PARTICIPATION IN ACTION

Young Mancunians learn about their city through Brighter Sound music project

**Provider** Brighter Sound in collaboration with Manchester Camerata, with support from Music Action International, 2Arts, One Education, RNCM and the BBC Philharmonic.

**Name** My Music, My Manchester

**Summary** A diverse group of teenagers composed and performed their own original music, improving cultural knowledge and enhancing self-confidence.

Young people aged 13 to 18 were brought together for a week to write original music that explored their relationship with Manchester, and was performed with a professional orchestra.

The My Music, My Manchester programme worked with 34 teenagers from a diverse range of backgrounds – 56 per cent were of black and minority ethnic heritage – during October half-term last year. It allowed disadvantaged young people to discover and utilise their talents, providing resources that they might not otherwise have been able to access.

Brighter Sound director Debra King says the project was led by the young people with the programme leader acting more as an enabler of their work. “The way the tutor works is that she brings people in and allows them to make the best of their talents,” says King. “The whole concept behind the piece is trying to discover and creatively convey what Manchester means to people – so this is obviously very much led by the young people’s ideas about the city.”

Participants were divided into groups based on the type of music they wanted to make. They worked within their groups to come up with a concept and, with help from practitioners, created and rehearsed a piece they all agreed on and contributed to. They were joined by members of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and Manchester Camerata to rehearse, performing with them at the BBC Philharmonic Studio.

“Music can be very evocative of different stages of your life; it can form a major part of who you see yourself as being.”

Debra King, director, Brighter Sound

Through meeting peers with different experiences of the city, they learnt about the different cultures that exist in Manchester. They also found their passion for music increased through the project (see My View).

King says music is an effective way of connecting young people, and engaging with children of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. She says: “Music is an often integral part of their everyday life. It can be very evocative of different stages of your life; it can form a major part of who you see yourself as being.”

A follow-up survey found two-thirds of participants kept in touch with someone they met from the programme, and 60 per cent felt their music ability had improved. King says one of the best things about the project was that it led to them finding a collective cultural perspective of the city where they live.

Brighter Sound, which is approaching its 20th year as a charity, has used this youth-led model in previous work. It is also working with Birmingham University on a four-year initiative, Exchanging Notes, which explores how this way of working can improve education outcomes such as young people’s attainment in school.

It is running a similar event, in July and August, for 14- to 18-year-olds with a love of hip hop to write and record music collaboratively.

More from www.brightersound.com

By Colette Flowerdew-Kinaud

**My View**

**Chido Nyakonda, 18, Manchester**

I found out about the project through an email from Brighter Sound, because I did a hip hop project before with them, I decided to do it partly because I really enjoyed that, but I also wanted to understand more about Manchester. I moved here from Zimbabwe when I was in year 9 and it has taken me a while to adjust. I thought this would be a way of making it feel more like home. Hearing what Manchester meant to the other people there helped with this.

I’ve always loved music. I’ve been going to choir since I was a kid, and I don’t remember a time when I wasn’t singing. But the project helped develop my confidence even further. I was still nervous in the final performance because it was at such a big venue, but it helped knowing that I wasn’t performing alone, and that I could rely on the other guys there to help me out.

Everyone there was so different, and we all liked different types of music, so I learnt a lot from them and expanded my musical knowledge. I also made some really good friends, I would like to collaborate with some of them on music projects in the future.