

*I am writing this listening to the rehearsal for our first concert in Winchester. This should be a inspiring evening as we have a couple of 'new' ex-prisoners performing as well as couple of 'old hands'. These concerts are always a high point of our work for me as we see the fruits of lives that are changed and how these lives can inspire us.*



*As usual the rehearsal is a mixture of things coming together, laughter, nerves and mild panic as the PA develops a mind of its own or someone decides to introduce a new song ten minutes before the show. If you have been to one of our concerts you may not realise that the rehearsal for the show only takes place on the afternoon before the gig – with musicians who have sometimes never met before!*

*I sometimes wonder what makes these events so powerful, apart from the great music! I am sure it has something to do with forgiveness. We live in times where forgiveness is often seen as a weakness, and where people are valued by what they can do, or what they own rather than who they are. Ex-prisoners who communicate with us so powerfully through stories and song help us connect with them as people, and enable us to share their hope – a hope that is built on forgiveness.*

*We live in a society that is obsessed with measuring and providing empirical evidence for the value of things. Yet how much is a redeemed life worth? Prisoners and ex-prisoners are so often seen as a problem rather than as people. I hope this newsletter shows how we are trying to address this issue and bring hope to what seem to be hopeless places.*

*Dim* Director

# intro

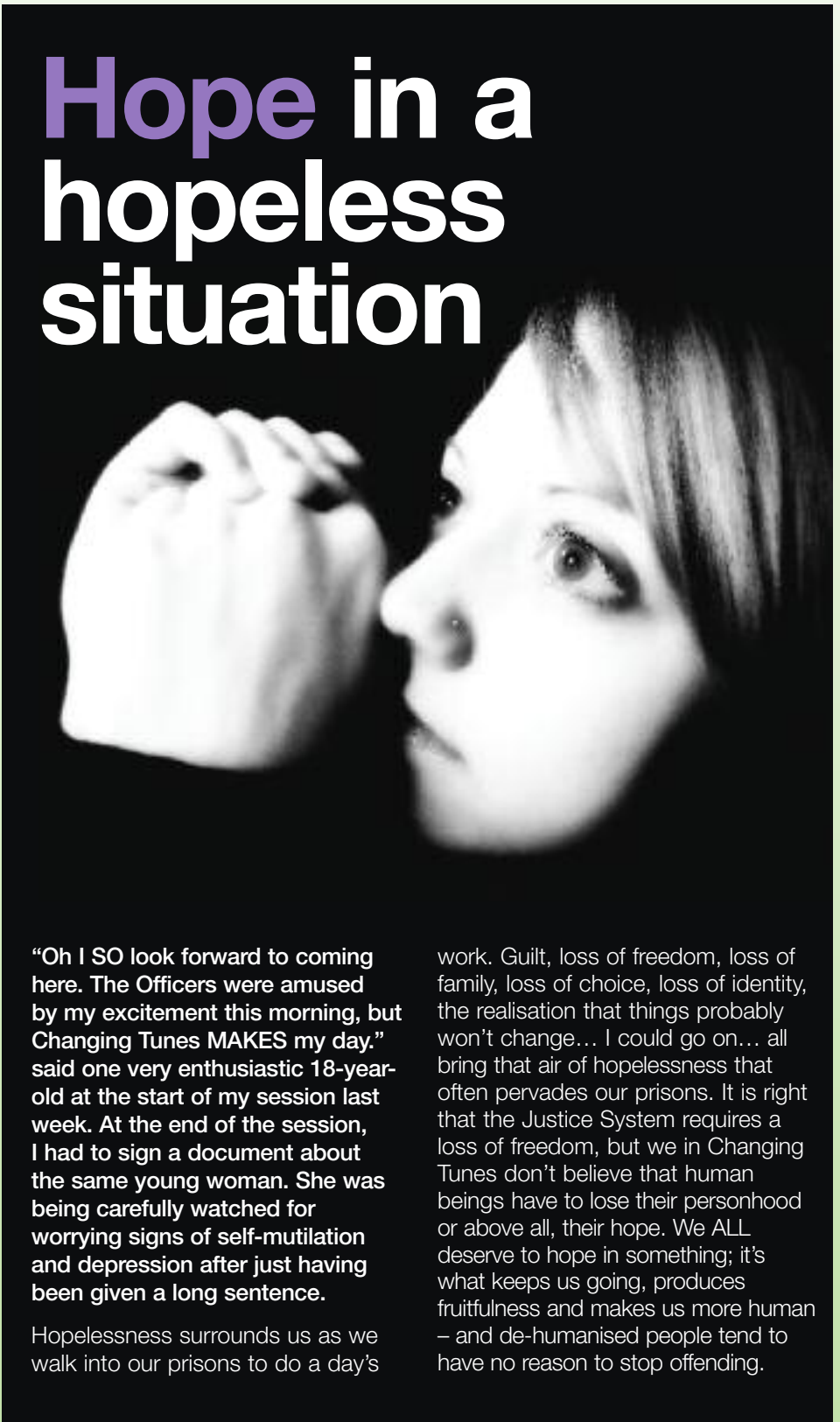
The Changing Tunes Newsletter **Spring 10**

