

Mini Mozarts at the Majesty Gardens Basic School

The Mini Mozarts Summer Camp held in August 2015 for some 25 children at the Majesty Gardens Basic School was the brainchild of Paul Anthony Williamson and Allison Arends. Following the successful staging of *Festum Sancti Andreae* in October 2014, Paul and Allison, two of the main performers at that gala musical concert, were invited to do a walking tour of Majesty Gardens, one of the communities slated to benefit from the fundraising event. The walking tour caught the attention of many of the residents some of whom recognized the performers from their appearance on a local TV show. Allison was struck by the warmth of island hospitality which the residents openly expressed, but it was the magnetic pull of the children of the Majesty Gardens Basic School that resonated most with the two visitors.

The little children had heard of the gala concert from their teachers and knew they had two big stars in their presence. This was perhaps what inspired them to put on a show of their own. They recited with passion and sang for the visitors like little rising stars on stage. They delivered a performance that [they] [the visiting artistes?] felt deserved high ratings. The loud applause, the look of contentment and approval on their teachers' faces and the delight with which the visitors responded confirmed that their best was more than good enough. This was the signal they needed. The children then moved from centre stage in order to get their congratulatory hugs and hear the words of praise and encouragement from their visitors and teachers.

Paul and Allison did not need too much time to reflect on the talent displayed by these young children and it was while driving up Hagley Park Road on their return trip to the St Andrew Parish Church in Half Way Tree that the Mini-Mozarts Summer Camp was conceptualized. The summer camp which became a reality in August 2015 gave the children who participated the opportunity to enjoy a learning experience through music and demonstrate their creative self-expression to the sounds of Do Re Mi.

The 10-day music camp saw the children creating decorated drums and guitars using Tastee cheese pans, and megaphones using cartridge paper, in addition to being exposed to art work by designing and creating their own operatic masks and headpieces as well as a variety of wall hangings. The camp ended with a short concert presented to delighted parents, other community members and representatives of a sponsoring firm. And That programme included a variety of choruses which the children brought to life with their expressive faces and acting skills; their rendition of *Doe, a deer, a female deer* from Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical, *The Sound of Music*, which had become the unofficial camp anthem; and the grand finale which was a musical and choral interpretation of *Little Lion Goes to School*, a children's book written by Jamaican author, Kellie Magnus.

The children were delighted with the final surprise – the mini prize-giving during which they all received certificates of participation. *Do I get to take this home?* That was the query coming from one of the children who, by all appearances, was delighted at receiving her very first certificate.

The St Andrew Parish Foundation intends to make this learning experience an annual event and every effort will also be made to incorporate more music into the curriculum as one of the tools of creative learning. □