

Welcome to **'The Rightful Owners of the Song'**.

Thanks for coming and we hope you enjoy the show!

There is so much to say about this project that its hard to know where to start, so, perhaps I should begin at the beginning and take it from there.

When it was first announced that Liverpool was to be the European Capital of Culture in 2008, it seemed to throw up lots of questions. What does this mean for the city? What is the culture of Liverpool? Who benefits from this?

These are big questions and not simple to answer, but this project is one response.

The singing scene in the pubs and clubs of Liverpool is well-known for its vibrancy and if anything deserved to be celebrated during the year then this was surely important?

And why put singers together with the Philharmonic Orchestra?

Well, I'm a great believer in bridging cultural boundaries and to bring together the worlds of the pub and the concert hall, the pub singer and the orchestra seemed like a great place to start. This great stage offers the opportunity to bring one of the great cultural traditions of the city into the mainstream of celebrations for the year. And whilst they may, at first, seem to be worlds apart, everyone involved in this show, whether they play the guitar and give a song in a pub, or play the violin or the piano in the orchestra, is united by a common love of music and of performing.

So - how do we go about getting a show like this on the road?

There was one thing that I was clear about from the beginning and that was that we wouldn't have formal auditions. Far better to go out and explore the pubs and clubs of the city, meet singers, talk to audiences and take in the scene. This has never been a 'talent' show, in fact I've tried to make it the opposite- the antidote to the X-factor! (And I've heard all the jokes by the way- 'Visiting pubs for a year; sounds like my dream job!' ... Well- its been tough, but someone had to do it!). And I've been to some wonderful places and some great sessions and met some fantastic musicians and singers over the course of this year.

One of the hardest things has been selecting people to take part. All of the singers in this show are wonderful performers and its been a pleasure to work with each and every one. And, at the same time, I'm sure that no one will mind when I say there are scores of other singers who could have been a part of this. There are no two ways about it – this city is full of great singers. Whether it's a 'Mad Monday' in the Blob Shop with John Dolan and Mick Masters or a Thursday afternoon with the retired seafarers at the Eldonian

Hall, or any day of the week in little Coopers; Country and Western in The Melrose Abbey on a Friday night, Cy Tucker in The Big House on a Sunday, or Kenny Docherty in the Hole-in-the-Wall or The Linacre... everywhere you go there is a song.

And that reminds me- what about the name of the show?

'The Rightful Owners of the Song' is a line from a poem by the wonderful Liverpool writer, Brian Patten. As soon as I started working on this project it seemed like the perfect title and if you read the poem through you'll see that it refers to both the singers and to the audience! You can't have a show without an audience so, once again, welcome, and we hope that you enjoy!

There isn't the space here to say much more but one thing that people have asked me over the last year has been- 'Why is it that in Liverpool there is this amazing culture of singing in pubs?' There are many answers to this and perhaps you will have your own thoughts? I don't claim to have a definitive answer. Many of the singers I've met refer to their family connections with the docks, the river, the sea. Many people I've spoken to talk about memories of home-coming parties to celebrate survival and safe return. Stories of where we've been; stories of home. And with these stories there always come songs. America figures large in the story of Liverpool singing because that's where a lot of people sailed to and there were always new records to bring back. And there is no escaping from the fact that, 'when you are poor, you make your own entertainment'. And in Liverpool if you're going to sing a song you better get good at it!

So; there is something that is particular to Liverpool but also, as I write this, I recall sitting in The Goat on the Dock Road on a rain swept Sunday afternoon a few weeks back, when it was blowing a gale up from the river...

The band is playing and the singers are taking their turn to sing a song or two and this seems like the friendliest place to be. A warm house on a cold day. And this, as well, is part of the story. This is something universal. Laughter and singing. The bustle of voices and the clink of glasses. Sometimes there is a song that brings a tear to the eye and then, more often than not, its followed up with a joke to lift the mood. Here, everyone is celebrating life and all its ups and downs. Surviving its hardships; celebrating its high points. The Rightful Owners of the Music singing for the Rightful Owners of the Song.

Jonathan Raisin