal. And how the cast rose to the occasion! Considering this was their first time in front of an audience, and quite a rowdy one (especially whenever the female members of the cast appeared!), the discipline, concentration and enthusiasm was remarkable. 'Oliver!' is a complicated show with many scene changes, props to remember, costumes to change in semi-darkness and so on. Within a few months, these young people had learnt all the songs, some in harmony, all the Dickensian dialogue, stage movement and even a bit of dance. Not once did they have to be prompted, which was just as well, as there wasn't a prompter! It being the first time the audience had witnessed a musical, their reaction was sometimes unorthodox! There was no applause at any point except from us, Chris, Niamh and Sister Frances, a nun working at the school. But there was plenty of audience participation, sometimes at all the wrong moments, like when the policeman carried off the body of the murdered Nancy with great dignity, to be greeted with wild

cheers and stamping of feet! Chris, Niamh and Sarah kept the cast behind afterwards, sorting out some teething problems and then we had a chance to meet some of the cast and congratulate them.

The second dress rehearsal was given to the 300 students of the Girls' School, bussed over in an endless line of matatus – the local minibuses that swarm like bees around Nairobi. The show was markedly better and it was obvious that the cast had gained confidence and really taken on board the after-show comments of Chris and Sarah. It was fascinating to see how these young Kenyan actors adapted parts of the story to the local situation in Nairobi rather than London. Although they didn't attempt cockney accents, their characterisations were authentic and believable. The young Oliver was a natural, with real stage presence and a lovely treble voice, unfortunately about to break. The evil Bill Sykes and his moll Nancy were well matched, as were the pompous Mr Bumble and his awful spouse Widow Corney. The only different 'take' on the Dickens character was the role of Fagin. Instead of the old, crafty miser, we were treated to a youthful Fagin who had more energy than the rest of the cast put together! He couldn't keep still and leapt around the stage 'body-popping' his way hilariously through all the songs, in a manner that would have seen the original Fagin having heart attack! Although the audience reaction was more restrained it was again a cultural shock to us to find plenty of smiles in the hall but no applause, even at the final curtain calls. Hopefully this exposure to stage work will inspire more students in the future to build on this success.

As well as watching the show we had time to spend with the two students sponsored by MDMT, the two students sponsored by the Cheshire scouts to attend the International Jamboree in Essex in July, and the student sponsored by All Hallows High School. They gave us a tour of the School, including a visit to the mosque. At the Music Centre, we had a whistlestop sing through 'Oliver!' around the piano, with Kennedy Miruka playing the sax. Kennedy stayed with

Colin and Beryl North in 2005 when MDMT brought some students over to Macclesfield. At the Girls' School we met the 5 students MDMT brought over last year and congratulated one of them, Jane, who had played Nancy in 'Oliver!'. We also met Mercy, who is being sponsored by the Jones family at Macclesfield Methodist Church. We were impressed by the headmistress Margaret Wanjohi, who openly discussed the problems of establishing the new school and particularly the difficulties of day to day life with 300 adolescent girls that we could all relate to!

On reflection, MDMT can be proud of the work and total commitment this year of our two volunteers Chris and Niamh. It is no easy task being thrown into a completely new culture and within such a short space of time, producing a 2 hour full-length musical with the rawest recruits. The benefits to individual students in their self-esteem and confidence will vary, but for some it will have been a life-changing experience that only the future will reveal.

**Andy Donaldson**

## National Festival Success

MDMT has been busy supporting Music for Youth throughout the year. In July we sponsored two awards at the National Festival of Music for Youth.



These went to Northampton School for Boys Jazz Vocal Group in the Senior Choirs section and to our old friends St Aidan's Swing Band from Harrogate in the Schools Jazz section. We were delighted that David Kisiaky could present the awards on our behalf and tell a packed concert hall about MDMT.

# A Birthday to Remember!

*John Quinn on the MDMT Tina May concert held on Sept 15th 2007*

In January 2007, I knew that I had a significant birthday coming up in April, my 40<sup>th</sup>. For a few years I'd had a desire to do something a bit different to mark the date. I'm interested in music of all kinds but I think it's safe to say Jazz is my favourite style, being a keen Jazz pianist as well as an attendee of many concerts. A few years previously I'd travelled to Wakefield Jazz Club to see Nikki Iles, one of my favourite Jazz pianists, celebrate her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday at a special concert. I know Nikki well and have been lucky enough to have a couple of piano lessons with her. Last year she invited me to another birthday concert in London at which she played a few tunes with Tina May, one of my favourite Jazz singers who I have been a fan of since the early 90s. I suppose these were the seeds of an idea of getting some of my favourite musicians to come and play for my birthday.

For a long time I've thought it was time that a top quality Jazz concert should take place in Macclesfield. I've travelled all over the country and beyond to see concerts and thought for my 40<sup>th</sup> it would be nice to have something on the doorstep. Another idea was to make it a concert in aid of MDMT. I remember in the past having a discussion with Martyn about Jazz at the time when I was starting to become interested in it. Martyn was very knowledgeable about Jazz amongst all his other talents. So it would be relevant and in keeping with the eclectic mix of music that has been performed in concerts for MDMT.

