

Pure Poetry




You may have seen Poet James McInerney's inspirational words on the information boards on the London Underground, on screens in train stations and even in shopping centres.

The Grafton caught up with James to find out what's next for the man determined to spread positivity through poetry in public places.

Tell us about the idea to put your poetry in public places.

The aim of the project is to get poetry into places you wouldn't normally see it and open people's eyes to the joy and benefits of poetry. But it's also to inject a bit of positivity into people's everyday lives. We are constantly bombarded with negative news. Even your phone alerts you when something bad happens. It's creating an anxiety in society and contributing to mental health issues. I wanted to counteract that and create a balance using positive words.

On a visit to London I was inspired by the Service Information boards on the London Underground that display train information and delays. I occasionally saw quotes from famous authors on them but never poetry. I messaged one of stations and was pleasantly surprised when they agreed to include my work.



"I suffered depression and poetry saved me, it is an amazing outlet."

What impact is it having?

The feedback through social media has been amazing, with lots of people messaging me saying things like 'I needed this today'. I feel like there's a real need for positivity in people's everyday lives and the way the demand for these uplifting messages is spreading shows that there's a hunger.

London Stanstead bought digital boards to display daily messages, Manchester Piccadilly and Glasgow Central train stations now display my words, public parks, schools and even shopping centres are keen to display my quotes. It's spreading like wildfire and I'm so happy it's doing something positive.

Where next? Where would be the dream place to see your work in public?

My big goal is for the large advertising companies to give up their ad boards to put a positive message on them and inject some positivity into people's day. Big corporations are spending millions on advertising things we don't always need to buy so I'd like to see them do something good for their customers and give something back. The first brand that did this would get such positive feedback.

You have been working with famous names like Hannah Emily Anderson and Maxine Peake to read your poetry. Tell us more about it.

Working with actors has been another way to spread the message and get people interested in poetry. Actors can get emotion across and it goes down well with fans. It's interesting to hear different people reading my work. Every person interprets it differently, that's how poetry works; people see themselves in the words. The actor reads from their experience and to me that's the joy of poetry.

Poetry is something you found in your 20s rather than being a lifelong passion. How did you get into writing?

I didn't like poetry at school, we did some Shakespeare but that was the extent of it. Initially I fell in love with classical film scores and then I started writing down how the music made me feel. It was the days before social media but when the social sites began it gave me an outlet to share and grow my work. Now I also teach poetry workshops in schools and libraries to get people into writing.

A lot of your poetry is linked to mental health, how has poetry helped you?

I suffered depression and poetry saved me, it is an amazing outlet. I find it's the best way to get rid of the daily heavy. We live in a world of negativity and it's healthy for me to put feelings down, acknowledge them and get rid of them. It helps me but also helps others to read my work.

I feel like poetry is the path I'm meant to be on and my course keeps being pushed back to it. Every time I try to give it up - something big has come along. I hope I can make a difference.

James' poetry is currently on display in Escape at The Grafton.

You can also find James on Social Media via @millsmc07 on Instagram and Twitter or search 'James McInerney' on Facebook.

jamesmcinerney.wixsite.com/poetry

