

# Time to get with Amy's African beat

Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance's **AMY FORDE** beats a path to the door of Rotherham African drummers project manager Amy Cawthorn to find out what makes her tick

**A**MY Cawthorn, whose musical skills include armpit farting which she learnt as a child, is a familiar face to many in Rotherham and the surrounding area.

She is the project manager of RAD (Rotherham African Drummers) and plays a significant role in the arts scene in the town.

In my role as marketing and communications assistant at Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance (ROAR), I visited 'the other Amy' to find out more about the young woman behind the drums.

Amy C, who is Rotherham born and bred, admits to having been the sort of youngster who did not want to stay on at school any longer than she had to.

But all that changed at the age of 11 when, through a project called Sounding Out, she was able to experiment with Gamelan and Samba music, as well as African drumming.

She said: "It unlocked something I didn't even know was there."

From that point on she started attending an after school drumming club every week.

Music was always encouraged in her house and she says that, to this day, her dad will make her sing Christmas songs in front of the whole family, while he plays the guitar.

But although she had the influence of a guitarist in her life, rhythm was always her bag.

She told me: "When I was about six or seven I learnt to fart with my armpit." Her dad would play flamenco guitar while she played along with it.

"My dad used to say 'Let's do the flatulent flamenco. It was brilliant.'"

And this underpins one of Amy's mantras: "I think I have got my sense of inclusivity from my dad because he would always include me in everything he was doing — I have a belief that everyone can do something, it doesn't matter who you are, where you come from or what your musical background is."

This is something which Amy believes is especially true of African drumming, because it is so accessible. As she puts it: "You hit the drum and it makes a noise."

Taking her passion to university to study a combined Bachelor of Arts in Music and Drama, Amy started to lead her own groups.

After completing her degree, she returned to Rotherham and began working for OMTC (Open Minds Theatre Company), where she still works. She hoped to bring her knowledge and experience to the people of Rotherham as well as build the confidence of

those she came across.

As she explains: "A lot of people don't believe in themselves and they think 'I can't do that because that's not aimed at me.'"

"But that's not true at all. Everyone can do something. Absolutely everyone."

Through working at OMTC, Amy became familiar with ROAR, as the two organisations share a building at Westgate Chambers. She recently became a member of ROAR as she was interested in what the organisation was doing:

She discusses one member who makes visual images out of the music he has made: "I don't think that any two art forms have to be on their own. I think each art form can be enjoyed on its own, but it's fun to collaborate and see what happens when different art forms come together to create something new."

Through her hard work and engaging nature, Amy has made a real success of RAD, along with the help of a number of volunteers and the dedicated Friends of RAD group.

She currently runs seven groups across Rotherham, all drumming at different levels. As she is currently working at capacity, Amy hopes to get more teachers involved.

She has applied for funding from the Music for All fund, which she hopes will do just this.

**To find out more about RAD, visit the [drummers.org.uk](http://drummers.org.uk) website or take a look at the Friends of RAD's Rotherham African Drummers Facebook page.**

Amy performing at the Wath Festival. 170710-4

