

# MUSIC FUND FOR CUBA

Newsletter 2016

## 'NOW WE HAVE AIR'

AFTER EIGHTEEN years without a base or performance space, Cuba's prestigious Enchanted Stag theatre company finally have a venue to rehearse and perform thanks to support from the Music Fund for Cuba.

Enchanted Stag (El Ciervo Encantado) was formed in 1996 and has gone on to become one of the island's most respected theatre companies, winning national and international awards.

Despite receiving artistic accolades, like many arts organisations in Cuba the company suffered from limited resources: "For the first eleven years we rehearsed in a classroom at the university, and then for a further eight years we found space in a dilapidated building which didn't even have a toilet," says Nelda Castillo, actor, founder and current director general of the Enchanted Stag Company.

The new theatre, situated on

18th Street in Vedado, took six months to renovate, with the company involved in everything from designing the rooms to helping with the building work.

"Now we have a great space for performances which will also be used by other organisations and community groups - a dressing room, storage space for props, an office and a toilet for the first time in 18 years," boasts Nelda.

The flexible space has room for 122 raked seats, 150 for children's shows when kids also sit on cushions on the floor, and 300 for flexible performances in the round. Admission, as with all arts in Cuba is subsidised. Tickets cost 5 to 8 Cuban pesos for children and adults, roughly equivalent to 12 to 20 pence.

The Music Fund for Cuba's contribution to the restoration was the nine air conditioning units positioned around the ceiling in the new theatre. "It might seem like a small



Director, Nelda Castillo (far left), with fellow performers of the Enchanted Stag company

thing," said Nelda, "but it makes a massive difference in so many ways."

"With the Cuban heat, especially in the summer, it becomes unbearably hot to rehearse. And as far as audiences go: 'Do you have air conditioning?' is one of

the first questions we get asked. People stay away if you don't have air conditioning as it's too hot to watch the shows when the theatre is full." "But now it's great," she smiles.

"Thanks to the Music Fund, now we have air!"

## CELEBRATING PROGRESS

IN 2015 the Music Fund for Cuba donated specially commissioned medals to a school for children with physical disabilities. The Solidarity with Panama school, situated on the outskirts of Havana, was founded in 1989 and currently has 186 students with special physical needs supported by 107 dedicated staff.

The medals will be used in 2016 to support an annual sports and awards day where the children's progress and achievements are celebrated. The school and students have a close and longstanding relationship with Gerardo Hernández, one of the Miami Five prisoners, with whom they corresponded during his 16 years imprisonment in a US prison. On his release, as he had promised in numerous letters, Gerardo visited the school for their awards day and noticed there was nothing to mark the achievements. So, together with headteacher Esther María La Ochoa, they approached the Music Fund to help.



Students showing off their medals with School director Esther María La Ochoa, Gerardo Hernandez, and cyclists on the 2015 Cuba Cycle Challenge

School Director, Esther La'O (as she is known by students), sent a message to the Music Fund for Cuba and all donors thanking them for their "exceptional donation of friendship and solidarity".

# New studio for music students



Trustee, Nick Gold, is shown some of the equipment purchased by the Music Fund for Cuba and currently being installed at the recording studio at the University of the Arts (ISA) Faculty of Music

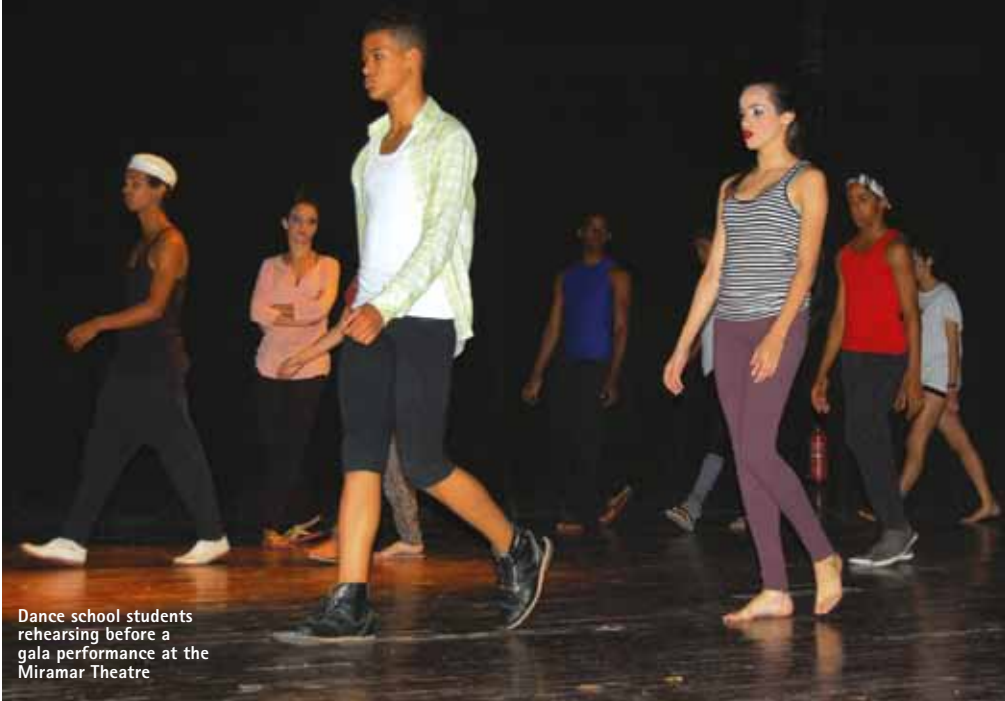
A DONATION of over £20,000 has been made to Havana's University of the Arts (ISA) Music Department to buy equipment for a new recording studio. The studio will be used to teach students sound mixing and music production as well as enabling them to record their own compositions. Until now, they had to borrow old and out of date equipment.

