

news

from arts council england, north west

sixty years
celebrating
the arts

ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND



Imagine the North West without the arts

As we reported in the last issue of *news*, the Arts Council was 60 in August. The arts today are richer, more plentiful and more vibrant than at any time in the last 60 years. The arts, in their many forms, are woven into the identity of cities, towns, villages and rural communities everywhere, not least here in the North West. Our anniversary is an opportunity to reflect on the impact of arts

Matej Andraz Vogrincic, *Untitled*
Commissioned by Liverpool Biennial *International 06*
Photograph by Alexandra Wolkowicz

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funding over the last 60 years. Imagine the North West without the Halle, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Exchange, FACT, the Wordsworth Trust, the fantastic public art that has transformed the waterfronts of Blackpool and Morecambe, or the region's many festivals.

Imagine Kendal without the Brewery or Oldham without the Coliseum. Imagine all the lives and communities that have been changed as a result of the superb work of the many community arts organisations we have funded; from Action Transport Theatre to Prescap, and from Community Arts North West to The Blackie. And that's to name just a few out of thousands of organisations and projects we have supported over the years.

Imagine life without some of our best-loved actors, musicians, writers and visual artists, many of whom learned and developed their craft while working in arts companies and venues funded by the Arts Council. For example, the Everyman in Liverpool was the crucible for an astonishing range of theatrical talent. Julie Walters, Bernard Hill, Antony Sher, Bill Nighy, Alan Bleasdale, Willy Russell, several McGanns and the Liverpool Poets all considered the Everyman a formative home in their early years.

An incredible feature of just the last 10 years has been the explosion of black and minority ethnic artists and organisations in the region, from Millap to the Chinese Arts Centre, and from Benji Reid to the Singh Twins. And again, that's to name just a few.

In particular, in the last 10 years, it's been possible to support this growth in the arts through both the growth in treasury funding and the extraordinary impact of the National Lottery. Following the recent public consultation by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on the future of lottery funding, the arts remain a good cause and the Arts Council will continue to be the distributor of arts lottery investment at least until 2019.

Iconic new buildings have transformed the

cultural landscape – thanks to the National Lottery. The Lowry in Salford is a spectacular architectural landmark. It has brought major social and economic benefits to the area and is one of the most successful regeneration projects in Europe.

The creativity of individual artists underpins the growth of the creative industries. Frequently, individual artists and small companies that receive their initial support from the Arts Council go on to work and thrive in the commercial sector. Claire Norcross was initially supported by the Arts Council's Setting Up Scheme to design innovative lighting using recycled plastic. Claire is now head of lighting design at Habitat.

To mark our 60th birthday, an exhibition of British art from the Arts Council Collection, collected over the past 60 years, is showing at the Hayward Gallery, London until 19 November. The exhibition features work by some of England's most significant and well known artists – past and present.

In partnership with Sainsburys Supermarkets we are producing Art in your hand – sustainable shopping bags, featuring specially commissioned artworks by artists Anya Gallaccio, Michael Craig-Martin and Paul Morrison. Look out for these in branches of Sainsburys from November.

Our 60th anniversary will also mark the start of Arts Council England's first ever public value inquiry. The arts are for everyone and we intend to place public engagement and dialogue at the heart of what we do by addressing questions about purpose, value and accountability. Looking ahead, our aim is to put people at the heart of the arts.

Using a focus on just two of the artform areas we cover – literature and music - this issue of *news* demonstrates how we are supporting our agenda and the six priorities we have outlined for 2006-8. Namely, taking part in the arts, children and young people, the creative economy, vibrant communities, internationalism and celebrating diversity.

Michael Eakin

Executive Director, Arts Council England, North West

The North West of England is home to a vibrant scene of literature festivals, publishers, writing and reading development agencies and centres, critical to the creative economy of this region. They are an integral part and play a pivotal role in the profile raising and distribution of literature in the North West.

