

Worlds in Collision: Music and the Trauma of War

Saturday 29 June 2013, The Mansion House

TRANSCRIPT

Introduction – Ian Ritchie

Good morning everyone. A very warm welcome back to Mansion House, this absolutely wonderful building, which is home of the Lord Mayor. It's wonderful that the Lord Mayor is actually here with us today, along with the Lady Mayoress. It was yesterday when we kicked off with his welcoming words that set the scene for the conference; we enjoyed such a good first day. I'm just going to summarise that very, very briefly.

We were first welcomed by the modern music-making of the Band of the Adjutant General's Corps. This was then followed by Nigel Osborne's introduction, who drew upon his huge experience in setting the scene from community music-making through to music therapy in areas of conflict. He also spelled out the importance of neuroscience as an evidence base for the validity of the work in music addressing trauma. Major Guy Booth, who is the director of the Band of the Adjutant General's Corps, described his work with the band in raising the morale of the troops in Afghanistan and demonstrating the power of music to transform, and also the importance of choosing the right music for each situation across a wide range. Then Hugh McManners and Morten Kringelbach demonstrated and explained the importance of neuroscience, and in particular brain scanning, in identifying the nature of pain and the centres of pleasure and joy that are capable of supporting those with trauma, followed by their colleague Kira Vibe Jespersen, who also demonstrated the uses of music in helping those with trauma to sleep. Then Karen Diamond from Northern Ireland described the use of songwriting, drawing on her experience in the province, helping children who are victims of traumatic situations to express their fears, their needs and their hopes through music.

Then Nigel assisted the audience in creating a brand new song; this took about ten minutes! If 150 people can make a song in ten minutes, how does that compare with how long it took Schubert to write songs? I don't know, we'd have to do the mathematics. Ben Shephard discussed the history of the attempts both internationally and in the UK to come to terms with the traumas of war from shell shock to post-traumatic stress disorders. Professor Simon Wessely, who remains highly influential in the world of soldiers' trauma, debunked some of the myths surrounding post-traumatic stress disorders and argued for individual rather than generic diagnoses. Then Julie Sutton and Lord John Alderdice reflected on the uses of music therapy in Northern Ireland, in particular where words fail. Julie drew on her clinical experiences in Northern Ireland and in Bosnia-Herzegovina to emphasise the importance of the present moment and of the healing experience of time in the therapeutic process. Ann Sloboda, another professional music therapist, described her work with a group of traumatised patients from many contrasting backgrounds in

London and she demonstrated how sensitive co-improvisation gave participants a sense of safety, security and connection.

Finally there was a panel discussion of the relationship between creativity and the therapeutic importance of creativity. All I would say to that is that it is important to remember the enormous success and potential for Army musicians – who are with us today and who were with us yesterday – to play an active role in therapeutic processes in various communities. This is a really important point. It sets the scene for more of what we are to hear today. Clearly music is a relationship between composing, performing and listening; that creative triangle is all about music-making and it is undoubtedly therapeutic in every sense.

I'm going to hand over to Stephen, who is the leader of today's part of the conference. He is a wonderful broadcaster, musician, musicologist, and he's going to introduce some music-making into the discussions. But the discussions are going to be quite wide ranging; we are going to be seeing how music has been, and is, used in various ways, good and not so good, in relation to conflict. But we are also going to get artistic responses in different cultural contexts, including not just music but other arts in those different contexts. That will then draw us naturally back into the therapeutic role of music-making. The Army's most senior musician, Lieutenant Colonel Bob Meldrum, will draw upon his amazing and extended experience in music and in the process of healing. We look forward to his contribution very much and then finally to the concert tonight. Over to you, Stephen, and thank you all for being here.