

WINCHESTER CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL AND STANMORE SCHOOL

Try to imagine a class of lively (and somewhat street wise) 7 and 8 year olds engaging with Chamber Music. If you find that difficult then you are probably as sceptical as I was when approached by the organiser of the **Winchester Chamber Music Festival**. However, always eager to expose Stanmore pupils to new experiences, I accepted the Festival's offer and held my breath.

I need not have worried, for as soon as I met cellist Sam Glazer and his guitar playing assistant, Jack, I recognised that special something in them that over 30 years as a teacher has shown me is needed if you want to engage young minds and win their enthusiasm and hearts. (Don't believe anyone who tells you anybody can be a teacher because it's just not true. The X factor is necessary! Sam and Jack had it in spades!)

With obvious musical expertise, patience and a love of what they were doing these two musicians enabled our pupils to write their own song and perform this confidently to the other classes in the school, and, later in the day, to parents and members of the public in the Discovery Centre. How they loved it when Sam and Jack got their mums and dads to have a go too!

They were somewhat overwhelmed, or may be I should say awestruck, during the private performance by Ivan Ludlow and Daniel Tong from the London Bridge Ensemble. What was interesting was how receptive they were to this new form, Chamber music. Sam and Jack's workshop had obviously sown some seed of understanding of the genre and I was thrilled that they were able to appreciate the music in such a mature way. They were keen to ask Ivan and Daniel questions, showing a new found confidence, which was also displayed in their own performance.

After our Chamber Music debut, we walked back to school through the streets of Winchester. There were the usual discussions about how great the biscuits and drinks were, and whose mum or dad was there and who felt nervous before singing. And what about the baritone's voice? It was along a quiet back street that we noticed a poster stuck to the wall. "Winchester Chamber Music Festival", read diminutive Callum. "I was in that!" he said proudly.

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