



## THE COMMONWEALTH RESOUNDS IN TOBAGO

22<sup>ND</sup>-24<sup>TH</sup> November 2009

Report by Hannah Grayson, student

It was the middle of a busy term for all the music colleges in London, UK, when seven students from one of these colleges took to the skies to represent the Commonwealth's international musical interests for CHOGM 2009 in Tobago. (*CHOGM = Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting*)

### Members of the group

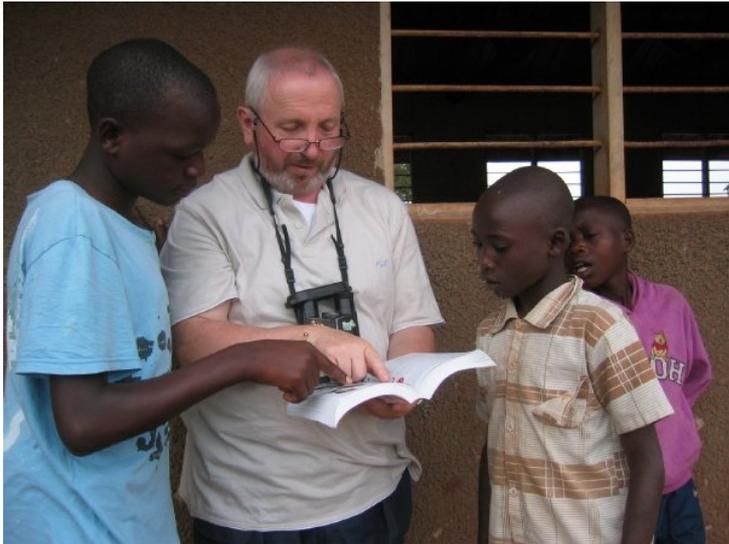


*(left) Will Roberts, James Pillai, Christian Barraclough, Shane Brennan, Rupert Whitehead  
(centre) Joe Richards (right) Hannah Grayson*

Five of the students, Christian Barraclough, Shane Brennan, James Pillai, Rupert Whitehead and Will Roberts are all members of a brass quintet called TRIUMPH BRASS

Joe Richards (percussion) and Hannah Grayson (flute) are former students of The Purcell School

The group was led by Peter Harvey, a professor at the RCM Junior Department, who previously ran projects in Uganda as part of *The Commonwealth Resounds! 2007*.



*Peter Harvey in Uganda during CHOGM 2007*



*Peter Harvey in Tobago (CHOGM 2009)*

Upon arrival at their accommodation, in a beautiful house in the middle of the rainforest near Castara Bay, the musicians got straight to work with an enthusiastic rehearsal for the workshop scheduled to take place on the following day. Whilst TRIUMPH BRASS refined their performances, Joe Richards and Hannah Grayson improvised and discussed ideas together under the starry sky; inspired by the surrounding sounds of crickets and warmed by the Caribbean breeze, so far removed from the city soundscape of hometown London.



*Tobago Resounds! The team arrives at Crown Point International Airport, Tobago*



*The students settle in and begin to explore the area*

The following day the group set off on an invigorating walk around the local area before being transported to the capital city of Scarborough where they were to run a workshop with twenty music students from the Brass Institute of Tobago.

Tony Woodroffe, Director of the Brass Institute, greeted the group warmly and explained his preferences for running the workshop. There was ample time to rehearse and plan further details for the after-school three-hour workshop in the Education Centre. Students arriving early were drawn with fascination to the grand sounds of TRIUMPH BRASS!



*Christian Barraclough (trumpet), James Pillai (horn) and Will Roberts (tuba) surrounded by enthusiastic onlookers as TRIUMPH BRASS rehearse!*

Musicians from the Brass Institute of Tobago arrived and set themselves up in a mixed ensemble with a range of six-year-old recorder players, teenage flute, saxophone, trombone, trumpet, drum kit and string players and a middle-aged clarinettist!

The work of Tony Woodroffe offers an extra-curricular musical education where he himself individually teaches the instruments and runs the weekly ensemble rehearsal. For one person to carry out all this singlehandedly is in itself an inspiration!

The ensemble of Tobagonian musicians kicked off the workshop with a performance of their two strongest hits; a Christmas Medley and a performance of the recently learnt 12-bar blues featuring several brave soloists!



*Participants joining in the exercises*

After such a warm welcome, Shane Brennan from TRIUMPH BRASS led a workshop consisting of the outreach and education exercises which are taught to students at the London music colleges, exposing the participants to an array of essential musical skills which were then to be exercised in the development of the workshop.



*Christian Barraclough demonstrating techniques on the trumpet*



*Masterclass-style performance*

The Commonwealth students adopted a masterclass scenario whereby the Tobagonian ensemble performed once again whilst TRIUMPH BRASS passed on their top-class conservatoire training to offer useful advice to these local musicians.

The first section of the workshop ended on a positive note whereby the number of Tobagonian musicians now feeling confident enough to perform an improvised solo in the 12-bar blues tripled!

After an hour and a half of intense musical knowledge and exchange came a much-needed break! However, the music did not stop! The members of the Brass Institute in Tobago were so enthusiastic and joyful to be there that they continued to improvise together, exposing incredible natural feeling and love for music. This was magical for the Commonwealth musicians to witness; here was a group of musicians with far less privilege and experience in their musical education but with love and commitment equal to that of any London conservatoire student in their music making.



*TRIUMPH BRASS playing a range of musical items*

Enlightened, TRIUMPH BRASS took to the stage and performed in the second half of the workshop. They played a number of pieces interspersed by educational interludes involving conversations about the technical practicalities of the brass instruments alongside some musical history behind the various compositions, ranging from the Baroque period to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The children were amazed to see and hear the instruments; in particular the tuba and the french horn, instruments which were previously unknown to them.



*Hannah Grayson and Joe Richards improvising and using extended techniques*

Hannah Grayson and Joe Richards, both former students from The Purcell School, finished off the workshop with an example of free improvisation using extended techniques on the flute, tambourine and djembe.

After Hannah and Joe had played for 10 minutes, the floor was opened up to the listeners, who were asked to suggest feelings or images which may have been conjured up by the music. Vivid thoughts emerged from the audience, and after some convincing that the music they had just heard came purely from the imagination of the two musicians, the members of the Brass Institute began to realise the possibility of complete freedom of expression in their music making.

This experience was entralling for all those involved in the teaching and learning. It provided lessons which will almost certainly be nurtured throughout the lives of each participant.

This invaluable sharing of knowledge and culture would not have been possible without the vision and dedication of the Commonwealth's group mentor Peter Harvey.



The excellent and highly worthwhile Commonwealth project in Tobago was made possible by generous support from Fran Nevrla, Chairman and CEO of Phonographic Performance Ltd and John Smith, Chairman of the International Federation of Musicians who is also General Secretary of the Musicians' Union. The musicians would like to thank them both sincerely.



**THANK YOU TO ALL THE FOLLOWING!**

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**Susan Ramrattan for her help and support with logistics**

**Anthony Woodroffe for his vision, musicianship and organisation**

**Quinnette for her wonderful cooking!**

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