Time for grime to shed image of crime

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Leading names in British urban music and dub poetry – from Cleveland Watkiss to Benjamin Zephaniah - will be helping a group of young people from South East London in a project to trace the roots of ‘grime’ through ‘garage’ and other urban forms and to produce a documentary film. The project, Grit Story – Still Risin’ From the Dust, has been made possible by a £25,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Managed and run by the Deptford-based Midi Music Company, the 15-month project will involve up to 75 young people and adults aged 13 – 25 years. They will work with Julian Henriques, Professor of Music at Goldsmiths University, and make use of its film and recorded music archives.

Among the artists involved with the project are celebrated British jazz singer Cleveland Watkiss, dub poet and author Benjamin Zephaniah and reggae artiste Joy Mack, as well as Vik Sivalingam, assistant director for the Royal Shakespeare Company’s current repertory season. They are also approaching artistes such as Roots Manuva and DJ Logan Sama.

Commenting, Benjamin Zephaniah, said: "I will always support this sort of project because it involves the young people in having a voice. Though I am so called ‘established’ it frustrates me that the media miss out truths about our legacy."

For the Heritage Lottery Fund, Head of HLF London Sue Bowers, said: “The project has tremendous support from leading artists and industry professionals and will encourage the creation of new, original work from the young people taking part as well as helping them to acquire a range of new skills.”

A core group of 12 young people will start by exploring the roots of British grime within the music industry, their own families and communities. This will lead to a series of workshops that will involve more youngsters culminating in a ‘grime symposium’ to be held at the Albany Theatre in Deptford on Saturday 18th April.

A film made by OOR Productions, Islington, will chart the project from research through to performances and once completed later this year will be shown in schools, colleges and arts centres. Original work created during the project, as well as a screening of the film, will be performed for Black History Month in October.

“We intend to disseminate information about the social and historic roots of grime as an art form in Britain and to raise its profile in mainstream education and the music industry,” said Rachel Bennett, the project manager. “It is important to identify positive aspects of this form of music that is so often associated with crime and social problems.”

The young people involved in the project have themselves identified specific topics for research including the tradition of political rebellion, the voice of the people and musical influences and styles.

Notes to editors

For almost 15 years The Midi Music Company (MMC) has been offering excellent music tuition at subsidised rates to children, young people and adults from the age of 5 years plus on a variety of programmes covering daytime and evening courses and weekend and holiday activity. MMC also delivers professional music industry advice through its membership programme where participants benefit from regular performance opportunities via live MMC showcases as

well as locally based industry events. In addition to this MMC has established itself as a leader in music education for its local community, regularly co-ordinating outreach projects and partnerships with schools and like-minded arts/community organisations in its resident boroughs of Southwark, Greenwich, Lewisham and beyond.

Grime is a form of urban music that first emerged in East London in the early 2000s primarily as a development of UK garage, dancehall and hip hop genres.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK, with over £850 million granted in London alone.

Further information

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