

PENUMBRA: EASTBANK ACADEMY GLASGOW STUDENT WORKSHOP



WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR...AND THREE COME ALONG AT ONCE!

4TH DECEMBER 2012



Buddy Beat took to the road for possibly the last time in 2012, this time heading to Shettleston in Glasgow. This was at the request of our friends from Penumbra (www.penumbra.org.uk), who were hosting a week of lunch-time events for students at Eastbank Academy to help with possible stress levels during the prelim exams.

In June 2011 Penumbra hosted a large mental health event at St Andrew in the Square in Glasgow and Buddy Beat was asked to come along and perform. In what turned out to be a memorable day for all concerned, this was the first time that we had incorporated group members relating how being part of The Buddy Beat has helped them and we also had a Q&A section with the audience.

And so we were delighted when we were recently asked to hold a workshop for Eastbank Academy students. How could we have refused? The Buddy Beat Sterling Six were-

- Dr Jane Bentley
- Allan Borland
- Hazel Borland
- Tom Chalmers
- Christine Robertson
- Sandy Smith

We were welcomed by Penumbra's Beth Maley and shown to the classroom where we would be drumming. At 12.30 the school bell rang (bell is definitely the wrong term- it was a piercing drone!) and gave us a fright! Beth explained that she would love to try her hand at the drums but unfortunately had to dash off for another engagement. Next time, Beth, next time! As the corridors of knowledge began to resound with the sound of trudging feet, we were soon joined by five pupils from 4th, 5th and 6th year- three girls and two boys, one of whom was Steven, a talented pianist who has performed many times for Penumbra and that he is always up for any new musical experiences! Also joining our drum circle was Paola DeRosa, a teacher from the school who co-ordinates the school side of the Penumbra/Eastbank Academy project.



Hazel, Allan, Sandy & Tom- a class act!



To settle anyone's nerves, Jane set things off with the circle telling everyone, one by one, their name. Having learned this, Allan gave a brief but accurate "How-To" for using the djembe. Jane then began a series of Copy Cat rhythms and the younger members of the audience kept up and looked determined. That led to each of us taking a turn and we went around the circle three times, with plenty of different and interesting rhythms filling the room. Jane announced that we were ready to play; telling the students to listen and find their place, never to be afraid and be willing to experiment, and off we went! It all sounded rather splendid and the beat rippled along. Jane then counted us to a stop and then restarted and after five minutes or so took the level down gradually before ending on a crisp and unified single beat.



Ladies in Rhythm- Our Jane and Christine



Next up we played “Bop-Around” which brought the usual smiles and we played three different levels of this, each time adding a touch of complexity. Jane then posed the question- “Would you like to learn one of Buddy Beat’s performance pieces or play together as we had earlier?” It was a unanimous decision by the students to learn one of our much loved compositions. Jane had selected “The Funky Lunch” and Buddy Beat demonstrated the three different rhythm components. Jane then asked who would like to do what and then we were off. The students watched intently and picked things up easily and over the space of quarter an hour or so, we pieced together the differing segments. Jane then that announced it was time to play the piece in its entirety and off we rocked. It sounded excellent and very much together, and towards the end Jane ramped up the speed- we all managed to keep up and by the time we had finished you could see the sense of achievement on everyone’s faces. If there was such a thing as a Buddy Beat Contract, they would surely have been whipped out to sign the students up!



Jane rounded with things off by suggesting that we spend the last five minutes creating a new rhythm. Splitting us into three groups, we had a minute to create a repeating rhythm to a count of four. Then we each demonstrated our beats to the other groups before bringing it all together. It was a great pumping sound and you could hear the musical conversations between the groups and Jane gradually brought the level down inch by inch and we ended on a heartbeat!

In the space of forty five minutes, our student visitors went from never having played, to learning a Buddy Beat tune to creating their very own piece! Not a bad work rate at all! Feedback forms were asked to be completed for Penumbra's benefit and one student was quoted as saying "It made me forget the stress of prelims" while another stated that "It had been really interesting to try another form of music."

Penumbra' Beth emailed Tom to say -

"I have spoken with the students who took part yesterday and they thoroughly enjoyed the workshop! I have also had a few other students, who were not there but heard about it from friends and they asked when it would be on again so they could sign up!"

That was a lovely and rewarding workshop. The students came in perhaps a little shy but quickly mastered the drums and took everything Jane threw at them in their stride. Sometimes large drum circles can be very good and often smaller circles can be equally as good. There were 12 of us in this particular workshop, and twelve certainly seemed like the magic number.

Words and photos by Tom Chalmers

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