

COMMUNITY MUSIC-MAKING FOR CHILDREN AND OLDER PEOPLE NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2005



'Tuning up'

Just over a year has passed since the first team of musicians from Canterbury Christ Church University College's, Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts & Health (SdH Centre), accepted an invitation to run a music-making session with residents and staff at Cumbria House Residential Home, Folkestone. At around the same time, SdH Centre project co-ordinator, Trish Vella-Burrows was running a pilot project for music-making workshops for children aged 0 – 8yrs and their parents and carers in Folkestone's Early Years Centre.

Such was the effect of both projects for all concerned, that SdH Centre Directors, Professors Grenville Hancox and Stephen Clift made a decision to develop both projects for a wider number of people in more venues across East Kent.

Grenville Hancox, who is Head of Music at Canterbury Christ Church University, gives a personal insight into the potency of music for individual and community well-being.

The batsmen take to the field to the strains of Jerusalem, the boxer enters the ring to Delilah, London Marathon runners are spurred on by Chariots of Fire. Such is the power of music that competitors and audiences alike are motivated, affected, changed in some way (if only temporarily). The musician travels to another country not speaking the language of the hearth, performs, is understood, affects and changes the audience. Such is the Power of Music. Such is the universal language.

The fact is that music is the key to universal understanding because what unites us as humans is our birth song. When every member of this planet entered the world extra utero he/she sang, announcing the presence of a new member to the human race, seeking comfort, nurture and understanding. For the first eighteen months of life, the song is modified, the

pitch modulated, the song eventually accompanied by words of the particular culture.

Whether the song remains central to the culture is a matter of tradition. If by accident we sang our birth song in Rwanda, it would remain central to our culture reflecting all aspects of life's journey, whereas in Wolverhampton, Widnes or Wellington the song would become more peripheral.

It is therefore one of our objectives, when arranging singing activities and implementing research programmes, to demonstrate that singing, the universal activity, is such a powerful force as to be a useful and perhaps an essential element of our **well being**. We feel better when we sing; we are affected; we are changed.

Our long-term aim is to demonstrate and convince as wide an audience as possible that singing could be *on prescription* and that our world will be a better place as such.

Spend any Sunday in a South African township and you will understand that a culture in which singing is upheld as a necessary function to keep body, soul and faith intact, is a healthier one; people from all generations, from grand parents to grand children, sing together, all uniting to express their faith. It's the communal singing that unites them in a very powerful very uplifting way. Singing is not a miracle cure for the world's ills, but it's one kind of medication that can have remarkable results.

(Susan Digby 1999)

Professor Grenville Hancox MBE

'Tuning in with others'

Previous partnerships with Sure Start, Shepway and East Kent and Coastal Teaching Primary Care Trusts, Shepway and Dover District Councils and Age Concern were developed further over the next few months. Support came in the form of provision of venues for music-making workshops and personnel assisting in workshops as well as organising seminars for staff training and publicity.

The partnership with Dover District Council led to a major funding opportunity through Project Delta, Dover's Healthy Living scheme, which currently enables continuation and development of both music projects over the next three years.

With all the extra work, the project outgrew resources available at the Sidney De Haan Centre - and thus was launched the sister organisation, 'Sing for your Life!', which, with charitable status imminent, has taken over delivery of the two music projects, now named *Jangle it!* and *Silver Song Clubs*.



Keeping in Harmony: music-making with older people

Following on from the first music-making session at Cumbria House, the SdH Centre's two community music practitioners soon found it difficult to keep up with growing demand for similar activity programmes at other residential and day care settings and in the community. So freelance administrator, Stuart Brown, who has been working with the Sidney De Haan Centre since its launch in February 2003, in his role as Regional Chairman of 'Making Music', a national organisation for amateur music societies, initiated new delivery system using groups of trained volunteers from local choral and music societies.

Under the new scheme, a pilot community singing session took place in Folkestone in August 2004.

