

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL  
DIOCESE OF ARUNDEL AND BRIGHTON

## St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

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Headteacher  
Mrs E Walsh

February 2007

To whom it may concern

During the week beginning 15<sup>th</sup> January 2007 I was fortunate to work with Nikhil Dally during our Music Week: a joint Gamelan and Shadow Puppetry residency at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Redhill.

I benefited enormously from Nikhil's willingness to support the planning process. Through face-to-face discussions and regular email contact we were able to move from a simple 'every child will play the Gamelan' to working towards a combined Gamelan and Shadow-puppetry residency (inviting a 'dalang' to join the team). This enabled us to give the children a broader appreciation of the culture of Java, and our Year 5 and 6 an opportunity to work towards a performance at the end of the week.

The week was very tightly timetabled, with after school workshops for staff, parents and students from our local secondary school. Despite this exhausting workload Nikhil established a wonderful working atmosphere with all the groups he worked with – easily adapting his approach according to the age, ability and confidence of the participants. Our children were entranced by the sounds of the instruments and the sheer pleasure of being surrounded by them as they played. Feedback from all the adults involved was glowing. The only criticism – they wish they could have done more!

Nikhil's organisational skills and attention to detail are exemplary, taking the guesswork out of the planning and budgeting process. I have no hesitation in recommending him to you as I feel sure that your school, your pupils and your community would benefit from the musical experience a gamelan residency led by him would offer.

Sarah Lewis  
Subject Leader: Music  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
Redhill



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE





**BOYNE HILL SCHOOL**  
Head Teacher: Jenny Stephen

23.5.07

To whom it may concern:

Nikhil Dally brought his wonderful gamelan to the school for two weeks, and worked with children from our year 2 classes and also from across the age ranges from All Saints Junior School.

All the groups he worked with had a stimulating and enjoyable experience: he struck up an immediate rapport with the children, who responded positively to his clear and inspirational teaching. The concert piece which some of the year 2 children performed for their parents during our Spring Concert was truly wonderful, receiving many congratulatory comments from the parents.

The children still talk about the experience. We are very much hoping to work with Nikhil again soon.

Jenny Stephen

# Yearning with Tigers



ROYAL ALBERT HALL

**Gamelan and dance at the Schools Gala Concert, Royal Albert Hall, June 1998. By Judith Sumner**

In October 1997 all Hertfordshire schools were invited to participate in the Schools' Gala Concert at the Royal Albert Hall. The second half of the concert was to consist of a massed choir performance of a choral work. The first half, however, was to be made up of items from individual schools who were lucky enough to be chosen to perform. Contributions were invited.

As headteacher of Lannock JMI School, a primary school in Hertfordshire, I was very keen that we should offer a contribution, for two reasons. First, I wanted to promote the gamelan clubs that I run in school. We have a small resident gamelan, owned by myself and Richard Pickvance, and gamelan is part of the culture of the school.

Second, I have great aspirations for our children, who are drawn from an area of economic and social deprivation and do not have naturally high expectations of themselves. The staff and governors of my school and I are determined that our children should achieve the best, along with children from other schools. The Royal Albert Hall Schools' Gala Concert seemed too good an opportunity to miss.

However, although a gamelan addict and a reasonable musician, I did not have the expertise to get the project off the ground myself. I therefore asked Nikhil Dally, who is my own gamelan tutor and also tutor at the Hertfordshire Gamelan in Stevenage, to become involved. We were interested in bringing together different aspects of the arts, and eventually chose to combine poetry written by the children, gamelan, singing, dance, and, of all things, avant-garde recorder techniques. Nikhil agreed to compose a piece which combined all of these elements.

This sounded to me like an impossible challenge, but knowing Nikhil I knew that he would come up with something good. He liaised with Helen Walker (Recorder Director), and Gill Roberts (Choreographer) about technicalities; was supplied with poetry written by nine year olds in the school; and set off to compose the piece. The end result was called 'Yearning With Tigers' and was based around this text:

*I would like to dance  
in the brown golden corn  
I would like to hear the moon cry  
at night  
Roaring with the lions  
and the tigers in the darkness  
I would like to finish  
the human race.*

When I heard Nikhil's demonstration tape I realised that the piece he had created was not just 'good'; it was a work of genius! It was haunting, rich, dramatic and completely original. All of the elements worked together perfectly and, what is more, all of it was within the performing capabilities of young children.

