

19th March 2011
Just for Us:
The Gameli Groove



As we all know, The Buddy Beat gang have travelled far and wide over the last 3 and half years, taking their magic to the wider world.

It is not very often that the gang get the chance to do something for themselves and they found themselves in Glasgow on a Saturday afternoon doing just that. In 2010, Buddy Beat received funding from Renfrewshire Council and part of this was for the group to hire the services of an external tutor/musician to provide a musical workshop for the members. This is where our very own Dr Jane Bentley came in, for she has a friend, Gameli Tordzro, who is part of Pan African Arts Scotland and runs African drumming workshops and after negotiations between the two, the date was set for a treat for the Buddy Beat members. The workshop was held in the West End of Glasgow at the Napierhall Street Centre where Pan African Arts Scotland (PAAS) are based. See www.panafricanartsscotland.org.uk for further information.

From their website, PAAS' mission:-

As a Centre of Excellence for African Arts and Culture in Scotland, we provide and share the highest level of wide-ranging cultural art forms from Africa and the African Diaspora with the widest variety of people living and working in or visiting Scotland.

Our vision is built on the idea of civic participation by Black people and other migrant groups in Scotland. We work to encourage and promote excellence in the creative arts, inspire young people to reach their highest artistic potential and contribute to the enrichment of an already diverse Scottish culture.

Jane put the word out and some of the gang were able and willing to come along and see what it was all about. They were:-

Allan Borland, Hazel Borland, Dr. Jane Bentley, Tom Chalmers, Anne Dowie, Angie Gilmour, Eileen McGrory, Christine Robertson



A birds-eye view of the setting for our workshop



The event was due to start at 2.30 and Christine arrived first, having been taxi driver once more and brought Eileen and Angie with her. Next up Tom and Anne arrived and Jane appeared also. The seats had already been set out in a circle and Tom heard from Hazel that she and Allan were stuck in traffic but would get there when they could.

Gameli called things to order and introduced himself and his teenage son. Gameli began by talking about his djembe drums and then asked us for our names. Then he put Jane on the spot by asking her to play as part of a trio with his son making up the threesome. This appeared to be something that had been played before in their 8 year friendship and Jane showed her class by keeping apace with the fast rhythm, even when Gameli subtly changed the beat several times. This received a well deserved and appreciative applause from Buddy Beat. Four young men had gathered outside the circle, attracted by the beats and one of them took his place in the circle, explaining when asked that he was from Iraq. Well, what a League of Nations we had in the circle- representatives from Scotland, England, Ghana and Iraq! Then Gameli spoke to us about creating a musical piece together. He quickly instructed us on the first of a four part rhythm and we practised that for a few minutes before tagging on the second part. Once we had that buttoned down, Gameli then went around the circle and played a duet with each and every one of us. We were just finishing that off when Allan and Hazel arrived, telling us that they had been held back by a road accident in front of them. Gameli joked that they should have called him and he would have sent his helicopter out for them! Allan and Hazel took their places and in a whirlwind display lasting less than two minutes, they were brought up to speed with the first twenty minutes.

Gameli then moved onto parts 3 and four. If parts 1 and 2 were straight forward, then the next two were more difficult. Part 3 had a tricky pause and rapid beat that we needed extra tuition with and part 4 puzzled most of us. But after all this time with Jane, we have learned to say when we are not getting the rhythm, and Gameli was more than happy to take his time and help us out.

Now with the four parts in our brains, Gameli challenged us to take it from the top and suddenly we were off! The room rose perhaps forty feet to a glass topped ceiling and the acoustics were just splendid, and Hazel made special mention of this. The air bristled with energy as we traversed through the sequence and then repeated it again and again, lasting five or more minutes and you could sense the pace quicken each time as we settled into the beat and our confidence grew, as was evidenced by our collective smiles!

Each of us looked genuinely thrilled and energised. Gameli let us have a short breather, giving us another chance to speak about parts of sequence that were giving us problems, and we then worked to iron them out. Then Gameli said that he was open to any questions and Christine asked him in which context the drums are used in his home country of Ghana. Gameli then spoke about his childhood memories and of how drumming played a big part in Ghanaian life. He explained that when a woman is giving birth, the family congregate outside the home with their drums and play for hours. This is to help the mother in her delivery. As you would think, drumming is a big part of weddings and there are different drums used for different occasions. One type, explained Gameli, could be heard over great distances and these were traditionally used to carry news from village to village. Gameli also spoke of drumming at funerals, sometimes for 12 hours through the night until the funeral took place the following morning. Then Gameli asked his son and Jane to play the same piece that they had played earlier and he proceeded to dance around the circle to demonstrate traditional Ghanaian dancing. He moved with such style and glided around making it look easy. I think we were all quietly worried that he was going to get us up dancing! Next, he asked Jane, Tom, Anne and Eileen to play a 5 part repeated rhythm while the rest of the circle played the sequence and it was stunning to hear how this lifted the whole piece to another level entirely. He then switched play so that the other half played the simple rhythm and again the air was charged to the max! Smashing!



