

citizen songwriters



Creating social harmony through song

A year of...

... creating and performing



... new opportunities



... visiting new places



... new friendships



Stories of Sanctuary

Stories of Sanctuary began in June 2018 and brought together residents of Durham including recently arrived Syrian refugees. Drawing on Durham's rich history of offering sanctuary, the project inspired original songs told by participants and inspired infectious friendships as well as deeply beautiful songs.

The Arts Council funded-project resulted in a **professionally recorded CD** and after launching at Durham Cathedral in October 2018, the Sanctuary Seekers choir were invited to share their stories at the **Houses of Parliament**. The performances feature viola player **Raghad Haddad** from the National Syrian Orchestra.



“Stories of Sanctuary speaks loudly of hope in the midst of difficulty and hardship, light in the midst of dark and dangerous times. As you journey through Stories of Sanctuary you will experience great beauty, peace and musical depth”

(Gareth Davies-Jones)

Songs of courage and hope

Songwriting workshops were facilitated by singer-songwriter Sam Slatcher and brought together 40 participants including local residents and Syrian refugees.



"It was really moving hearing the stories and hearing the voices of those who are often overlooked and unheard, who have actually undergone the dangers of migration/seeking refuge"

(Audience member,
Houses of Parliament)

These new streets I walk and
breathe have set me free
The city I came to offered sanctuary
The longing is painful and oh I miss
my home
But I know I do not walk alone

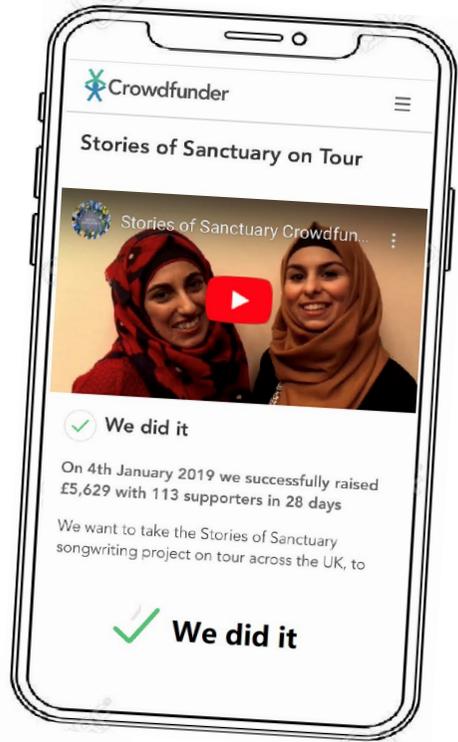
(from the song 'Like a Butterfly'
written collaboratively)



Crowdfunding a UK tour

On the 3rd January 2019 we reached our Crowdfunder Campaign total of £5500 (+£2000 offline donations) to bring the Stories of Sanctuary performances to a further 5 cities across the U.K.

“Stories connect people - Stories of Sanctuary connects what we all have in common: humanity, the desire to live in peace and experience love, kindness and compassion” (donor)



Durham
Stockton
Hartlepool
Lanchester
Hull
Sheffield
Leicester
Birmingham
London
Southampton

“This is such a creative and exciting project, enabling young people to develop their own skills and share their stories—stories that need to be listen to and taken seriously for they contribute to the building of safe spaces of sanctuary for all”

(Inderjit Bhogal,
Founder of City of Sanctuary)

“On the tour, we were hosted by local residents. We were welcomed with warm hearts. Music is the language of the world. When I was singing I felt every word I sang. I sang from my heart to all the hearts of the audience. I wanted to tell them that despite pain and sadness, we are brave because sometimes you just need to hope and have faith that things will work out”

(Sabah, Tour Coordinator)



“The young adults from Stories of Sanctuary who performed at the Festival moved me to tears, not because their songs sought my pity but because their lyrics were full of resilient courage and tender hope” (Rachel Parkinson, Festival organiser)

1500 audience members

15 Concerts

4 Festivals

10 Cities

20 Participants



Welcome Town - Stockton

In May—June 2019, Citizen Songwriters' facilitator Sam worked with performance artist Natasha Davis on a project called 'Welcome Town'. The project involved participatory workshops (lower left) and a public, interactive installation on Stockton High Street (lower right), which re-imagined how towns could provide truly humane care for displaced individuals.



“Running home you came to me,
You thought love had set you free
Your sorrow lost within those leaves
Underneath the cherry tree, I saw you looking lonely
Memories, weighing on your heart
But remember I honour the fallen,
From the Boer War, to the Great World War,
To the ones you've left behind
As the shadow falls, I have stood the test of time”

(‘Paradise’, written from the perspective of Albert Park, Middlesbrough)