This was followed by 'taster' sessions held as part of the Zest Fest event in Dover, Deal and Aylesham before the Silver Song Club programme was launched at the beginning of 2005. There are now 7 Clubs meeting each month in East Kent and new Clubs are planned both in Kent and elsewhere in the South East Region later in the year, including one in Faversham and another in West Berkshire, in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society

Each Song Club is led by a trained facilitator and supported by a group of amateur singers, often but not always, drawn from choral societies. A Song Club is starting in October in Southampton in partnership with Southampton University, Southampton Primary Care Trust and the local Age Concern. Currently there are 75 Silver Song Club volunteers working with more than 250 older people and their carers.

The Clubs provide inter-active music making opportunities, including both familiar and new material using percussion instruments to stimulate movement and rhythm.

Music stimulates memory and the sessions are used to help those who for whatever reason feel lonely or socially isolated. It has been found that the volunteers also benefit from the sessions apart from receiving support for their groups.



▲ Time bars

'Looking forward to the next bash!' by Lawrence Lees

I have taken part in the 'Silver Songs Club' on four occasions so far. As you arrive for your first 'go' there is a feeling of apprehension, maybe even dread and thinking what am I doing here? Not surprising really, in all probability you have never experienced an event like this before. For many of the clients it is their first time too. Rest assured, once you get going you very quickly feel at home and have a comfort factor provided by more experienced members, such as Trish, Stuart and James.

The format is roughly the same for each meeting. We all have name stickers with our first name on. This is a useful way to introduce ourselves, and is invaluable to someone like me, who after introduction to someone, promptly forgets their name. Song sheets and simple noise generators such as bells, chimes, wooden tubes and hammers are distributed. Some people want to be involved in producing a noise of one sort or another, although with others a little gentle persuasion may be required.

The session facilitator starts us with 'O what a beautiful morning'. If you close your eyes, and you have a vivid imagination, you can almost see yourself clip clopping along in the Surrey with the Fringe on Top with Gordon Macrea and Shirley Jones. The music continues for about 2 hours but the time really flies by! Musical accompaniment is from a keyboard or CD player. We either sing together or rounds. Sometimes there is a bit of harmony or the occasional solo from a client taking a trip down memory lane. We stop and start at the command of red and green flags. The Director with a flag in each hand and a manic expression on his face, gives an impression of semaphore gone mad! The degree of difficulty achieved during the session depends upon the ability of the clients attending, and it has to be said, ours.

The tea break at half time is very interesting. You get to talk to the clients and establish a rapport with them. It doesn't always work, but invariably you are surprised by what you hear. Barbara "... I was secretary to Dr Coggan for many years... the then archbishop of Canterbury". Shay "...I am a trained tricologist-bet you don't know what that is... guess how old I am. 80? No I am 96!..."

It seems that everyone benefits from the club. Most of the clients spend their time in a home, and welcome the chance to get out and socialise. I have yet to meet one who has not had a lovely time, and can't wait for the next meeting. The choir benefits financially, and choir members who take part I am sure benefit in lots of ways. The enjoyment and insight you get by helping to run the group depends upon the individual. For me it works really well and I'm looking forward to the next bash!

Folkestone GP, Dr Sarah Montgomery is a partner in the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health. Here she gives a personal account of how her interest in the role of music in healthcare began.

My interest in the beneficial impact of music on health began when I was a newly qualified junior doctor. At the time, part of my work involved caring for patients with advanced dementia in a long stay hospital where disorientated elderly people roamed the wards apparently unable to engage in any kind of normal social interaction. One day I watched the hospital chaplain lead a short service of Holy Communion. In place of liturgy he used hymns. I was amazed by the transformation in the atmosphere of the ward and the behaviour of my patients. People who could no longer recognise their own spouses sang the hymns they had known since childhood and calmly took Communion. Their dignity and humanity was restored. Music achieved in an instant what drugs and dedicated nursing care could never do.

Singing and music have always been used naturally by people of all cultures to rejoice, lament, encourage, express love and faith and send babies to sleep. The benefits are so obvious that in a way it seems odd that we should need to conduct formal research to prove them. However, there is much to learn about how music can best be used not just to improve general well-being but to have a positive impact on particular problems faced by particular patients. The Sidney de Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health is contributing to a growing body of knowledge that may lead to music becoming as much a part of mainstream health care as a visit to the pharmacy.