We had to work to a tight timescale to get the children ready for the performance. Initially we worked separately, with Nikhil on gamelan, Helen on recorders, Gill on dance and me on singing. The first time we brought the groups together we realised what a success the performance was going to be.

There were 36 children altogether and the performance had to be of the highest possible standard. Expectations of the children were probably the highest they had ever experienced in terms of total giving of themselves. Nikhil was

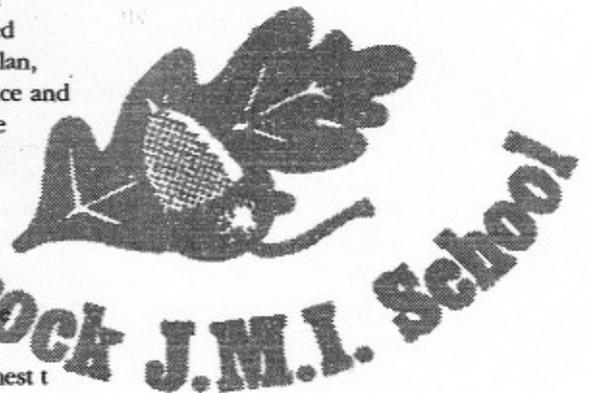
masterly in communicating these expectations.

On Saturday 6th June we took the children and some of their families to the Royal Albert Hall for the final rehearsal. Many of the children had never visited London and had no idea of what to expect. As they entered the empty hall and saw the vast arrays of seats, there were some sharp intakes of breath as they realised exactly where they would be performing that night.

We were on first and the hall was packed. The children walked on to the stage like professionals and took their places. The piece began, led by Nikhil who was in complete control and who compelled all of the performers to have total confidence. The children's determination to excel themselves was obvious. Needless to say, the performance was a huge triumph and received thunderous applause.

Afterwards the children were full of themselves. They talked about it to anyone who would listen and are still talking about it now.

That night, several thousand people heard gamelan for the first time, and it was our children who made that possible.





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Nikhil Dally  
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19<sup>th</sup> October 2006

Dear Nikhil

I was very sorry not to see you yesterday but, as I expect Pauline explained, I was at a conference. I have received your invoice and forwarded it to County Hall for payment.

On my arrival this morning I received a very nice email from Jane Phillips (Head of Music at Holmer Green Senior School) thanking me for allowing her pupils to attend the Gamelan workshop yesterday. Her complimentary comments were typical of many of the remarks made by teachers and pupils over this past half term.

Thank you so much for allowing us to host the residency and providing such a valuable insight into this wonderful and in many ways mysterious form of music making. Many hundreds of children have benefited enormously from your inspiring and thoughtful teaching and I am delighted that after a number of attempts we finally managed to get it together and make it happen!.

I hope that we may well be able to repeat a similar project in the future. Until then, all good wishes for the future and the imminent arrival of number four.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Simon Salisbury  
Headteacher, High Wycombe Music Centre

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Date: 26 September 2006



**WOKINGHAM  
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Dear Nikhil,

**'GAMELAN' PROJECT – SUMMER 2006**

I write to thank you for all your hard work which once again made the gamelan residency a great success. I have had many positive comments both verbally and in writing from headteachers and music coordinators and I know that pupils and staff enjoyed and benefited from the sessions. We now have a group of teachers and schools who have become regular supporters and have taken part in the 2002, 2004 and now 2006 residencies!

If I were to pick out some particular strengths of the residency, one is that you offer to work with Year 2 pupils and quite a few schools took up this offer – pupils of this age and their teachers seem to engage really well with the gamelan and get a lot out of it. Another strength has been the work with pupils from our all age special school who have taken part for the first time this year. The special school staff commented on the high quality of the tuition and noted that pupils with a wide variety of needs found the sessions to be of great benefit.