Key to this mix are the independent publishers who contribute so much to new writing in the UK. Publishers, from the critically acclaimed poetry publisher Carcanet, synonymous with quality, and operating within an international market, to the relatively newly established, trailblazing, Comma, set up in 2002 to reverse the decline in short fiction. The role that these and several other independent publishers play in a time of an increasing trend towards industry conglomeration should not be underestimated. A progressive and innovative editorial ethos position these independent publishers as leaders in their field, and this is reflected in the success of their numerous award winning writers and titles.

Festivals in the North West have their own identity and character, unique, innovative, edgy, strong on vision – just how North West audiences like it. The enthusiasm and commitment that audiences have for literature in this region is never more evident than in the excitement of the build up to festival week, the programmes, the authors, the venues, the expert panels, the debates, the writers' salons, the work in translation. Unmissable.

Manchester has long been recognised as having the largest, the most diverse and the most vibrant Live Literature scene outside London. Innovators of performance poetry such as Lemn Sissay and Rosie Lugosi are just two of the region's exports to the international stage. The work of agencies such as Speakeasy, Cultureword and Apples & Snakes and their approaches to working in partnership with promoters, artists, venues and audiences in the region has made the case for increasingly significant investment in this area, most recently, the Litup event at the Brewery Arts Centre in Kendal. Hugely popular with audiences,

live literature events showcase an ever increasing supply of new talent to the literature scene and offer a real chance to take part in and experience new writing activities in this region.

In the cultural mix, writers are the pulse of any thriving arts scene. The diversity of talent coming through the North West is a measure of the vibrancy and creativity of the arts in this region. The demand for taking part in this easily accessible artform has never been higher. Writers can avail of professional development and training opportunities to advance their writing, whether they are mid career writers or just starting out. Opportunities range from formal creative writing courses to training for writers working in specialised settings such as libraries, prisons, schools, communities, with industry specialised training in the areas of writing and reader development, publishing, live literature, storytelling, marketing and business development. Employment opportunities come in the form of writers residencies, commissions, workshops, performances, teaching and training, competitions and slams.

Essential to the writers are the readers. Public libraries are hubs of literature activity, not only providing spaces for reading groups and workshops but programming a wide range of live events.

In 2005/06 Arts Council England made awards to the value of £650,000 through Grants for the arts and £500,000 to regularly funded literature organisations. The successful organisations, initiatives and projects funded are too numerous to feature here but you can read in the following pages about some of the activity that is happening in your area. There's something for everyone, so if you're not linked into the literature scene in the North West – you're missing out.

Avril Heffernan

Literature Officer, Arts Council England, North West

Manchester Independent Book Fair

took place in St Ann's Square at the beginning of September. A partnership event run by INDEX and DXN (Diversity Exchange Network), to promote and raise the profile of a diverse independent publishing presence in the region. It also offered a book fair, poetry, readings and the chance to engage with the leading lights of the UK's independent press.

'There was horizontal rain on one of the days,' says Ra Page of INDEX and Comma Press, 'but still people stood there and valiantly listened to poetry and bought books. The independent market is vital at a time when the range of books published by the mainstream press is shrinking. We fill in the gaps – we reflect the voices of the nation, the ethnic diversity, the different life experiences – in a way that does not always happen in the purely commercial sector.'

Manchester Independent Book Fair Photo: Karen Wright Photography

It also provided a platform for the publishing industry to showcase their works and promote their businesses. Ra says: 'It's like organic food – it's an alternative, but one that a lot of people would be interested in if they had access to it, like they now do in supermarkets. Independent publishing just wants to be given a fair chance.'

The fair attracted crowds of people, raising awareness of issues of choice and accessibility in the context of the increasingly limited range of titles available through mainstream bookshops and retail outlets.

Cultureword/Shorelines – Black Publishing Initiative

There are a lot of talented black writers in the region. But there are not a lot of talented black writers getting published.





Research by the Arts Council/The Bookseller in 2004 found the publishing industry was too 'white, middle class, and in danger of losing touch with the buying public'.

A project by Cultureword and Shorelines, using Shorelines' Suitcase imprint, aims to identify, nurture and publish black, Asian and Chinese writers through the Black Publishing Initiative.