Music Fund trustee, Nick Gold, who has huge experience in this field through his work at World Circuit records and producer of the Buena Vista Social Club

album said: "It's great to see the studio taking shape and to see how excited staff and students are to finally have the possibility to work with state of the art equipment. This studio will be a real boon to their learning experience and will help ready them for contributing to Cuban cultural development and for working within this fast moving industry."

Dr Rolando Gonzalez Patricio, Rector of ISA, said that the donation "will greatly benefit the quality of education we deliver to our students" and sent "sincere thanks" on behalf of the university.

# Miramar Theatre goes from strength to strength



Dance school students rehearsing before a gala performance at the Miramar Theatre

THE MIRAMAR THEATRE has developed into a cherished cultural centre for both the surrounding community and students of the nearby national music and arts schools since reopening with Music Fund funding in 2012.

More than £270,000 was donated over a seven year fundraising drive – the biggest Music Fund for Cuba project to date.

Twenty permanent workers including a director, artistic advisor, programmer, cleaners, ushers and administrative staff oversee a busy mixed programme of community performances, touring shows by national and international artists, cinema, and graduation performances by students. The space is rarely empty and performances have risen from 90 in 2012 to 339 in 2014. Rafael Perez Malo, Vice President of the National Council of Performing Arts says that students from the schools use the space to rehearse and perform, which provides them with invaluable experience in front of live audiences. Subsidised ticket sales help to raise funds for the theatre's general maintenance, however, Cuba's cultural policy of ensuring affordable access to quality arts events means that the theatre receives 70 per cent of its funding directly from government, and all projects with the arts schools are fully funded.

"It is not our ethos to make money out of the arts" says Rafael. "Cuba's cultural policy is to focus on the provision of free arts education to those who have talent, not money."

## ¡PRESENTE! Contemporary Art from Cuba 6-29 October 2016, London



THE MUSIC FUND FOR CUBA will introduce a taste of Cuba's exciting current art scene to the UK in October 2016. This unique and rare exhibition of 50 artworks and educational events will include paintings, works on paper and photography by internationally respected artists including Luis Camejo, Kcho and Roberto Diago to emerging young stars such as Niels Reyes and Lisandra Isabel Garcia. Working with the Cuban Ministry for Culture and GX Gallery in London, sales of the works will help fund arts educational projects across Cuba.



Tess and Dec Sanderson asked their wedding guests to donate to the Music Fund instead of giving gifts

## Fundraising thanks

A MASSIVE thanks to all of the supporters who have donated to the Music Fund for Cuba over the last few months. As well as individual and group donations to our work we are also grateful for all of those who have organised fundraising activities. A special thanks to Annie O'Leary who undertook a year of sponsored activities for us and has set up a Cuban film and cultural night in Birmingham in support of the Music Fund. Also to Oxford based Ran Kan Kan Cuban style big band for their fundraising gigs, local Cuba Solidarity Campaign groups for regular donations to our work, Voces de Cuba, and to Tess and Dec Sanderson who asked guests at their wedding to donate to the Music Fund instead of buying presents. Please get in contact if you would like to fundraise for the Music Fund for Cuba, or have an activity or sponsored event you would like us to publicise on our website.



