

## **A passionate exchange – participation, power, progress and great music**

*Katherine Zeserson, Head of Community Music Development, Music Centre Gateshead*

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Music Centre Gateshead, in the North East of England, is pioneering an approach to music education that aims to bring together the key features of highest quality community music, music education, conservatoire practice, an international performance centre and creative laboratory.

The vision is of a centre for musical discovery, which acts as a source of energy for the whole Northern Region of England, recognising no hierarchy of musical forms or genres but rather seeking to encourage and support all citizens to embrace music as an active cultural tool, choosing musical languages according to their fitness for purpose.

The rigour of highest quality music education practice, the high aspirations engendered in a conservatoire context are combined with the democratic, creatively responsive character of best community music practice across a diverse range of projects and programmes. Our teaching and learning techniques developed in the community music context derive from a Freireian approach to development, based on ownership of learning process in the learner, and social motivation to excellence. We are committed to the synthesis of access and excellence, recognising no conflict or contradiction between them; rather aiming remove barriers to participation in order then to involve people in rigorous, challenging music making and learning activities in which they can set their aspirations as high as they dare.

Cultural diversity and community cohesion are key issues in our communities. We aim to illustrate how music can be a powerful tool in the rebuilding and development process, engendering strong, positive community bonds, as well as developing advanced skills, musical and social.

Community music both reflects and influences social reality. Teaching and learning activities in the community context offer participants a range of opportunities for growth, development and articulation, ranging from specific musical skills through to social and cultural extension and challenge. Community music projects and activities can offer the framework and tools for social and political expression, advocacy and enfranchisement. Equally, through a community music approach, people can become immersed in musical languages and activities they might otherwise never approach, and by experiencing music within their own wider community cultural context, can adopt it and make it their own.

This story is told through anecdote and video/CD illustration within a theoretical framework drawn with reference to the work and writing of Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal, Dorothy Heathcote, John Chernoff, John Stevens and the current research work of the author and her colleagues.

### **Brief biography:**

*Katherine Zeserson* is Head of Community Music Development for Music Centre Gateshead. She has a national reputation as a trainer and animateur working with voice, rhythm, percussion and improvisation, in a broad and diverse range of community and social contexts. Her experience in the formal education sector as a music animateur, voice teacher and choral trainer ranges from nursery to degree level. She has regularly taught on modules on arts management, community music, world music and social and political context at a number of Northern universities. She has been building practice and developing links between community development, music and education for 25 years.

Within her role at Music Centre Gateshead she is responsible for strategic direction of the Centre's community music programme, animateur/tutor-training programmes, work with under 5's and with older people, as well as collaborating with colleagues on developing school based and higher education programmes. She spent three years as Community and Education advisor to the Northern Sinfonia, and directs that work within Music Centre Gateshead. She also continues with some hands-on practice, and is currently setting up and working on an action research project with

under 5's, leading a folk/world music chamber choir, facilitating poetry and improvisation workshops bringing together older people and members of Northern Sinfonia, and teaching jazz voice to degree students.

Katherine Zeserson was born in New York, brought up in the West of Ireland, and has been resident in the North of England since 1984. She is a singer and percussionist, and is an admired and widely experienced performer of jazz, improvised music, blues and traditional song. Her first degree is in Philosophy and Psychology and her Masters degree is in Creative Writing. She has one teenage son.