## Hope in a hopeless situation

**"Oh I SO look forward to coming here. The Officers were amused by my excitement this morning, but Changing Tunes MAKES my day."** said one very enthusiastic 18-year-old at the start of my session last week. At the end of the session, I had to sign a document about the same young woman. She was being carefully watched for worrying signs of self-mutilation and depression after just having been given a long sentence.

Hopelessness surrounds us as we walk into our prisons to do a day's

work. Guilt, loss of freedom, loss of family, loss of choice, loss of identity, the realisation that things probably won't change... I could go on... all bring that air of hopelessness that often pervades our prisons. It is right that the Justice System requires a loss of freedom, but we in Changing Tunes don't believe that human beings have to lose their personhood or above all, their hope. We ALL deserve to hope in something; it's what keeps us going, produces fruitfulness and makes us more human – and de-humanised people tend to have no reason to stop offending.



Many prisoners and ex-prisoners have experienced little hope from birth or childhood, being treated without affection, care and respect, and without ever knowing what it is to be nurtured in a mature, thought-through way. It is these people that we Musicians and other staff, are drawn to. We work with challenging, despairing, angry human beings, and we aim to bring them fresh HOPE and purpose through music – rehearsals, performance, and recordings. But not only is it about the music; we aim to treat each person as an individual with a voice and with a life that we are interested in, and care about.

The girl that I quoted at the start of this piece is a creative young woman, who could go two ways in her life spent in prison. She could have a purposeful sentence, that brings out her inherent creativity, and gives her HOPE, and she could be treated with respect and care, being seen as someone who can grow and develop as a person. Or she could be treated differently from this, in a way that robs her of her own respect for herself and of any hope that she has of developing and becoming a more rounded human being. We in Changing Tunes believe passionately in the first way. We see it work radically and in some cases the results are incredible.



**It's been a busy five years for David since we met him in Guy's Marsh prison. His talent and enthusiasm for singing were obvious right from the start and he has been a regular at our concerts ever since. Gareth caught up with him to talk about the big picture.**

**GH: What have been the highlights of the last few years since your release?**

**DC:** Performing in front of people, particularly the Beatles tribute

## Looking back, looking forward

concerts – being able to stand up, sober, and do gigs to raise funds by singing songs that I've loved for a long time. A dream come true was learning to play guitar, which has been amazing. It has helped me to write songs, which I didn't realise I had the gift to do.

**GH: How do you go about writing songs?**

**DC:** I always had melodies in my head but I didn't know how to get them out. When I learnt to play some chords they just came out – stuff that had needed to come out for a long time. A lot of the songs are about my journey in recovery. I don't know where they come from but they come out fairly quickly.

**GH: What has been the key to positive changes in your life?**

**DC:** Number one is sobriety. Without sobriety there's nothing, so

that comes first before everything. I keep very close to my fellowship and take one day at a time.

**GH: What ambitions do you have for the future?**

**DC:** I'm excited about making an album. Being a recovering alcoholic and drug addict I'm constantly over-critical of myself, and a perfectionist by heart so I have to learn to accept the level I'm at and just to do my best. I really just want to build on what I'm already doing. I'm playing guitar now in my local church, which I'd never dreamed I could do. I'd like to keep raising awareness of Changing Tunes, to raise funding to get into more prisons and help more people. I've done concerts for a few hundred people and I've got ambitions of filling the Colston Hall, maybe a slot at Ashton Court... and Wembley!



# Beatles tribute gig



The idea for the event came from David, a very talented singer who we've worked with since 2005 when we met in Guys Marsh prison (see Looking Back, Looking Forward). David discovered and developed his vocal skills while singing along to Beatles records and since then he has held an ambition to do a whole concert of Beatles material. He also wanted to put on an event to raise money for Changing Tunes and suggested doing this concert as a fundraiser.

Careering through two hours of music that included 33 of the best-known Beatles songs, the band didn't have to try too hard to get the audience participating, and the 350-strong crowd had clearly come ready for a good night out, singing along from start to finish. Thank you to all who were there for making it so much fun – all our hard work was worth it!