'Feeling better'

by John Hilton

Dover Choral Society was approached by Sing for your Life some months ago, and asked to consider setting up a Silver Song club at a local venue. The one chosen was the Age Concern Community Centre in Dover. Originally six members of the Society responded enthusiastically to the appeal for members to set up the Club at the Centre, which now takes place once a month. Usually about thirty members of the Centre sit in on the sessions, which involve singing familiar songs from a collection provided by Sing for your Life, with some instrumental and percussion accompaniment using instruments provided by the Sing For your Life. Singing is enthusiastic and loud, and is obviously generally enjoyed, by both members and Choral Society members alike. More Choral Society members are joining in as news spreads. Staff at the Centre seem interested and are supportive, encouraging Centre members to join in. The mood always seems positive. Quiet members seem to appreciate the chance to do something loud and uninhibited. It also makes me feel better, which can't be bad, and my Choral Society supporters are very positive about what they are doing.

In addition to regular Song Clubs, 'Sing for your Life!' provides outreach programmes that have included numerous music workshops in residential settings and day care Centres. In partnership with Age Concern, Cheriton, 'Sing for your Life's!' Co-Director and Head of music at Canterbury Christ Church University, Professor Hancox continues to lead popular bi-monthly Song Clubs, which also act as practice placements for students studying Music, Arts & Health as part of their music degree. The students bring their own mix of musical and social skills. As the sessions progress, students often report a sense of warmth and meaningful connection between themselves and participants. A significant number of students choose to pursue further training in community music.

Guided by the 'Sing for your Life!' Song Club model, which includes elements of reminiscence, learning challenges and a lot of fun, each Song Club develops its own identity depending on the venue size, number of music-makers and volunteers etc. Despite these differences, common factors emerge, including social bonding and the sharing of positive experiences.

Jean Hayles, Manager of Romney Marsh Age Concern believes that Song Clubs are beneficial to her client group:

'Everyone at the centre is enjoying the sessions. Apart from joining in with the music itself, staff often say how nice it is to see clients interacting with each other on such a wide scale. It is the one event that nearly everyone who comes to the centre



▲ Cheriton Age Concern Song Club, Folkestone

▼ Eastry Court, Aylesham



▲ Riverside Age Concern Silver Song Club, Dover

joins in with; we don't have another activity where so many clients are altogether.

It probably has a lot to do with the songs chosen, which are not the usual 'Pack Up Your Troubles' type, that are often used for people in this age group. I think the clients like the diversity, especially using the instruments. It's really interesting to see people behaving differently. Of course, with any group of people, some are extrovert and some introvert, but I've noticed that even those who appear introverted at other times in the Centre, want to join in with the music, in the end.

We have people who are very independent and those who are clinging onto independence, but music seems to be a good leveller, particularly for people who have short term memory loss, who are often able to remember songs and tunes very well.

The sessions seem to address emotional and mental well-being. This may be partly to do with people having an opportunity to learn new things but also, I suspect that they are learning something new about themselves too.

The care assistants are enjoying the sessions too, because it gives them an opportunity to join in with something mutually positive. Even those who are too shy to join in, enjoy being able to step back and watch; some say that seeing clients in a different way impacts positively on their care-giving.



'Sing for your Life!' co-director, Professor Stephen Clift, co-leads a Silver Song Club in Sturry

Euphrasie Barbier Care Home in Sturry, home to retired Sisters from Our Lady of the Missions, is the venue for the Canterbury Silver Song Club. Together with volunteers from 'Spirit of Song', a ladies choir based in Canterbury and their leader James Graham, we have lead eight afternoon sessions of singing and musical activity. The experience has been a source of pleasure, enjoyment and fun for all concerned, with many of the Sisters saying how much they have looked forward to the musical afternoons between visits – they would like us to go every week if we could! But the most enjoyable aspects for us as visitors has been the willingness of several Sisters to sing for us and teach us new songs – and the opportunity to make new friends over tea and freshly baked cakes from the kitchen!

Family harmony: music for Mums, Dads & Babies

With further funding from Sure Start and Kent County Council's Adult Learning for young families and children, Jangle It! workshops continue to thrive. Weekly sessions in Dover and Aylesham give children, parents and carers an opportunity to share in music-making; to learn new songs, games and actions with an emphasis on having fun!