My first step was to check with Tina and Nikki whether they'd be interested in the idea. They were, so then I approached Andy D. I'd pay for the musicians and whatever was taken in ticket sales would go to the music trust. He was keen on the idea but checked with the Trustees. Where would we have the concert? I thought the Methodist Church would be a good venue as the acoustics are good and it's a good space where an audience would be close to the musicians.

My actual birthday was to be on Easter Saturday. This wasn't the best time to have a concert as it's a busy church time as well as holiday time. Fitting in with the planned schedule for the year, Andy thought that September might be a better time to have it. If the Queen can have two birthdays, why can't I? September 15<sup>th</sup> was set for the day of the concert.

Tina and Nikki have worked together for over 10 years, often as a voice and piano duo. I thought that to really make it a really good concert it would be good to have Tina with a full band of Bass, Drums and Saxophone as well as Piano. It would have been possible to get some players from the South. However, there are players based in the North West that are on my list of top players that I wanted to take part. These are Steve Berry on Bass, Eryl Roberts on Drums and Mike Hall on Saxophones. Over the years they've all worked with Tina and Nikki quite often so it wouldn't be a scratch band. Tina and Nikki were happy to have these musicians take part. The quintet of musicians that were picked have all influenced me to some degree and so I was pleased that they would be all assembled in one place. By the middle of March the band was all booked for the concert.

When July came the publicity started in earnest. As well as MDMT's usual channels of advertising, for this concert it was decided that we'd try and get some publicity in the Jazz press to bring some of fans of the music from the wider area. A few emails to various publications meant that the concert was mentioned in Jazz UK as well as Jazzwise, the two



John Quinn & Tina May  
after the concert

main Jazz publications in this country. I also fancied getting the details published in the Guardian on the day of the concert just to see if it could be done.

In the weeks approaching the concert, quite a few advanced tickets were sold but then on the night many people just turned up and paid on the door. The church was nearly full to capacity. People travelled from as far away as Southport and Harrogate to attend.

For me the concert was the perfect way to celebrate my 40<sup>th</sup>. The audience gave the players a great reception and I felt that they rose to the occasion. Lots of people have told me since how much they enjoyed the night, many of whom wouldn't normally go to a Jazz concert. So we had a really good night of music as well as raising over £2000 for MDMT.

Thanks to MDMT for helping one of my ideas to come to fruition.

**John Quinn**

*Something to celebrate? Someone you'd love to see perform in Macclesfield?! Why not consider following John's example and sponsoring an event for MDMT.*

*Perhaps your company or business might like to sponsor a concert, a Live Music Now visit, or even part of an event (the interval refreshments?!). Let us know if you have any bright ideas. Every bit of assistance, no matter how small, is of value to the Trust.*

# Live Music Now: Musical Therapy

In December MDMT arranged through 'Live Music Now' another series of concerts at the East Cheshire Hospice, The Stroke Rehab Unit at the General Hospital and Peatfields Centre. The artists on this occasion were Andy May playing the keyboard and Northumbrian pipes and Callum Stewart on the wooden flute.



As always with the young professional musicians on Live Music Now's books, Andy and Callum provided not only brilliant performances but catered to the different audiences in terms of repertoire and opportunities for interaction with them. The Northumbrian pipes were a revelation and much to be preferred to the Scottish bagpipes – sorry all true Scots! Although the musical programmes were folk-oriented, Andy and Callum were able to respond at the Hospice to an audience request for some seasonal Christmas songs very movingly. MDMT hopes to continue these very successful twice-yearly events, bringing music's healing therapy where it is sorely needed.

## Donations & Thank You's

Our congratulations and thanks to Trustee Katie and new husband Marc Hough, for kindly asking for donations to MDMT at their wedding in July.

More congratulations and thanks to Jolanta Starsiak, an ex-pupil of All Hallows High School, who donated £70 to MDMT instead of giving out favours at her wedding.

David Kisiaky spoke to pupils at All Hallows High School about life in Kenya and his time at Starehe Boys' School at the end of last year and came away with a £30 donation.

## Friends Make Friends!

We are beginning 2008 with an appeal for more MDMT Friends! The regular donations received from you, our Friends, are the most important contribution to the charity, as they enable us to be able to plan ahead financially and to sustain our activities into the future. We feel that you, our current Friends, are our most valuable resource in encouraging new Friends to sign up!

All we ask is that you mention MDMT to anyone you know who may be interested in supporting our aims, show them this newsletter, invite them to an event or give them the website address to learn more. All they have to do is set up a direct debit, for any amount, to show their regular and on-going support for the Trust.

In return, the new Friends will receive this newsletter, invitations to concerts and events with reduced ticket prices and the priceless satisfaction of showing support and friendship to young musicians in Kenya and the UK!

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### Martyn's Music 4

**Saturday 13th September, Macclesfield Methodist Church**

*A musical extravaganza!*

### MDMT Barn Dance

**Autumn 2008**

*Coming soon... do si do your partners at our MDMT Barn Dance. More information to follow. Yee ha!*

## Your Friendly Trustees

**Chairman:**  
**Andy Donaldson**

**Vice-Chairman and Friends Co-ordinator:**  
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