Playing alongside David were Changing Tunes musicians Gareth, Jonathan, Matt, Ralph, Myrtle and Hannah, and volunteers Liam and Neil. It is testament to the skill of our musicians that they were able to pull off such an ambitious performance with so few rehearsals. Matt and Hannah had not actually met Liam and Neil until the afternoon of the concert, and it's this seat-of-the-pants approach that is necessary



when working in a prison environment, but also essential for keeping costs down when putting on an event like this.

A surprise for David came in the form of a Louis Sherwood Award for Recording, presented by our founder and Chair of Trustees Richard Pendlebury. Louis was a friend and supporter who left a legacy to Changing Tunes, and part of that legacy will go to awards for ex-prisoners who have a key involvement in recording projects. David's award, the first to be given, was for the Beatles EP that we sold at the concert.

The event raised over £3,000 in tickets, CD sales, and the auction of a pair of drumsticks, very kindly donated and signed by Nick Mason of Pink Floyd. This money will go a long way to funding our work in Bristol prison over the coming year. We are also hoping to release a recording of the concert as an album, which will help support our on going work in Bristol and further afield.

In typical fashion, our Director Tim is already looking for ways to better this event and there are plans to book a larger venue for a concert that combines the popularity of a tribute concert with the gritty, heart-rending aspects of a "normal" Changing Tunes concert where ex-prisoners tell their stories between the musical items. Watch this space!

## Beatles EP – on sale now!

We still have a number of copies of the fabulous EP of Beatles covers recorded by the band who played at the Beatles Tribute gig. This is a 'must-have' memento for anyone who came to the concert – and indeed for anyone who didn't make it to remind you to come along next time!

Get your copy by sending a cheque for £3 (inc. P&P) to Changing Tunes, PO Box 2646 BRISTOL BS6 9BU or by PayPal via our website – our PayPal address is: [info@changingtunes.org.uk](mailto:info@changingtunes.org.uk) **Please ensure you let us know what you are ordering – otherwise we will assume it is a donation!**





If you have ever wanted to find out what is happening in the world of Changing Tunes, see what events we have planned, meet the team, or even listen to some of the great music the prisoners and ex-prisoners have produced, where better to go than Changing Tunes' own website?

We have plans to expand the website this year with more news and music – so do pay us a visit.

Those of you who regularly receive updates on our work will have received a copy of the campaign booklet *Close to the Edge*, funded by Sappi Paper. This has been sent to all MPs, members of the House of Lords and prisons in England and Wales. This booklet, challenges decision makers to look at how they can help re-personalise the criminal justice system.

## Steiner School Concert Feedback



On 20th March, the Bristol Steiner School once again kindly put on a fundraising concert for Changing Tunes. It was the turn of the women this time, with two Year 11 girls being joined by two girls from other local schools, performing music from Bach to the Beatles. Myrtle & Hannah from Changing Tunes came along and played with Emma, an ex-prisoner.

There was a special guest spot for Emma who not only sang beautifully, but also answered questions from the girls about her experience of prison when not much older than them and how music had helped her. All the performers had a keen sense of how scary it is to play and sing in front of a packed hall. Some younger members of the school ran a raffle and one of the winners gave Emma his prize in appreciation of her musical talent and honesty. Altogether with the ticket sales, the raffle, and drinks, the school raised a fantastic £740 for us – an amazing result for such a tiny school! Well done Emma, Steiner school girls, and many thanks to Beryl who organised it all for us.

Our work is not target driven; it is defined by the rehabilitative needs of the person. Anyone involved with rehabilitated prisoners will know that some form of personal support is virtually always at the heart of a prisoner's motivation to change – yet as work in prisons becomes more 'prescribed' and target driven this type of work becomes less likely to happen.



Having had a very encouraging response from the booklet from MP's prisons and supporters, we will be following it up with a conference in London on the 19th October this year, aimed at those who fund Voluntary Sector-led work in prisons as well as key decision-makers in the government and in the prisons. We will let you know how the event went in our autumn newsletter.

## A greener Changing Tunes

**No, not the logo or the newsletter, they are quite green enough...**

We are always looking at ways that we can reduce the amount of bits of paper we produce here at Changing Tunes. To that end, we are trying to build up our e-mailing lists so that we can send

news and events information by e-mail rather than snail mail. This should also mean that less of our funding is being spent on paper and more on the work we want to do.

Existing supporters should have an e-mail address request slip in their

newsletters; otherwise drop us a line at [info@changingtunes.org.uk](mailto:info@changingtunes.org.uk).

We will only hold your details for the purposes of sending you our quarterly newsletter, updates on the work and information on events in your area. We will not pass on your details to any other organisation. You can, at any time, request that we remove your details from our records.