

Biographical Account by Daoud Merchant (award winner in 2001)



Coming from a musical family, I began on piano and violin from a young age. However, sat on the edge of my brother's bed listening to Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Herbie Hancock when I was 6, my interest became clear: I wanted to be a jazz drummer. From age 8 I



was beating watering cans with sticks until the neighbours complained and tapping tables until my teachers practically staged an intervention with my parents. Finally accepting they had a drummer on their hands, they enquired about tuition for me, but were told by my school's drum kit tutor that he didn't accept pupils without a drum kit. Having since taught drums at various institutions I can understand, but at the time I spent the first years of my career on a rubber practice pad working on my paradiddles and advancing on snare drum. Derek Vickers at the Winston Churchill School, my first drum kit tutor, kindly took me on board without drums, but my progress was naturally slow without equipment at home.

It's at this point that I was lucky enough to be accepted by the Woking Young Musicians Trust (then the Marie Oswald Trust), who kindly helped me acquire a ride cymbal for my first drum kit, the most important and expensive item for any jazz drummer. I remember proudly bringing my 20 inch Zildjian K Custom Dark Ride to every concert as drummer for the Winston Churchill School Jazz Group and the Woking College Jazz Group, both of which I was delighted to return to as ensemble coach after graduating. At age 18 I was accepted on the Jazz and Classical Percussion undergraduate course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, from which I built a network of contacts leading to performance opportunities across London's jazz clubs, nationwide venues, European tours and visits to China, Australia and the USA. I was also a recipient of a Yamaha Scholarship for Outstanding Jazz Musicians, and later a nominee for the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Young Jazz Award. Music education was always a part of my career, teaching drum kit at schools and workshops around London before eventually joining the faculty of the Guildhall School and City of London University as Jazz Professor. However, funnily enough, it was a Dixieland jazz band which changed my life forever.



Back in December 2013, the Dixie Ticklers had a residency at the Caveau de la Huchette in Paris (you may know it as the jazz club Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone go to in *La La Land*), playing until 3am every night and necessitating strong coffee at midday the day after. Sat in Paris' finest coffee shop (tiny and tucked away just a couple of streets from the Louvre, of course) I casually asked for help regarding the Louvre opening hours from the lady sat next

to me as she took a coffee in her lunch break from the French Supreme Court; today, we're running after our 14-month-old son in an apartment in south west Paris. My music career had to take a different path to relocate to another country in another language, and within months from now we're off again to Stockholm where she'll be the French Consul of the French Embassy. What next? Well, anything goes when you're married to a diplomat, but I know that I will always have my jazz career to thank for my new life and family in Europe. I'm sincerely grateful to the Working Young Musician's Trust for enabling my first equipment purchase, and truly support their efforts to help young musicians in an industry which is becoming increasingly difficult to enter for those who need initial financial assistance.