Peter Kalu, author and director of Commonword, says: 'The talent is there in the black community in the North, but for a variety of reasons they are not getting a break with publishers. Black writers that are successful tend to be London based. So instead of moaning about it, we thought why not do it ourselves?'

The first novel – *The Curry Mile* by Zahid Hussain – is out on November 2, and an anthology, *Hair*, follows on November 30. There is also an ongoing contest to find the best unpublished black novel.

The Black Publishing Initiative will not only give a voice to talented individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds, but will also contribute to a sustainable creative economy through publishing successful and well-received books and poetry. There will also be continuous development for the writers through a mentoring scheme.

Independent magazines

There is a thriving presence of literary magazines in this region, featuring exciting debut writers and editors. If you are a reader wanting an exciting range of fiction and poetry or a writer looking for ideas and inspiration, you should take a look at some of these titles; *Citizen 32*, *Dreams That Money Can Buy*, *Lampport Court*, *Orbis*, *Pennine Ink*, *PN Review*, *Raindog*, *Smoke*, *The Quiet Feather*, *The Reader*, and *Transmission*. These are just a few of the magazines in the INDEX publishing consortium, supported by Time To Read, with new members joining every day. Check them out.

In this current *news* feature, the spotlight is on this autumn's Manchester Literature Festival (featuring the Manchester Festival of Palestinian Literature) and Lancaster's Litfest. In addition, in the build up to European Capital of Culture 2008 we look at the Writing on the Wall festival. Festivals are becoming synonymous with promoting the region as a cultural destination: the North West arts calendar is packed with literature festivals too numerous to feature here but watch out in the year ahead for Cumbria's Words by the Water, Word Market in Ulverston, Lakeland Festival of Storytelling in Grasmere, Kendal Mountain Book Festival, Wigan's Words 07, Kicking Leaves - East Lancashire's Children's Literature Festival, the Chester Literature Festival and the leading edge Bury Text Festival.

Manchester Literature Festival 12-22 October

We live in a world of ever-changing technology – technology that is now an essential part of our daily lives. One of the strands of the first Manchester Literature Festival, Freeplay, reflects this by integrating these technologies with new creative works. Blogs and text messaging might not fit the traditional image of literature – but here they are, adapted and recreated, to encompass a whole new potential audience.

The Burgess Project is a live literature promenade through the streets of Anthony Burgess's home town. Photos, music, video and text will be sent free to audiences' mobiles en-route.

Anywhereblogs is a new initiative for the whole of Manchester – using the power of the text for more than telling your mates which pub you're in. Review Manchester Literature Festivals events; share your views on Urbis or on the Northern Quarter; in fact on anywhere – this is, after all, Anywhereblogs.

BBC Radio 4 will be broadcasting *Original Modern Stories*, five commissioned works that revolve



Sophie Hannah performing at the 'Welcome to Manchester' culture reception on 24 September for the Labour Party Conference. As part of the Manchester Literature Festival's Original Modern project, Sophie has recently been commissioned to write a short story inspired by Sangam Restaurant, which will be recorded live from the restaurant and broadcast on BBC Radio 4 during the festival. Photo: Karen Wright Photography

around unusual locations such as the Manchester Police Museum – with each recorded in its own unique setting.

Manchester Literature Festival also features two other prominent strands: Independent, reflecting the best in independent publishing, writing and production; and Read, the most exciting authors presented in stimulating surroundings. Don't miss Kwame Dawes, Sebastian Barry, William Boyd, Arundati Subramaniam and many more. The new **Manchester Festival of Palestinian Literature**, which we featured in the last issue of *news*, presents the best Palestinian and diaspora writers over a weekend of readings and debate.

Litfest, 15-19 November

Described by poet Carol Ann Duffy as ‘one of the best-run, warmest and most exciting festivals in England’, Lancaster’s Litfest runs from November 15-19.

Litfest, an Arts Council regularly funded organisation, started in 1978 and is constantly evolving. Director Andy Darby says: ‘It started off wanting to be a mini-Cheltenham, but over the years developed its own voice. I heard it described recently as a little gem – which is true. We don’t have the large scale of other festivals, but what we do have is very good and well thought-out.’