From a Council perspective, it was good that we had so many pupils attending workshops during the four weeks. We filled almost every available slot, so, as well as the high quality work, we are reaching a large number of pupils. This was partly possible because you were able to provide 'deps' for various sessions when you were not available yourself. Will you please pass on my thanks to your colleagues?

I am happy to recommend you to others looking for a service of this type and for you to use this letter to show others how pleased we were with the outcomes.

In principle, we are once again considering another gamelan residency in Summer 2008, but we think that we need to move to a new venue, or perhaps two different venues for two weeks each with a move in the middle? We will need to discuss this nearer the time.

Thanks again for all your support.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Congdon".

David Congdon  
Senior Adviser – ICT/Music

## The *Gamelan* visits Greneway Middle School, Royston

As the lights dimmed, a hush settled on the packed hall. For the first time in most of their lives, the two hundred people in the audience were enveloped by the magical and hypnotic sounds of the Javanese *Gamelan*.

Parents are used to seeing intense concentration on the faces of their children when they are performing in concerts. This concentration however was different: there was an even more intense energy. Having to keep in time, change speed and volume, maintain an independent rhythm and detect and respond instantly to the directions of the drummer focused attention even more than usual.

After a couple of minute's music had gently created the right mood, attention turned to the white sheet of the shadow puppet theatre. As the story unfolded, Meg, Mog and Owl came to life. Each scene was reflected by the varying music of the *Gamelan* as the heroes could be seen walking up and down hills, climbing the castle steps, trembling before the ghastly ghost, battling with the green knight and celebrating victory with their new friend the white knight. The audience was delighted. Taken altogether the experience had been greater than the sum of its parts. Story, lighting, shadow puppets and the *gamelan* had all contributed to what will certainly be a life-long memory for everyone present.

We borrowed the *pelog* half of the County *Gamelan* from Stevenage Music Centre at the end of February, and the concert was six weeks later at the beginning of April. The plan was to have a day with Nikhil Dally, the County *Gamelan* tutor early in the half term, and then another day of sessions with Nikhil five weeks later just before the concert. Normally *gamelan* groups are sixteen pupils at the most and that would certainly be the best size for efficient teaching. Working with such small groups would have been too expensive in terms of staffing for the school budget to manage, and Nikhil agreed exceptionally to try working with whole classes of 26 children with their form teacher. This made it possible for three classes and their teacher to use the *Gamelan* under the expert tuition of Nikhil, which was a great INSET opportunity. Those class teachers were also able to practice with their children between Nikhil's visits. In addition there was a smaller fourth group of

children from all years which had three sessions with Nikhil. This group was made up of members of the school orchestra who already had more advanced basic musical skills and who were specially interested. Each group worked on the music for a different section of the story, and during the performance the players exchanged places between the scenes whilst Nikhil played variations on the gender (a *glockenspiel* often used as a solo instrument).

Just before the concert fate struck an alarming blow in the form of a virus and severe bronchitis which attacked Nikhil, the Art Teacher whose art club was making the puppets, and several performing children. However, Nikhil nobly struggled to Royston on the day of the concert and took over the drums for the final rehearsal, the puppets' limbs were hastily self-otaped and paper-clipped into working order, and all was well.

This was a marvellous opportunity, and one which I am sure we wish to repeat. During its six weeks at Greneway, the *gamelan* was played at least once by over 600 people, on at least four occasions by over 400 people, and frequently (about twice a week) by about thirty people. It was used in music lessons as well as during lunch times and after-school music clubs.

The benefits of the *Gamelan*'s visit have been widespread though not startling:

- a greater awareness of structure;
- choosing deliberately to damp glock and cymbal notes at definite moments;
- improved awareness of others in keeping time;
- much better at playing deliberately off the beat;
- better Year 8 effort at playing independent parts in time;
- improved understanding of scale;
- thinking of notes as numbers and degrees as well as by letter-names.