We had a short break and Jane kindly supplied us with water, fruit juice and biscuits. Our young Iraqi friend said his goodbyes and Gameli placed four drums together with two chairs facing each other across the skins and he sought out the services of Jane and they played together for several minutes, and they sounded electric. Another round of applause filled the room and then Gameli moved the four drums into the centre of the circle and then appealed for his first victim, sorry volunteer. The group quickly inspected their shoelaces, for if the truth be told, Buddy Beat has hardly ever used two drums together, never mind 4! Hazel bravely rose to the challenge and announced that she would be the first to have a go and by golly she certainly did! Tom was next up and he thought it looked like an awful lot of drums to play with but found that once he had started his hands were flying involuntary here, there and everywhere! Top fun! Next up Anne took her position and she gave as good as she got, in the only way that Anne can! Eileen looked as apprehensive as the rest of us but jumped in at the deep end, feet first and she more than held her own. Christine brought her own quieter style of beats to the drums and looked chuffed doing so. Next, Angie started off and kept apace with Gameli, and they creating a neat interaction between them. Allan was last up and he has a talent for bringing fresh beats to the table and he and Gameli looked to have enjoyed their duet together. Gameli went to move things on but Buddy Beat weren't going to let his son sit quietly on the sideline. We told him it was his turn, and earlier he had said that he had been playing for five years, and it more than showed in this face off and Gameli, I hope this isn't too controversial, but perhaps your son just edged it!



Two Masters of Rhythm



Gameli and Anne strut their stuff while judge Simone Cowell looks on





Christine, our “Lady in Red” rises to the challenge



While Angie takes centre stage, ready for battle!

Gameli was then interested to hear our own beat and Buddy Beat filled the room with a sparkling rendition of “Funky Lunch” which went down very well. Gameli had earlier asked us to close our eyes and play back rhythms that he would play and he was interested to hear from us if we found playing easier with our eyes closed or open. Hazel explained that she often closes her eyes when we jam each Thursday morning, while others like Anne and Eileen prefer to keep an eye on what the group is doing. It’s obviously a personal thing, and like the rest of drumming “rules” there is no right or wrong

Gameli’s wife Cecilia then joined our circle and played along with everyone before Angie and Christine had to leave just after 4.45 as they had further social engagements to attend to, but not before we had a group photo. After they had left, Tom asked if the four part sequence was called “The Gameli Groove” to which Gameli replied” That is good enough!” After five minutes of playing The Gameli Groove, Gameli asked if we would like to add a 5th and final part to the sequence. This was a tricky rhythm that took a bit of mastering and then we got down to it and the room shook to the rafters and by the time that Gameli brought is to splendid stop, our hands were red raw! But we still were able to give Gameli a big round of applause and hear-felt thanks for a great afternoon’ drumming and Jane extended an invitation to him to pop along to any of our weekly sessions in Paisley Arts Centre.

That was just wonderful and the gang all really enjoyed themselves... Jane recorded our last play of The Gameli Groove so that we may revisit it in our own sessions.



So a big thanks from The Buddy Beat to Gameli for an awesome afternoon's drumming and also to Jane for booking the workshop up on our behalf. Cheers!



Allan, Christine and Angie bumped into a Munchkin drumming troupe whilst in Glasgow



Eileen- "I loved the teaching and Gameli pushed us to new limits, although my hands were getting a bit mixed up, so I am looking forward to returning to Jane's classes to give them a rest!"



Tom- "It was just magnificent to be part of such an astoundingly energetic session. I could really feel the music and we rocked! Gameli stretched me as a drummer in a way I had never known before, and I found it totally invigorating."



Anne- "It was 10/10. It was a magical wonderland."





Jane-“It’s a real sign of the groups’ progress to go somewhere and be challenged and not be put off and to stick with it. It was also really nice to learn a new rhythm piece.”



Angie-“It was really great especially working on a new rhythm piece for us and sitting in the middle playing those 4 drums with Gameli was a fun challenge.”



Hazel- “Wow- an excellent drumming workshop led by Gameli...it was a challenge to be working outside my comfort zones, especially when I stepped up to be first at drumming using the 4 drums with him, but interestingly enough- I have realised that I am a more competent drummer than I normally give myself credit for. A fantastic workshop and it was a pleasure to be taught by such a wonderful person- if ever the opportunity to work with him again occurs, I’ll be first in the queue.”



Christine-“It was totally stimulating and challenging- Quite the most memory challenging yet and I guess most of us surprised ourselves in what we achieved.”



The one and only Gameli
We salute you!

Compiled by Tom Chalmers

