

## **'Get Connected'**

**A reflection on the work of Musician,  
Roshi Nasehi, during this project:  
Hounslow**



## **CASE STUDIES**

From January to July 2014, Roshi Nasehi had an artist residency at the Hanworth Centre, a valuable community resource in a deprived area of Hounslow, as part of Sound Connections' Get Connected initiative part-funded by PRSF. A young apprentice leader, Ayumi Konno, supported her on this project. Ayumi is a skilled vocalist with experience of singing in choirs and an interest in music technology.

Originally, it was thought that the residency would primarily be a vocal-based project. However, once the project started, Roshi felt that a big singing angle would be more appropriate with a larger group of young people. She felt that the focus needed to shift more towards supported individual song-writing, so she offered guidance on singing skills and continued to encourage group work by warming up together every week.

Over the course of the project, Roshi recorded several tracks and track snippets. The young people that participated in the project were creative and sparky but also frustratingly chaotic. They didn't manage to come every week or sometimes even every three weeks. She discovered that this is the case for all the activities on offer at the Centre, and that some of the participants have complex reasons for their irregular attendance or in some cases for not returning at all.

Roshi also discovered that quite a few of them were working on the songs that emerged in the sessions and continuing to write lyrics in between weeks. She said that when she saw the young people they showed her pages of lyrics on their phones and there were some very touching words, moments of humour and creative, clever rhymes.

She encouraged them to take charge of the process of recording and to make choices with regards to instrumentation, beat programming and even which compressor to use on the voice. Roshi also wanted to share creative ways of using the voice like looping and vocal effects and even ways into vocal improvising and dividing hooks and riffs across the group through 'hocketing'. The group were instantly excited by the sonic possibilities afforded by this technology.

The first time she worked with the women's group, Roshi started activities with vocal looping and effects. She and Ayumi felt the self-consciousness in the room straight away and they knew that no one would be brave enough to show themselves (their singing, their lyrics) straight away, so making their voices sound like a robot or putting it through an echo was a great way of breaking the ice and stopping people from feeling too exposed. Roshi's set up (laptop, Cubase, looper, controller keyboard, and mic) is basic and she set up a drum kit and taught some girls some basic grooves. Roshi said that this felt overwhelmingly positive.

Siobhan, the women's group leader at the Centre, informed Roshi that these young women are generally very lacking in confidence. She did everything she could to address this and Roshi felt pleased to be making a positive contribution too. By the end of that first session, half a dozen

girls joined in with an improvised blues, with one participant playing a guitar riff, several people improvising vocals and there were alternating drummers.

One of the first individual songs to have emerged out of the sessions came very early on from C. C came across as mature, confident and self-possessed. She said that “music saved her... music and weight training”. C had been through a lot despite her relatively young age. She had presence and was feisty, and it was obvious that she related to music in many ways, including viscerally. She said that it all helped her “let off steam, channel her energy, focus”. Music was central to her: “your feelings come out when you listen to certain songs”, and writing her own songs was a natural step on from this. She was able to use her voice to really express emotion, something that was further enhanced by the lyrics she sang:

*Life is a struggle without you here,  
But the pain disappears  
Where did you go wrong?*

Roshi encouraged Ayumi to learn how to set her equipment and how to use Cubase. Ayumi grew in confidence and recorded some of C’s vocals (her first attempt at recording). Roshi used this as another opportunity to say that they should never feel excluded from music technology or composition, or for that matter drumming or lead guitar, even though those things seem dominated by boys. This sparked a mini-discussion as a group, which felt extremely positive. This was also an excellent step for Ayumi, who was adopting a leadership role. She was self-conscious about assuming such a role when at just 22 she was only a little older than the members of the group. She was initially very nervous about supporting young people with their own writing but she and Roshi looked at tactics for doing this: asking leading questions (Socratic direction), running fun game-type activities that generated words such as the cut up method using newspapers or other text. As the weeks progressed she approached facilitating lyric-writing with the young people with much more confidence. Ayumi drew the group’s attention to music which they may know or be interested in. Roshi noted that:

**“There was a sense that whilst there are roles in this project, nothing is too hierarchal and that we are all learning from each other.”**

M benefitted particularly from being around other female participants and leaders. She attended sporadically for a while which made developing anything difficult, though it appeared that she had genuine reasons for not being able to come every week, and was working on songs by adding lyrics and developing melodic and arrangement ideas between sessions. When phase two of the project started, M really started to flourish. She came to a block of sessions and recorded a very interesting, self-penned song, with a very nicely sung vocal line. The lyrics were personal - about trying to extricate herself from “a bad crowd” and finding solace in her own company. Roshi asked her about one line in particular: “if I were her daddy, I would be ashamed”. Why not mummy and why ashamed? She gave very thoughtful replies about cultural differences and different social environments.

Over the weeks M stepped up a gear and started attending multiple music opportunities in many different settings, taking up as many different projects as possible. She also gave a younger member of the group, J, positive feedback and encouragement, which was a nice peer learning moment.

J and her friend came to a session but they were very late, so Roshi and Ayumi were only able to spend a little bit of time with them. As they left the building however, Roshi and Ayumi noticed that the young women were busy writing lyrics. The following week J was alone but with more developed lyrics, ready to record them. Roshi noted that J was incredibly professional for someone so young and was the only young person on the project able to sing with a click track. She was also able to harmonise, and play a bit of keyboard (which she taught herself by ear). The track evolved very naturally and her friend, L, recorded vocals too. The song had a nice sentiment about 'being free' and 'being yourself' and seemed to mean a lot to the girls. J was able to create a counter harmony and she and L were invited to join in with singing a slightly older girl, E's song.

Though not a confident singer, E constructed a song which perfectly captured the mood of a romantic love song - the subject she said she wanted to explore from early on. She wanted Roshi to show her how to play the chords that she had been playing underneath her melody. Roshi showed her the bass part and she spent the rest of the evening practicing it. By the end of the week, she was at the point where she was able to play the bass line into the track on a controller keyboard.

When the project began it was anticipated that the young people from the Hanworth Centre would perform at the Roundhouse alongside other groups participating in the Get Connected initiative. As the project went on, it no longer seemed suitable for this relatively small-sized group to give a performance as such. However, plans are underway to visit the Roundhouse Studios for some recording and final mixing of the songs with a studio engineer.

Roshi said that she has enjoyed the project and has developed new skills as a result of it. She noted that it has reinforced her belief in the therapeutic power of music, particularly song-writing. Roshi wrote:

**“There were definitely periods where I was directive and hands-on, but over time I was very much able to step back and act as a kind of guardian of the process.”**

It is excellent to feel that Ayumi and the participants are able to continue on their own journeys and further develop their musical voices, and the project has clearly made a contribution towards this.