Workshop facilitator, Lucy Hands, guides the sessions with material that gives parents and children a chance to make music together. Lucy believes that integrating music as a shared experience into daily schedules can build a platform for developing physical, emotional and social bonding.

Some experts in child development believe that music can enhance children's ability to learn and that engaging in musical activities from birth can help provide a good foundation for formal learning and development later on.

It is known that very young babies respond to the sound of his or her mother's voice long before recognising her face. The voice is music to a baby's ears and more enjoyable than any other sound. Babies respond to adult conversation, cooing and babbling in turn. By around eight months, babies start to 'sing' using about four notes up or down a scale. At nine months they can recognise changes in short tunes and rhythms. Developing a range of sounds builds a child's vocabulary and can develop language and social development. Some researchers believe that regular repetition of songs and tunes acts as a sort of 'brain gym', which strengthens synapses formation, through which brain messages are routed. Using simple percussion instruments, very young children are capable of developing critical thinking skills and learning to listen and to respond to music can develop a child physically, emotionally, and intellectually.

Staff from the Folkestone Early Years Centre pilot project, reported positive effects. Workshops were popular with children of all ages and their parents and staff felt that they encouraged more chatting – and certainly a lot of laughter.

Some mums attending the Babies (under 1yr) project talked about the experience:

'She really loves it – she loves the dancing – so do I!'

'I sing to him now... not in front of anyone - but he doesn't care what it sounds like; he just watches me all the time'.

'They like the rhythm – and action songs. They'd get bored if you did the same thing all the time but they like things they know too'.

Leader, Lucy Hands continues to run Jangle it! workshops, which take place weekly during school term time. Last term, over 40 people regularly attended the workshops in Dover and Aylesham.

In addition to evaluating the Jangle it! sessions, the SdH Centre has been commissioned to evaluate the Music Start programme on the Isle of Wight. Music start is a national initiative funded by Youth Music a national organisation set up to promote music with young people. The initiative aims to encourage musical activities and singing with infants and young children up to the age of five in families and educational settings



In Tune with Healthcare:

Growing partnerships with NHS Primary Care trusts.

From the outset, 'Sing for your life!' has been supported by neighbouring NHS Primary Care Trusts and local health practitioners.

On a rather snowy afternoon in February, the 'Sing for your Life!' team met with members of Shepway Community Assessment & Rehabilitation Team and other healthcare staff representing the Shepway Primary Care Trust. The aim was to discuss how regular musical intervention programmes may be integrated into primary healthcare, particularly in reference to Government ChangeUp programme that aims to support people in prolonging independence their own homes.

A lot is known about health-giving properties of music-making and singing as a community. Medical researchers have identified certain chemical changes that can occur when we engage in musical experiences, including changes that boost the immune system and others that support levels of cortisol and melatonin, which are disrupted in depression and anxiety states. It is also known that engaging in music can reduce blood pressure. Music really can lift the spirits!

We know too that music-making can address issues of low self esteem and self confidence, as well as stimulating social cohesion and a sense community. A current government Green Paper seeks to address problems of rising healthcare needs, as people grow older. Devon's Upstream Health Living initiative refers to the importance of keeping people physical and mentally well.

'Research indicates that mental stimulation contributes to a sense of well-being... the Upstream project shows that early intervention prolongs active life and reduces dependency on statutory services. We are looking at practical health benefits as well as 'quality of life'.

Upstream offers a wide range of Healthy Living schemes for older people, including music projects that aim to reduce isolation and prolong independence.

The Sidney De Haan Story

'The Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts & Health was launched in February 2003 with partnership funding from Canterbury Christ Church University and The Roger De Haan Charitable Trust Sidney with support from the Creative Foundation. The Centre is named in memory of Sidney De Haan, founder of Saga, an organisation that provides services for people over 50.

In the later stages of his life, Sidney suffered with vascular dementia. Sidney's son, Roger, noticed that attending musical events had a profoundly positive effect on his father, not only at the time but also for some days afterwards. Sidney continued to enjoy music into the latest stages of his condition.

When the Research Centre was formed two years ago, Directors, Professor Grenville Hancox and Professor Stephen Clift, were delighted to have Roger De Haan's support, which has enabled expansion and development of research into practices that could offer positive benefits to people with dementia'.