





Above: members of the public at *The Sultan's Elephant*, London 2006. Photo: Matthew Andrews

## Should the public be involved in arts funding decisions?

Patricia Brown - Chief Executive,  
Central London Partnership:

'The arts – in all their forms – contribute a lot to civic society and, critically, the lives of individuals. Whilst much of this work is overt, some is subliminal, and the everyday experience is enriched by the imagination of artists in so many ways. Too frequently the arts are put in a box – quite literally in the case of theatres, museums and galleries, which has to be visited, or 'opened', to be experienced.

Whilst this will always be the case, too little is understood about the mediation or other subtle ways in which artists work to improve

the 'everyday', be this through art in the public realm or direct engagement in the regeneration of our towns and cities. From a personal viewpoint, some of the most life enhancing experiences have been through the arts and, frequently, this has been through the more challenging or less traditional productions.

Two examples are The Wooster Group's production of *Phaedra* – brought to London by LIFT; or *The Sultan's Elephant*, produced by Royal de Luxe and brought to London by Artichoke. Both took a massive effort in fundraising and a very personal risk by LIFT and Artichoke, and, in the case of the elephant – an equally large leap of faith for

the Arts Council to invest such a big chunk of money.

In doing so, Arts Council England enabled over a million people to have a truly 'magical four days' last May. It brought smiles to the faces and tears to the eyes of London's residents, workers and visitors, who were led by the 40 foot elephant to parts of the city that they may not naturally see as their own back yard, for the arts help give people permission to dare to be different.

Taking this level of risk and presenting work which, on first glance, may be so off the wall, requires skill and judgement based on wide horizons. This cuts to the heart of the funding debate. Who should decide on what gets funded? Professionals should, I believe, be tasked with the responsibility to ensure that the widest possible range of work gets to reach our attention.

A public funding body for the arts should be trusted to test the pulse of its community and be an enabler of work that reaches as diverse an audience as possible. That requires understanding its community in all its facets whilst being brave about taking funding decisions for the greater good. That type of decision making brought *The Sultan's Elephant* to London and I for one feel privileged to have followed in its footsteps.'

Jonah, 12:

'I think that it's neutral. Young people should be involved in decision making, but it's probably difficult to involve a wide range of people as there may be people who aren't enthusiastic, though I suppose it's good to get everyone's views as you can work out why they don't like something.

But, no matter how much adults think they are in touch, they're not as in touch with what young people want as young people

are. There will always be little things that we pick up on.

For a young person, art galleries aren't as accessible and they're not as interesting for young people as they could be. [There could be] lots more urban art and installations and more multimedia used in art galleries, to interact with.'

Mahta Hassanzadeh, 18, Editor, LIVE Magazine:

'It is true, to an extent, that anything involving public funding, should really involve the public themselves. The public know what they are interested in and they know what they are willing to invest in. They should be involved in the process of decision making when it comes to the arts...after all, the 'art' in question is being aimed at them...they are the intended audience.

Having said that, it is a worry that allowing the public to have too great an input can have a bad impact on the arts. Could this take out the element of surprise and innovation that many expect from any art form? In my opinion, as a lover of the arts, this is definitely a risk. After all, many of us partake in the arts in order to experience something new and refreshing, not something we could have thought up ourselves.'

The arts debate runs  
until 11 May 2007.  
Have your say at:  
[www.artsdebate.co.uk](http://www.artsdebate.co.uk)

# Focus on theatre

## See a Voice



Touch Tour before a production of *Cats*. Photo: Tom Miles

'An inspired idea.'

David Lammy, MP Minister for Culture, speaking at the launch.

'It makes such a difference to me actually being able to follow the plot and have the visual aspects of the play highlighted; so much more enjoyable for me, and I do not need to ask questions...such a fantastic and inclusive service.'

Audio description user.

'It was the first time I could follow a musical word for word. Many thanks for opening an entirely new world for me.'

Captioning user.

*See a Voice* is a joint project between STAGETEXT and VocalEyes over the next three years to empower more theatres to improve their accessibility to people who are blind, partially sighted, Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing. It has been funded by just under £725,000 from the Treasury's Invest to Save Round 8 and £300,000 through the Arts Council's Grants for the arts.

The project will provide audio description and captioning services to venues. Audio description is a live verbal commentary delivered during an event, capturing key visual elements and picked up through discreet headsets, worn by the audience member. Captioning converts the spoken word into text, which is displayed on a caption unit situated on or next to the stage.

Groups of theatres and venues in England will be invited to join together as local hubs and to collaborate in order to make their work fully accessible to existing and new audiences with the provision of top quality assistive performances.

