



Working for Health

Creative Arts and Health

Presenter

Issues relating to creative arts and health. To begin, we visit the Pan Project in Camden, London, where a group of school children are learning to play Indonesian music. John Martin, the project coordinator.

John

A gamelan is a set of tuned bronze percussion instruments from Indonesia and the one which we are playing is a Balinese angklung gamelan. It has a series of gongs which are the baseline, and then the other instruments are either sets of tuned bells which are like sort of upturned balls which are played, and the other instruments are then like four key xylophones.

Child

It makes you feel like you're part of a group and you all work together as a team to play it. It's like a jigsaw puzzle it fits together with more than one person.

Andy

My name's Andy Channing and I spend my life teaching gamelan. Children when they learn to play gamelan, grow in confidence, enormously. Quite often children who who don't really get the full support of their teachers, maybe they they they find an aptitude for playing gamelan, and they really increase in confidence. Megan, she's been playing now for about three years and she was very timid when I first met her now she's, you can't stop her, she's really come out of herself and she's really confident. And I've noticed this with a lot of children, they're given a chance to work together as a group that they play gamelan they become used to interacting with other children and taking on responsibility, and I normally talk about not just the musical aspects but the kind of philosophical aspect behind and the social aspects and what it's from what it's like for the people in those countries.

Child

You know that you're doing something from another culture. You don't just learn about how to play an instrument you learn about the instrument, its beliefs, and the beliefs of the peoples, cultures that it comes from.

ACTUALITY

Andy

It's a very social activity, and the best gamelan groups are the groups that that meet together socially as well just playing, but also I think this the therapeutic aspects in the music itself I think just being around the sound of the gongs I think is very kind of very therapeutic.

Child

It's fairly calming as well, and it helps you to calm down. It's calming music to play even though it's a war song, a warrior song that we're playing at the moment, it's very calming.

Child

I've never played gamelan before and I don't know if I'll be able to do it again. It'll be a once in a lifetime experience maybe, and probably for other people. So I'll be able to tell my pa my parents and I'll be able to, when I'm in the Albert Hall, and I can say that I've played in the Albert Hall, and I'll just be proud of myself.

John

Through being able to play a piece of music they're also more able to come and ask you a question, they're also more able to talk about what they have done. It's as if you are sort of opening up a channel for them and a means for them to re-balance themselves within their social group. On perhaps an even more basic level the teaching of things like rhythm, I have seen people and heard people say well since we've been learning the rhythm work with you, the way that I behave in my everyday life is calmer, my breathing is calmer. The way I walk to school is calmer, I actually play rhythm games with myself and make sure that I'm in a nice calm rhythm as I walk to school. So there are several things, I think particularly in music, which actually have a directly therapeutic effect on the body, so that they feel more at ease with themselves, and this is to me a very strong way of creating a healthy young person.