



HANLEY MADDEN

Andy Gleadhill

BUDDYING UP

Andy Gleadhill's new book aims to make a virtue out of necessity, putting years of under-resourced classroom experience to good use. Glyn Môn Hughes reports

It's hard not to feel enthused when talking to Andy Gleadhill. His passion for percussion is infectious and his latest, possibly most innovative book, *Percussion Buddies*, aims to make learning and teaching this branch of music that much easier for all types of teacher.

Gleadhill graduated from music college to become a professional percussionist and spent 15 years playing in West End shows or working as a

session musician with pop bands.

'At the time, I developed a strong interest in world music, much of which is percussion-based,' he says. 'One of my first trips abroad was with the British Council, after I trained as a teacher. I went to Zimbabwe to teach English, but ended up learning more about the music I heard while there.'

Gleadhill returned to become head of percussion at Bristol music service, eventually securing the role as head of

the entire service. He has played with a number of the leading recording artists and orchestras around the world for film, television and recording sessions.

But he is now probably best known as an author and educator. He has worked at Bath Spa University for 15 years, where they run a specialist secondary music PGCE programme. He also quit his role as head of Bristol Music Hub two years ago to concentrate on writing books and working internationally.

'I was always interested in wider opportunities programmes and, some years ago, I broke my wrist,' he explains. 'That's not good for a percussionist but it did mean that I started to write a book. It was about African drumming and I wrote it mainly for teachers. That was in 2007.'

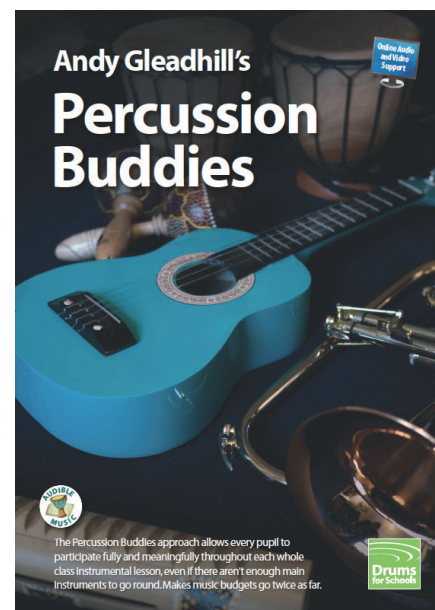
Since then, a whole series of books has appeared, and he has just completed his eighth, entitled *Percussion Buddies*.

Gleadhill also spends a good deal of his time overseas. 'For the last three years, I have had a contract with the Ministry of Education in Singapore,' he said. 'They have a particular interest in world music there and they realised that much of their music teaching

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“ THERE'S ALL SORTS OF DIFFERENT SOUNDS YOU CAN GET OUT OF A TRIANGLE ”

was Western, classically based. And that does not really fit with their demographic profile as there is a very diverse music scene there.'

He also works in international schools, as well as institutions in the state sector, in Malaysia, where he is a visiting professor at the Malaysia Music Teachers Training College.

It is this wide experience which has given Gleadhill an edge, he believes, when it comes to producing literature to assist with teaching techniques. He's worked across the whole range of the sector, from early years to special educational needs, as well as in post-graduate settings in universities and conservatoires.

The new book aims to give teachers extra resources, something which will be particularly welcome to those schools where equipment is scarce and resources are stretched to breaking point. It was

inspired by conversations with head teachers, teachers and music tutors frustrated because the available funding would not stretch to equipping the whole class with instruments: classes at risk of losing valuable experiences and pupils frustrated that they could not participate fully.

'I'd experienced much of this when I worked at the music hub in Bristol,' said Gleadhill. 'Providing enough instruments for a class of 30 was expensive and not always practical. And there are some instruments – steel pans, for instance – where only six people at a time play, so that could leave others with nothing to do for long periods of time.'

'But, the plan in the new book is that everyone is engaged all of the time. Pupils can be "buddied up" – something which happens in sport all the time – so one child plays while the other watches and learns and then they swap over.'

That means instruments can be used effectively and children are learning musical skills and learning how to play properly and musically.'

There's a good deal in the book aimed at non-specialist music teachers – colleagues in the staff room, perhaps? 'Often, nobody has shown them how to play musically,' suggests Gleadhill. 'There's all sorts of different sounds you can get out of a triangle, for instance.'

A series of musical templates is included where, for example, if a melody is in a particular time signature, then there are rhythms already written out for a range of instruments. Teachers are also encouraged to create their own exercises, with a series of blank templates included to expand the repertoire further.

'All this is written in grid notation, not traditional classical notation, so it is easy to read,' says Gleadhill. 'I've also included YouTube videos of myself playing the instruments so that people can see how it all works. These can be accessed through QR codes. There are also QR codes for all the parts and templates, which can also be downloaded as an MP3 file.'

'It's all geared to make music-making easily accessible.' **MT**

www.andygleadhill.co.uk
www.drumsforschools.com