Highlights of the 06 event include the *League of Gentlemen’s* Jeremy Dyson reading from his first novel; short story writer Helen Simpson, and the Flax Books digital anthology launch.



Andy Darby, Litfest Artistic Director. Photo by Jonathan Bean, www.beanphoto.org.uk

Writing on the Wall, May 2007

Liverpool is a city famed for its writing talent, with the likes of Jimmy McGovern, Willy Russell, Roger McGough and Brian Patten all emerging from the banks of the Mersey in recent years.

Since 2000, Writing on the Wall (WOW) has been toasting the old and inspiring the new, with a year-long programme of events that culminates in the annual festival. Next year’s festival is Grants for the arts funded, and an integral part of the city’s European Capital of Culture plans.

Big names attracted by WOW in the past have included Irvine Welsh (who kindly commented ‘there isn’t another writing festival in England as good as WOW’), Noam Chomsky and Roddy Doyle. Literary superstars aside, WOW has at its heart community involvement – empowering and enabling new writers, and enriching lives with its workshops, events and focus on diversity. Thousands of local people have taken part in WOW activities.

Festival coordinator Madeline Heneghan says: ‘That is really what WOW is about – not being elitist. When we get a big name, we try and use that as a way to involve and inspire people in the community. We hold events in places like nightclubs and bars where people actually go in ‘real’ life.’

2007 themes are the bicentennial of the abolition of trans-Atlantic slavery, and Liverpool’s 800th birthday. Guests include Benjamin Zephaniah, Levi Tafari and Jean ‘Binta’ Breeze. The work of Wallasey-born Malcolm Lowry will be explored, alongside contemporary writers like Kevin Sampson.

In addition, the renowned poet Linton Kwesi Johnson will be visiting Liverpool as part of WOW’s contribution to Black History Month this October.

Highlighting new talent, celebrating the established and exploring cutting-edge technologies: Manchester Literature Festival, Lancaster Litfest and Writing on the Wall all contribute to the creative economy of the region.

liverpool stories

vol 1

ramsey campbell
margaret murphy
marin edwards
dinesh allirajah
charlotte allan



Public Libraries

The ability to get lost in a good book, or indeed to write one, is vital to a healthy cultural climate. In an era of fast-food news and 24-hour television, the art of reading and writing is more valuable than ever. Developing projects to encourage reading and writing is key to our commitment to literature: reaching out across all levels of the community not only to nurture new talent, but to widen potential audiences. Writers need readers. Readers need writers. Both are supported by the Arts Council.

Key to the success of the Arts Council's provision in the arts for literature are the professionals located within local authority arts and culture teams. Cheshire County Council and Cumbria County Council both have dedicated posts in reader and writing development. This is critical to the delivery of high quality literature provision in this region and is evident in schemes like the Cheshire Poet Laureate, a post previously held by HMP Styal Prison's Writer in Residence, Joy Winkler and Cumbria's annual The Write Read. Local authority funding of literature development posts enable initiatives such as Time To Read, a consortium of 22 local authorities working to ensure a comprehensive and strategic delivery of reader development activities. As a result of such schemes, the North West is now recognised as one of the progressive regions in the UK in reader development.

Lit Up

A boy band in white suits spouting poetry instead of pop; a blonde wig with a life of its own and a poetry slam to sort the Keats from the naff are among the events that were lighting up the Brewery Arts Centre in Kendal at the end of September.

Lit Up is an event for arts professionals – a chance to showcase and market performance poetry, literature and spoken word and its potential; as well as the opportunity to meet and learn from others involved in the sector. The creative programme was complemented by discussions on producing and programming live literature;

marketing live literature for venues; and the relationship between artists and venues.

Entertaining as the shows and events were, there was also a serious opportunity to learn and plan for the future.

International Mushairas

Celebrating 60 years of the Arts Council, Circle of Literary Friends has its origins way back in 1944, and exists to promote the creativity and work of the Urdu community. It holds workshops, concerts, exhibitions and mushairas, as well as carrying out research.

