

Drumming is about more than just making music

The party of nine adults and 29 children and young people who make up Pulse of the Place are off to New York today to lead the Tartan Day Parade with TV personality Gail Porter on Saturday.

The samba drumming group has raised just under 90% of [their target of £55,000](#) to pay for the trip which was postponed because of Covid in 2020.

Band founder, Rohan Seilman, has already connected over the past few years with Dr Dana Monteiro, a music teacher at the Frederick Douglass Academy in Harlem, and Harlem Samba will lend drums to the Edinburgh band so that they can minimise the luggage they need to carry on their journey. In a future collaboration, one of Dr Monteiro's former pupils will come to Edinburgh this summer to work with the band – and there is a workshop planned while Pulse of the Place is in New York.



Rohan Seilman from Pulse of the Place. Photo © 2023 Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Drumming is more than music making

To run seven weekly sessions of the samba drumming group for children and young people it takes around £60,000 a year, and the group were relieved recently to be awarded £30,000 by [Creative Scotland](#) Creative Scotland have supported them in past years, but year to year funding is always precarious.

Seilman is Project lead, [A.R.Ts Afternoon's Drum Club Project](#), and teaches drumming to the members of Pulse of the Place.

He said: "It's all outreach work, so we go to where the kids are. We're in Drylaw, we're in Leith, Newhaven, out at Tranent and then we do a group at Fet-Lor Youth Club as well which is a more advanced group. A few of the young people – a lot of them actually who are coming to America – come to two groups a week."

But he explained that many of the young drummers "have something else going on for them in the background".

He said:"What young people seem to lack in general, or the ones that we work with – it's the confidence to do things. And confidence is the biggest barrier – if you don't have it – to learning anything. So what we hope is that building that confidence allows them to go back to school and be more sure of themselves."

When they become members of the group, there is still a chance for more personal development.

Seilman said: "Some of our young people come to us with things that are difficult, like getting bullied, or some issues that are too difficult to raise at home. Sometimes they talk it through with us beforehand. I tell them I don't have a magic wand that can make things better, but we can look at the things that can improve and give them the skills to deal with what they have to deal with. What I get back from them is

huge. Personally I had a stroke about ten years ago and I am from an ethnic minority, and there are times when people say things that are deeply racist. But when I am working with these young people they don't see the colour, they see the person."

Seilman said it is unfortunate that it always comes down to money, but he is adamant that all sessions must continue to be free, because it is then the young person's choice if they come and learn drumming or not.

The children and young people on the trip to New York have paid a proportion of the cost of their trip, with payments spread out over the last year. For some, this will be their first time away from home and some of their families have seen it as the opportunity of a lifetime.



Brooke, Kenzie and Leonie from Pulse of the Place sporting their World Fair Trade tartan. Photo © 2023 Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

New York invitation

The invitation to play their Brazilian rhythms in New York came through their association with the World Fair Trade Tartan clan established by Tania Pramschufer of Hand Up Events. And along with the drummers, their patron Louise Marshall, who is the Lord Provost's piper, will accompany them.

And in another Edinburgh connection, the Grand Marshal will be Scottish model, actor and TV personality, Portobello's own Gail Porter. Watch out for photos in the next few days from the Big Apple.

History repeating itself

Seilman had a stroke about ten years ago, and had to give up his job as a community worker with The City of Edinburgh Council – which is where the drumming clubs began in 2006.

Rohan developed a youth led band which he took to England to meet up with another samba band at Varndean School in Brighton. While waiting for the train home they played with the chopsticks they had just eaten their Chinese takeaway with, sitting in a circle on the floor of the station. That, Seilman says, is the moment that Pulse of the Place was created.

That scene might well be recreated in Grand Central Terminal on what will be Rohan's first trip to New York, and the first trip abroad for many of the band members.

Pulse of the Place have previously entertained Edinburgh audiences at The Edinburgh Festival Carnival and at Light Night.



Rohan is towards the right of the group (in front of the goalposts) with Pulse of the Place rehearsing in Inverleith Park with the Castle behind before going to New York PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter



Eve, Taylor and Sarah-Louise from Pulse of the Place. Photo ©
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