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INGLES & HAYDAY  
FINE INSTRUMENTS



Antigua & Barbuda  
YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

<http://ingleshayday.com/>

LSF were invited by Her Excellency Karen-Mae Hill, the Antigua and Barbuda High Commissioner, to send volunteers to Antigua to train students in stringed instrument repair and maintenance. This was in support of the Antigua and Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra (ABYSO) and the Music Service which had acquired a large supply of school guitars including 100 donated from the UK. As well as the music service tuition, there are numerous private music schools and instrumental teachers on the islands and it was hoped that all would benefit from the training offered.

### Aims

- to set up a workshop for instrument repair
- to train local volunteers in repair and maintenance of the violin family of instruments
- training in guitar repair to meet a particular local need

The long-term aim is to set up a permanent workshop service with a paid staff to maintain all orchestral instruments, as well as other popular instruments such as guitars.



Keith Graves and Rita Walker completed a two-week workshop in July 2018. We were based at ABICE (Antigua & Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education). The staff were extremely accommodating and helpful which contributed to the smooth running of the project.

We had a large number of trainees - 13 presented themselves on Day 1 - so we decided to split the group into violin family and guitar work to make efficient use of time.

After setting out the workshop we gave demonstrations on tools and equipment use. This was followed by a short lecture on guitars & violins to help the students decide on which area they would prefer to focus. The split was conveniently 50-50.

### The Guitar section - Rita Walker



After a couple of days, the students with alternative obligations dropped off and I was left with 5. These particular guitar students were very committed, engaged, enthusiastic to learn and made the most of the training which resulted in my teaching them being a delight. We were able to cover a fair amount of ground, but at the same time, just scratch the surface in the two weeks. The training included setting up Classical guitars, before moving onto Steel String Acoustics and Electric Guitars.

Whilst carrying out these tasks, welcome problems arose that enabled us to explore further aspects of guitar lutherie; e.g. replacing rusty, ineffective cogs on machine heads, unseated frets and fret buzzes, bridge pin fitting, replacement nuts and saddles, cracks and splits, bridges/soundboards/headstocks/neck joint re-gluing etc. Although there were some major repairs i.e. holes in some soundboards and backs, broken necks etc., the opportunity to train further in this more complex work was not available to the students as we were lacking tools and wood. The students were disappointed at this missed opportunity and it is an area open for future training.



It was particularly pleasing to see the students became confident enough to take the initiative and worked together, sharing tasks and helping each other with imaginative ideas in the absence of much needed tools.



I believe that the students gained a considerable amount from the workshop and achieved a great deal. They managed to get 22 guitars to playing condition, including some which required some major repair work.



## The Violin section - Keith Graves

We started with the basics of tool maintenance and sharpening and then essential skills such as using a plane and chisel safely. The participants had almost no knowledge of woodworking, but enormous enthusiasm and were focussed from the start.

After 10 days we had been through a range of repair skills including bow rehair, peg fitting and other set up work, removing and regluing fronts and fingerboards, as well as comparing notes on repair methods for cello and basses. The focus was mainly on the training of the students, but we still managed to make playable a fair number of instruments and bows.

As with the guitar section, the trainees were wonderfully supportive of each other and learned a lot by explaining to others what they were doing. We ended up with four dedicated and enthusiastic repairers who were able to adapt normal methods to suit local conditions and facilities, helping each other throughout.

One evening myself and Rita visited the Antigua Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra string section rehearsal to hear them play and to talk

to the members about looking after instruments. Several minor adjustments were made on the spot, with a couple of people encouraged to bring their instruments into the workshop for larger repairs.

I learned a few things along the way: the heat and humidity affected various processes! Waxed thread meant that during bow rehairing the wax melted and ended up on fingers (and the hair). Animal glue takes an age to set, peg paste melts meaning pegs slip without a touch of rosin!



## Conclusions

- This 'pop-up' workshop was successful overall, with most students able to complete basic maintenance tasks
- For any future workshop we recommend that the number of students be kept low, ideally to 4 or 5 of those that attended this time
- The students progressed at a good pace but need further experience in woodwork in order to continue to the next level.
- A secure workshop with more suitable benches and storage will be essential
- Further tools and equipment would be needed to supplement those in place

## **Thanks**

Our trip overall was a wonderful experience, not least due to the generous and hospitable nature of the Antiguan who made us feel very welcome and indulged us in sharing their beautiful island.

For their unstinting help and hospitality in Antigua a special thanks goes to Dr Jillia Bird, Mrs Claudine Benjamin, Mrs Marion Byron, Dr Lester and Mrs Simon, Lisa Hixon, Bev Hill and Paula, and last, but in no ways least, Captain Bernard Duplessis who often went way beyond the call of duty to assist us.

We would like to thank our wonderful trainees:

Alfranique, Hector, Jean, Jahrel, Victor on the violin team and

Anthony, Danny, Evaun, Kevin, and Patrick in the guitars.

## **Sponsors**

Finally sincere thanks to our main sponsors for this mission: Ingles and Hayday of London <http://ingleshayday.com>, as well as to several other individuals and companies who made it possible:

Dictum, Soundpost, Touchstone Tonewoods and M & J Healey Violins for discounts and gifts of tools and materials

Geraldine Swallow for a large donation of funds raised from the sale of tools and books from her late husband's collection.

## **Future plans**

At a follow up meeting after the mission Karen-Mae Hill requested that LSF run another workshop. She will be actively seeking a home for a permanent, secure space. Currently the tools and materials donated to ABYSO have been packed away and stored.

## **Budget**

Travel £1175.32

Tools £951.17

Accommodation and food supplied by our hosts

## **Keith Graves and Rita Walker**

LSF-UK



[www.LSF-UK.org](http://www.LSF-UK.org)

[info@lsf-uk.org](mailto:info@lsf-uk.org)

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