

October 29th 2009- Renfrewshire Disability Arts Forum Relaunch

Renfrewshire Disability Arts Forum was holding a relaunch event at Paisley Town Hall and had invited 150 guests for the occasion. Buddy Beat was asked to come along and play for 20 minutes at 12.30, while everyone sat and had lunch.

Jane was not available to take this event on, and Buddy beat decided to try and do this on their own. Karen had earlier held our normal morning session before this gig at The Paisley Arts Centre and we were joined there by new member Mary Graham. Mary told us that she had drummed with Jane before and when she heard us talking about our lunchtime gig, she asked if she could come along! Buddy Beat has been known to throw new members into a performance after just a few days or so amongst our ranks, but we have never had a volunteer within the first hour! So we packed up the gear at noon, for Jane had let us borrow some of her equipment, and we toddled over to The Town Hall.

The Buddy Beat were:-

- ✓ Tom Chalmers
- ✓ Mary Graham
- ✓ Jackie McDowall
- ✓ Eileen McGrory
- ✓ Lesley King
- ✓ Anne Ross
- ✓ Sarah Van Der Molen
- ✓ Noreen Young



*Left to right - Anne D, Noreen, Lesley, Eileen, new girl Mary, Jackie and Sarah
Eileen- "Has anyone seen Tom?"
Anne Ross- "He's behind the camera!"*

In the Town Hall, the main room was already busy with the invited guests and Buddy Beat set up by the left corner of the stage. The chairman of Renfrewshire Disability Arts Forum was a chap called Keith and he took centre stage and made an announcement over the microphone and suddenly we were off!

What we essentially did was a huge jamming session and threw everything but the kitchen sink into it. We began with 8 loud beats in the centre of the drums to draw everyone's attention and glided from there into a series of different volume rumbles before some freestyle. Then we passed Echo and Response around ourselves for 2 revolutions, ending with 4 centre beats and a split. We took it down to finger drumming and built the sound up, going louder and then softer. Tom instigated clapping and everyone kept drumming, but one by one the group joined in with the clapping until we were all doing it and it sounded fab in the auditorium. After a period Tom started back on the drums and the whole thing reversed back to drumming. We jumped from there to another 8 beats in the centre of the drums and repeated different volume rumbles before slipping back into freestyle. Tom then took a Boomwhacker and similar to the Clapping sequence, the drummers one by one changed from djembe to Boomwhackers and this made another subtle and softer sound in the hall. You could really hear the different tones on the tubes so we stayed with that for a minute or so and then brought the drums back in one by one. After another short freestyle we played on the outside of the drums and then half the group stayed with this and the other half played in the middle, and we alternated on a count of four several times over. Then we took the volume down and each drummer was asked to play louder. We then gave another round of handclapping before some more Echo and Response and ended with firstly a series of loud and fast beats in the middle of the drums and then an almighty rumble, built up to fever pitch before finishing in a heartbeat! Phew!

The audience whooped their delight and host Keith moved back to the microphone and asked everyone to again show their appreciation which reverberated around the room. It was strange to hear it, for after all we only did what Jane has taught us on Thursday mornings!

Then Keith introduced Councillor McLeod and he began with welcoming everyone. He then turned to Buddy Beat and said "Can I just say that was absolutely amazing. I came to the Town Hall ten minutes before you finished and couldn't believe what I was hearing!" We all sat there looking stunned, but managed to mouth a "thank you" to him and he then turned back to the audience and added "In fact, I must insist that we give Buddy Beat another big round of applause!" To say we were taken aback was an understatement!

Councillor McLeod then urged the groups present to seek funding for their projects and pointing once more to us, and told everyone that Buddy Beat were a prime example of how a group can be helped by council grants. He then handed over to his colleague Councillor McAdam who was handing out prizes to winners of an art competition held by the Disability Forum. The winners' faces were a treat to see as they came up to the front to accept their gift vouchers.

The proceedings then took a break and Buddy beat were invited to have lunch from the impressive buffet and we had worked up an appetite. Tom and Noreen packed the gear away and during this one chap approached Noreen and told her "Your group was inspirational to me!"

At 1.30, Keith then introduced another treat for the gathering- The Dirty Feet Dance Company and their 20 minute piece was centred on how difficult it can be to get people to understand how you feel, and their impressive performance included dance and drama, with a background of punchy music.

We had been asked to perform for 20 minutes and Tom had his stop watch function on his mobile phone ready for action but failed to press start at the beginning. Some time through the performance he checked and was horrified to see the screen static at zero and hurriedly pressed "Start". By the end, his watch said 14 and a half minutes and coupled with the beginning, we must have played for 25 solid minutes! Two members of the audience came up and joined us, but it was such a shame they got so little time as were approaching the end of our performance, but Sarah made them very welcome! Well done to everyone for

sticking with it and special mention must go to Mary Graham for her Buddy Beat debut. At the end Tom asked her how it had gone and she replied that she had loved it and wanted to do more, there and then!

As we prepared to leave, a lady approached and introduced herself as the Vice-Chair of the Disability Forum and she said “I had to come see you and say how truly wonderful you all were. There is something definitely prime-evil about drumming and I think that feeling you get goes back to being in the womb and hearing your mother’s heartbeat!”

Well, that was surely a very successful adventure for the gang and even the pouring rain when we left the Town Hall couldn’t dampen their spirits. And we received a fifty pound donation for our trouble!

And Eileen, thank you for loading your Chitty Chitty with the gear! It was appreciated!

Words and pictures by Tom Chalmers