Through the supply of equipment and training of local professional describers and captioners, costs will be reduced. At the same time, training in awareness and customer care, combined with marketing advice and support, will help venues to find and serve their audiences in a sustainable way. The project was formally launched at the House of Lords on 16 January 2007.

Those confirmed taking part in year one are:

<i>London</i>	Theatre Royal Stratford East, Royal Court, Tricycle, Soho and Gate Theatres, Lyric Hammersmith, Old Vic, New Vic, Oval House and Battersea Arts Centre
<i>Liverpool</i>	Liverpool Playhouse & Everyman - Bluecoat and Brindley Arts Centres
<i>West Midlands</i>	Birmingham Rep and Hippodrome

## ON the arts debate...

### Peter J. Pullan

#### Chair, STAGETEXT:

'Today we live in a society that is increasingly diverse. Along with diversity comes the need to create an equal and just society in which access and inclusion are part of the process. This diverse society comprises a range of people paying their fair share of tax, some of which is used to fund the arts. It is considered that the arts are worthy of public funding and therefore the arts should be available to everyone.

Making the *See a Voice* project truly successful will involve much more than providing technology. There is a need for access awareness within the arts world. It is about overcoming the attitudinal barriers that are often the greatest obstacle to inclusion. Speaking as a deaf person who uses the captioning service, I can only say what a great pleasure it is that I can now go to the theatre and enjoy it just like everyone else.



STAGETEXT captioner at Hampstead Theatre. Photo: Gerry Litman

An arts organisation that fully embraces the principles of diversity, access and inclusion will see its supporters grow and will be justified in offering a good account of the way it uses public funding in increasing appreciation of the arts.'

## A new national youth council for theatre

A new national council for youth and participatory theatre has been developed by Arts Council England. Made up of 20 young people aged between 14 and 24, it is part of our Young People's Participatory Theatre project (YPPT), funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

The group includes three young people from London - Osman Bah, 21, from Project Pakhama, Simeilia Hodge-Dallaway, 23, from the Young Vic and Alicia Wilkinson, 17, from Croydon Youth Theatre Organisation.

The YPPT project is a three-year programme to create opportunities and broaden the range of theatre in which young people can participate, as well as strengthening its links with the mainstream theatre industry.

It will also explore opportunities for young people interested in working in theatre and will focus on the full range of theatre practice including circus and street arts.

'Youth theatre is one of the most innovative and creative areas of theatre in this country, yet while much important work is happening, more needs to be done to strengthen and build the sector so that we can increase the opportunities for all young people to engage with and enjoy theatre.'

Peter Hewitt

Chief Executive, Arts Council England

## 1st Framework

Below: *Paradise*, 1st Framework, Stratford Circus, December 2006. Photo: Laurence Burns



1st Framework is a production company and charity that produces theatre from a community and intergenerational angle, and also provides work experience and volunteering opportunities. Recent production *Paradise* involved recording a multi-cultural cross section of 50 Londoners describing what paradise means to them.

*Paradise* was a joint venture between 1st Framework, radio producers Jules Wilkinson, Lore Windemuth and Theatre Venture that involved 1st Framework's over 60s drama group 3rd Thought. It was shown in a number of boroughs across the capital and culminated in a performance at Stratford Circus in December 2006.

Supported by the London Boroughs of Camden, Croydon, Islington, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Westminster and was funded by Arts Council England, London (£24,810 through Grants for the arts) and London Councils. *Paradise* has been short-listed for an Innovation Award by National Institute for Continuing Adult Education and will be shown again at the Capital Age Festival on 17 and 18 August on the South Bank.

## A new boost to funding in outer London theatres

Traditionally, the majority of theatre activity has taken place in central London. People have always 'come into town' to engage with the theatre. However, as London has changed, and the regeneration of industrial land has created new centres for work and living, people want to engage with cultural activity a bit closer to home. There has been a general imbalance in arts provision across the capital - simply less opportunity for those in outer London to engage in high quality arts activities in their communities.

Through our programme of venue development funding, we will be investing £240,000 to directly address this historic under-investment in outer London theatre and to respond to changing demographics. This funding will meet the needs of these communities, furthering opportunities to see theatre at a local venue.

The funding is earmarked for six theatres in outer London, providing them with an opportunity to develop their programmes and reach new audiences for a range of imaginative and thought-provoking theatrical work. The six theatres are the Broadway Theatre, Barking; Croydon Clocktower; Drama Centre, Redbridge; Jackson's Lane, Haringey; Millfield Arts Centre, Edmonton; and Stratford Circus.

The Broadway Theatre has been building audiences for its work for children and families since the venue opened three years ago. Their new programme will further develop the on-stage work, whilst supporting innovative communications strategies including a community Ambassadors scheme. Attendances at arts activity in Barking are amongst the lowest in London, so the theatre had to find ways of communicating with the local community to promote understanding and trust. This included creating a mascot, Barker the bear, who



Above: Workshop event, Stratford Circus. Photo: courtesy Stratford Circus.

appears at an array of community events to promote recognition and trust in the theatre as a destination for local people.