Ronald Chand says: 'Things have changed a great deal since the 1940s. Now we have offices in Liverpool and Manchester, and we also have an emphasis on international connections now. This year we have sent writers to three events to perform their poetry – in Berlin, Stockholm and Oslo.'

Writers Attachment Scheme

Developing the writers of today and inspiring the writers of tomorrow are the two strands of the Windows Project.

Writers are given training through WAS – the Writers' Attachment Scheme, which gives four new writers a year the skills to work in schools and the community. WISE – Writers In School and Education – fully supports the Arts Council's commitment to young people by helping schools source and afford visiting writers.

A lot of work is also carried out with young people from educationally disadvantaged areas, Saturday clubs in libraries, youth clubs and day centres for elderly and disabled people.

The Wordsworth Trust

Providing one of the most ambitious contemporary poetry reading series in the country, the Wordsworth Trust supports a community of artists and poets in the heart of the Lake District. With a wide-ranging programme of residencies, events, publications and exhibitions, the Wordsworth Trust gives unrivalled opportunities to poets to create and present new work.

Here we have featured just two North West writers both of whom have received Time To Write awards from Arts Council England.

Rosie Garland

Rosie – under the name Rosie Lugosi – is a female drag-queen vampire poet. Her unique visual style and performance skills ensure that once seen, never forgotten. Which is just the way she likes it.

'Well,' she says, 'when you're trying to change people's opinions on things like sado-masochism and queer femininity, there's no use trying to preach to them. I do it differently. I do it sneakily, with humour and through entertainment. It's very subversive – but subversion with glitter!'

As Rosie Lugosi, she found she was being invited all over the world to perform and also to take part in conferences. Unfortunately, most of the time she couldn't afford to get there – until the Arts Council stepped in. She says: 'It was marvellous really. For example I was invited to San Francisco to take part in an event, and wouldn't have been able to afford it. This afternoon in fact I am off to Amsterdam to deliver a paper at a



Rosie Lugosi

conference. I have developed an international network of contacts like I never thought possible – and I'm now something of a cultural export!' Rosie also received support to free up time to write a novel, and receive mentoring during the process from poet John Siddique. She is now on to the second draft of her novel.

Chanje Kunda

Chanje Kunda is an acclaimed spoken word artist, with a passion for poetry, rap, hip-hop and MCing. She has worked alongside some of the world's most renowned modern poets, like Benjamin Zephaniah and Linton Kwesi Johnson.

Chanje came to the Arts Council looking for help in taking her development and her career to the next level. Although popular with women's events and Black History Month, she felt she was not receiving sufficient exposure to get more frequent and varied bookings, despite the accessibility of her work.

Her Grants for the arts funding allowed her to get top-level mentoring that made her vocal, writing and performance skills even better. It also enabled her to make a CD to use to show people exactly what she could do.

She says: 'It's been a huge success on lots of different levels. First of all, it's been a huge success for me – after all the extra training I got, the standard of my work just went up so much, I really raised my game, and apart from anything else it showed me what I was capable of achieving! It also showed other people as well – and I can use the CD to send out to show what I do. It was also used on the BBC Manchester website.'

'It has resulted in more bookings, I've performed in London and Birmingham and Manchester. As well as that, it has opened more doors creatively for me – people who have listened to it have wanted to collaborate with me or work on new projects, so it's all been very exciting.'

You can see and hear some of Chanje's work on www.myspace.com/chanjekunda

Encapsulating the North West music scene in a few paragraphs is an exercise in what to leave out, rather than what to put in. What a great problem to have!

Whether talking about contemporary or classical music, the depth and breadth of activity in this region is extraordinary. Take for instance classical music, and take for example just Manchester. Within a square mile we have the Halle, Camerata, BBC Phil, Royal Northern College of Music, Chethams and Bridgewater Hall. Nowhere else in England (including London) is there such a close proximity of internationally famous organisations dedicated to classical music. Of course this is just Manchester. The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra is a key flagship for our Capital of Culture, we have an extraordinary voluntary sector encompassing choirs, concert promoting societies and ensembles across the region, and I haven't even mentioned the countless number of small chamber concerts that take place each week or our contemporary music ensembles such as Psappha and Ensemble 10:10.

