

5 Mario Petrucci visited Sherborne School on October 4th and 5th, 2010. He was eagerly anticipated:
one member of staff who had seen him before (and who, coincidentally, was teaching Mario's
poetry to his English set) told us that Mario was one of the top three poets he had ever seen
perform. He drew a big audience to Sherborne's Old School Room; boys and girls came from St
Anthony's, Leweston, and from The Gryphon, Sherborne, too.

10 We heard his 45-minute recital in a rapt silence, and then Mario took questions. His answers, as
much as his introductions, were passionate and illuminating about the process of composing poetry.
For a moment the meeting looked like becoming a lively debate about the differing roles of the arts
and sciences, and we felt lucky to be in the presence of someone who had mastered both. People
left genuinely inspired.

15 The next morning, Mario threw himself into a succession of classes, which included three creative
writing sessions. One of my strongest memories will be of an hour-long question-and-answer
session he conducted with 120 teenage boys shortly before lunch. They are of course charming, but
we couldn't rely on them being consistently attentive and respectful throughout the event. They
were. Then, when it was their turn to ask questions, they were full of them, each one drawing
deeper and more compelling insights from the poet. He recited Emily Dickinson by heart; he sang;
20 he analysed sonnets; he thought on his feet at terrific speed; he entertained and enlightened. Even
as he was leaving, after meeting the school's writing group, he was giving me ideas and tips for how
to nurture the reading and writing of poetry.

A school visit from this poet is a wonderful thing; we were lucky and honoured to have him.

25 **Tom Payne**

Teacher and Writer in Residence

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