Ann Cooper, Marketing Manager at the venue says, 'The funding has enabled the Broadway to move forward with its audience development strategy, increasing the quality on offer to a hard to reach local community, who previously were deprived of any theatre facility.' She added that the funding also gives the Broadway's strategy 'a stamp of approval' - 'this endorsement has and will continue to aid us in our relationships with other key partners and funders.'

At the Drama Centre in Redbridge, the funding will engage young people in the development of their programme of physical and visual theatre whilst Stratford Circus will focus on work for children and young people, responding to a clear local demand. Croydon Clocktower will build on the

successful previous grant to establish and present work by a new youth circus.

In light of the shifting demographics and major developments such as the Thames Gateway programme and use of the Olympic park after 2012, this investment is a clear response to the changing needs for audiences and artists in London. As Ralph Dartford at the Millfield Arts Centre in Edmonton says, 'It's a great leap forward for us and that's causing a measure of excitement both here at the venue and within the community.'

Below: Broadway Theatre Mascot *Barker*. Photo: courtesy Broadway Theatre



## Creative Partnerships

Right: Pupil taking part in *Photographing Columbia* - a Creative Partnerships London East and South Catalyst Project. Photo: Keith Saunders

Catalyst Projects are developed by a school and a creative partner or partners and for the 2006-7 academic year have focused on developing a distinctive school ethos, exploring the diversity and identity of the school or realising models around student voice.

During the spring term 2007 pupils and staff from Columbia Primary School in Tower Hamlets worked with visual artists Savinder Bual and Stephanie Gill, using digital photography to support the school's aim to engage pupils in learning, understanding, talking and thinking together.

Between September 2006 and April 2007, 35 Catalyst Projects, involving approximately 4,540 young people, 340 teachers and support staff, and 54 creative partners took place in South and East London.

Creative Partnerships London East and South works with 34 core schools and 61 associate schools across eight London boroughs: Hackney, Islington, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark.

Creative Partnerships is the Government's flagship creativity programme for schools and young people, managed by Arts Council England and funded by the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Culture Media and Sport.



## Sign up for information on London 2012

The 2012 Olympics will be a cultural as well as a sporting festival. We are in discussion with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG), the London Development Agency and other partners to ensure that the arts sector will be decisive in delivering that cultural dimension.

In the meantime, visit the LOCOG website to keep in touch with news and developments, or to sign up for the London 2012 e-newsletter: [www.london2012.org](http://www.london2012.org)

# Current publications

## *artists' studios: creating public benefit*

A detailed portrait of the Association for Cultural Advancement through Visual Art (ACAVA) Blechynden Street studios, North Kensington and Chelsea and The Art in Perpetuity Trust's (APT) studios in Harold Works, Deptford.

## *artists' studios: a resource for securing, supporting and creating affordable studios*

A guide for developers and provides list of studio organisation contacts and sources of help and advice.

Launched in February 2007 by Minister for Culture David Lammy MP, these two publications are for developers, local authorities and housing associations. They are based on research commissioned by Acme Studios in 2006 to identify the community, cultural and socio-economic benefit of affordable studio buildings in London. The publications were produced as part of the 'Capital Studios: London Artists' Studios Development Programme' and led by Acme Studios and Arts Council England, London. You can request copies of the above publications through the Acme website [www.acme.org.uk](http://www.acme.org.uk) or by contacting the Acme office on **020 8981 6811**.

## *Open space - Art in the public realm in London 1995 - 2005*

Produced by Arts Council England, London, and Central London Partnership. It showcases inspirational examples of art in public spaces, across a range of diverse contexts within the capital. From artist-designed bridges to temporary performances in tube stations the publication looks at a broad section of the possibilities within the public realm.

*Open space* offers guidance on the commissioning process and features commissioned essays from professionals in the field. Aimed primarily at potential commissioners, such as local authorities, developers, regeneration agencies and healthcare trusts alongside artists, curators and art professionals, the book will become an essential reference guide of outstanding past projects, as well as demonstrating the exciting opportunities of working with artists in the public realm. To order this publication, see [www.openhouse.org.uk](http://www.openhouse.org.uk)

Below: *Evergreen* by David Batchelor, 2003. More London Place, Southwark, London SE1. Commissioned by More London Development Ltd, and curated by Andrea Schlieker, the piece was funded by More London Development Ltd, Pool of London Partnership, and Arts & Business New Partners. Partners included Foster & Partners and Mike Smith Studio and the project also involved artists Fiona Banner and Stephan Balkenhol.



