



poetry & music

Tongues&Grooves helps launch 'This Island City'

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Maggie Sawkins, co-founder of *Tongues&Grooves*, speaking at the launch of the first ever anthology of Portsmouth poems, said:

'*Tongues&Grooves* began in 2003 with the launch of my pamphlet of poetry, *Charcot's Pet*. Greg, the landlord of The Florence in Southsea, impressed and bemused by the strange gathering of poets and musicians, asked if we would organise a regular spoken word event. After much thought (and fears by some, that it would turn into a platform for ranters) we decided to go ahead. The rest, as they say, is history.

Rather than turning into a zoo of ranters, *Tongues&Grooves* has attracted a menagerie of some of the finest voices in contemporary poetry. Two of our past featured poets, John Haynes and the American war poet Brian Turner, have been short listed for this year's T S Eliot prize. Stephanie Norgate was short listed for last year's Forward prize; Anna Robinson is currently receiving rave reviews for her collection, *The Finders of London*; and earlier this year, Wendy French won £5000 in a national competition. All but one of these poets have poems included in *This Island City*.

It's always been our mission at *Tongues&Grooves* to encourage the quiet voice. One of the greatest pleasures has been to see people from the audience, who have sat and listened month after month, come forward for the first time to read or sing.

There have been memorable moments. Who could forget the evening when Julie Millard read a poem from the top a step ladder; or our fantastic concert at the New Theatre Royal where local poets and musicians performed on stage along with the likes of John Hegley and Guo Yue; our sell out concert on the opening night of the Havant Literary Festival; and the inspirational Poetry of Exile events hosted by Richard Williams and George Marsh.

One of our main achievements has been to inspire local writers to take a chance on literature with a capital 'L'. Since *Tongues&Grooves* began in 2003 other groups have been formed: Rob Richardson's very successful *Write on the Night*; Elaine Crinnion's word club for young people at the New Theatre Royal; *Wordsouth* in Havant; and the now annual poetry stage at the *SouthseaFest*. These have complemented the long standing

Portsmouth Poetry Society formed in 1971 and still under the wing of local poets, Denise Bennett and Pauline Hawkesworth.

Probably most poets included in *This Island City* have come through *Tongues&Grooves*: some have read at open mic; some have attended workshops; some have been our featured poets. Though being a featured poet did not guarantee a place in the anthology. Liverpool poet and playwright, Paul Birtill's submission, *The Isle of Wight was alright but Portsmouth was shite,* was sadly rejected by the majority of the editorial team (myself not included).

Sadly, some poets in the book are no longer with us. U A Fanthorpe, one of the nation's favourites; Heather Hart an early supporter of *Tongues&Grooves*; and Rowland Lee, a member of the Pompey Ranters Scene in the seventies.

Despite numerous requests, Rowland didn't get around to submitting anything for the anthology. However, after his death this poem was passed onto us by one of his fans:

A Farewell to Dave

*In order to stop cruelty to animals
Dave Perry (a vegetarian) has volunteered himself
For the meat raffle at the Red, White and Blue next Friday.
First prize is Dave's leg.
Second prize is Dave's bum – a nice piece of rump steak.
All the rest of him is going into sausages.*

So – a short poem:

*Farewell to Dave
A Brave Man*

*See you Dave – I won't be eating you myself –
I don't like sausages.*

One thing I've learnt since running *Tongues&Grooves* is that if you're creatively inclined, it's the easiest thing in the world to come up with a brilliant idea. *This Island City* always was a brilliant idea. What we didn't realise was the sheer amount of hard work involved in turning our vision into a thing of substance.

So, to finish, I'd like to say a big thank you to the team, but especially to Dale for taking '*This Island City*' under her wing; for making it her own pet; and for pushing it through to its completion. I'm sure all Dale's care and attention, hours of devotion, and her ability to cope calmly with any growls of dissent, will ensure its future as Portsmouth's very own Literary Lion.'

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