Middlesbrough's Treasured Memories

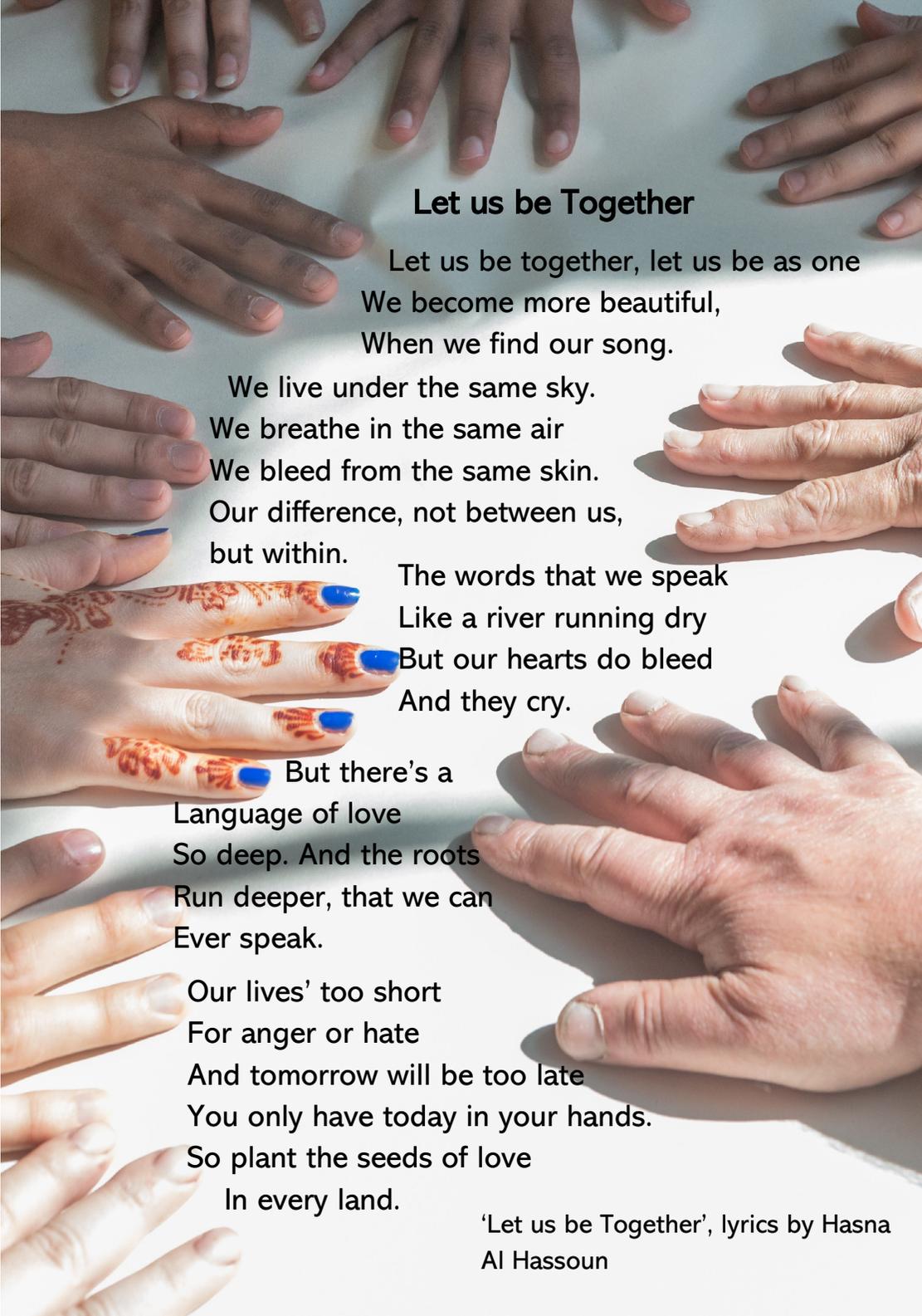
Citizen Songwriters also partnered with **Stronger Communities Middlesbrough** (Middlesbrough Council) to create new songs on 'Treasured Memories' with residents from diverse backgrounds from three Middlesbrough neighbourhoods. 3 new songs were written including 'Paradise'

The songs were then performed at the **Middlesbrough Mela** in September 2019 with the participants from the workshops singing in the choir.



"Telling stories, putting people together from different backgrounds to tell their stories, sharing their experiences, it's the most beautiful thing"

(Aisha, participant)



Let us be Together

Let us be together, let us be as one
We become more beautiful,
When we find our song.

We live under the same sky.
We breathe in the same air
We bleed from the same skin.
Our difference, not between us,
but within.

The words that we speak
Like a river running dry
But our hearts do bleed
And they cry.

But there's a
Language of love
So deep. And the roots
Run deeper, that we can
Ever speak.

Our lives' too short
For anger or hate
And tomorrow will be too late
You only have today in your hands.
So plant the seeds of love
In every land.

'Let us be Together', lyrics by Hasna
Al Hassoun

The Citizen Songwriters team

Sam Slatcher is the founder of Citizen Songwriters, a singer-songwriter and community music facilitator, with a Human Geography PhD in creative community engagement at Durham University.



Pippa Bell is a trustee of Citizens Songwriters. She works in education using the visual arts to engage with people of all ages and backgrounds including prisoners, asylum seekers and refugees.

Sabah Al Hassoun is a primary school teaching assistant from Homs, Syria. Since moving to the UK in 2016, she has been involved in Durham City of Sanctuary as a trustee and coordinates the Stories of Sanctuary tour.



Get ting involved in 2020

If you would like to get involved in hosting Citizen Songwriters workshops or Stories of Sanctuary performances, please get in touch with one of the team at: info@citizensongwriters.org

You can subscribe to e-mails via the 'Get Involved' tab on the Citizen Songwriters website:

<https://citizensongwriters.org/get-involved/>



Creating social harmony through song
Co. Durham - Teesside - Tyneside



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🌐 www.citizensongwriters.org



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