## School visit for sponsored cyclists

Riders on the Cycle Cuba Challenge were welcomed by staff and students at the Abel Santamaria School of Blind and Visually Impaired Children in November 2015. The school, which provides specialised care for 145 children aged from 4-14, is a long term partner of the Music Fund.

Music and dance play an important role in developing the children's confidence and expression and this year requested that the sponsored cyclists raised funds for instruments including a new drum kit and bass guitar.

Mike Hedges was one of the cyclists who helped to raise over £3,000 for equipment: "Donating musical instruments is a small thing but you can immediately see just how welcome these donations are here."

■ Contact the Music Fund to find out about the sponsored cycle challenge in Cuba in 2017.

A student tries out a new drum kit donated by sponsored cyclists

## New life for old violins



Violins and other assorted musical equipment are being put to good use in Cuba thanks to donations by supporters in Leicester.

Michael Gerard and his partner Caroline Moles, organised the donation from the remainder of stock used by the former peripatetic music teachers, who gave free tuition to children.

"What was a tragedy for Leicestershire with the disappearance of free music lessons will now benefit other young people who desperately need them," says Caroline.

Michael said: "Music is very much an essential part of Cuba's cultural heritage but, for various reasons, not least the continuing economic blockade of the island by the US, it is difficult to buy even the most basic of arts supplies and materials, let alone musical instruments."

Eusebio Leal, Havana City Historian and director of the restoration program of Old Havana, thanked the Music Fund for Cuba for the donations: "We will use the instruments for children across the city to help develop our ongoing music education programmes for all."

Yes, I'd like to make a donation to the Music Fund for Cuba

Full name   
Address   
  
 Postcode  
Email   
Phone

Here's my gift of:

£10  £20  £50  £ Other amount

Please tick here if you would like the Music Fund for Cuba to reclaim the tax that you have paid on this and any future donations you may make.\*

Signed  Date

Cheque enclosed (payable to Music Fund for Cuba)

Please debit my credit/debit card

Credit/debit card number

Start date  M M Y Y Expiry date  M M Y Y

Switch cards only: Issue No.  Valid from  M M Y Y

3 digit security code

\*In order for The Music Fund for Cuba to reclaim the tax you have paid on your donation(s) you must have paid income or capital gains tax (in the UK) equal to the tax that will be claimed (currently 20p for every £1 you give).

## Leave a lasting legacy – Miramar theatre seat plaques

For just £150 you can have your own plaque on a seat in the Kirsty MacColl auditorium at the Miramar Theatre in Havana. More than sixty plaques have already been dedicated by individual supporters, trade unions and groups, all of which will help fund future Music Fund for Cuba projects.

The plaques are a perfect gift for family and friends, or as a commemoration or dedication, or on behalf of a trade union, organisation or business to show their support for Cuba.

Each gold coloured plaque carries your own choice of wording of up to 140 characters in black print and will be fixed to the back of a seat in the Miramar main auditorium.



### APPLY FOR YOUR DEDICATED SEAT PLAQUE TODAY

Name

Address

Postcode

Tel  Email

The message you would like to appear on your plaque...

Please return with a cheque made payable to the Music Fund for Cuba or pay by credit card by calling 0207 490 5715 or emailing [info@musicfundforcuba.org.uk](mailto:info@musicfundforcuba.org.uk)

The Music Fund for Cuba was first established in memory of singer Kirsty MacColl in January 2001. Kirsty, who was killed in an accident in December 2000, had been hugely inspired by Cuban music and culture and campaigned against the injustice of the blockade.

Her mother Jean MacColl and friends approached Cuba Solidarity Campaign to set up the Fund. The Fund became a fully registered charity in February 2003.

Cuba is well known for its rich cultural traditions. Its music and performing arts are enjoyed by people around the world, but this heritage and the future artistic development are threatened by a lack of basic tools and materials. Violin strings, paper for music scores, ballet shoes, paints and other small but essential items are all in short supply. The main reason for these shortages is the continuing economic blockade of the island by the United States.

### The aims of the Music Fund for Cuba are:

To advance the education of the public, in particular children and young people, by the supply of musical equipment and materials to students, music schools and performing artists within Cuba.

If you are interested in helping the Music Fund or have ideas for fundraising projects in your local community please do not hesitate to contact Director, Rob Miller.

Your support today could make a world of difference to young Cuban musicians and artists.

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Charity Director: R.Miller

Supporting Cuban music and arts

Music Fund For Cuba

Registered Charity No. 1096283



Please complete the appropriate section and return this form to:  
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or ask friends to support your fundraising for us via [www.justgiving.com/mffc/donate/](http://www.justgiving.com/mffc/donate/)