Another success story is our music festivals. There is huge diversity here – geographically, culturally, socially and of course representing genres across the spectrum. To name but a few - Futuresonic's increasing influence represents a growing interest in electronica in the region and many, such as the Lake District Summer Music festival and the Cornerstones festival in Liverpool have seen spectacular rises in audience attendances over the last three years. Dpercussion, the largest urban music event in the north of England, attracted an audience of over 50,000 in 2005 and Africa Oye continues to draw thousands of fans. There is remarkable strength in the region's jazz festivals. Appleby has extended its reach to encompass world music strands and the Manchester Jazz Festival is now highly regarded on a national canvas. South Asian music is also growing in reputation on the national canvas. And last year Milap created the first ever Arts Council revenue funded South Asian music ensemble as part of a range of initiatives designed to build capacity within the sector.

This year, in the North West, the Arts Council has

been focusing on the music industry, or to be precise, the music entrepreneurs working within the music industry. This may seem unusual terrain for us, but recently we have experienced a large rise in the number of approaches from entrepreneurs who have been finding it increasingly difficult to capitalise on the opportunities made available through both the fragmentation of important elements of the music industry and ground breaking developments in technology. We have been consulting a range of individuals and organisations interested in the success of our music entrepreneurs, to see if there is an approach that could draw together a range of partners to provide strategic support for the benefit of all. This work is at an early stage and details of where we are up to can be found in the report *Music Industry Project North West* on our website at www.artscouncil.org.uk/northwest

I have not touched on our strengths in music education, music manifesto projects, our four Youth Music Action Zones, our major capital development to create a home and touring lynchpin in the region for jazz, world and African and Caribbean music, our art06 winner More Music in Morecambe or a great many other projects and organisations.

In the pages that follow are just a few of many stories, chosen to give a flavour of Arts Council supported work in the region. These examples were not chosen with any theme in mind, however they all have something important in common - a portfolio economy. We are now living in a complex, diverse and fast moving arts world, and in this environment the success stories are coming from those organisations and individuals with flexible skills able to develop work in diverse settings with a range of partners.

The Arts Council is working to create opportunities for artists and organisations with this kind of entrepreneurial approach. It is something that musicians and music managers have always excelled at, so hopefully the future will continue to be bright.

Eddie Thomas

Music Officer, Arts Council England, North West

Sense of Sound and Jennifer John

Jennifer John is gearing up for a busy autumn. And 2007. And 2008...

The singer/vocal coach/director of Sense of Sound has recently appeared in part one of *Ornamental Happiness*, a show in song and circus that will be staged in all its glory in Liverpool in 2008, when it celebrates its time as European Capital of Culture.

She is also busy preparing for her role in *King Cotton* – an awe-inspiring and epic musical drama scripted by Jimmy McGovern, and telling the tale of cotton-related journeys from the deep south of America to the mills of Yorkshire. Again, the full production will be in 2008. She says: 'The show is amazing. We did three performances at



Jennifer John

The Lowry to attract investors, and everyone was impressed. It is going to be fabulous.'

Jennifer is also busy gigging with her band, as well as dedicating much of her time to Grants for the arts funded Sense of Sound. She says: 'There is no real separation between me and Sense of Sound. I am one of Sense of Sound's artists, as well as an artistic director. I don't think I would have enjoyed the profile I do as Jennifer John without the support of Sense of Sound.'

As a singer, Jennifer has worked alongside the likes of Elton John, Sir Paul McCartney and George Michael. Her coaching skills, via Sense of Sound, have helped many big names, including Natasha Hamilton and Jennifer Ellison, as well as a host of people on the BBC show *Can't Sing Singers*. She enjoyed chart success with a reworking of the classic *Just Can't Wait (Saturday)*, which has become a dancefloor classic.

Launched way back in 1991, Sense of Sound is now an integral part of its home city of Liverpool, as well as enjoying a national and international reputation. Its list of services has expanded to include vocal coaching, a session agency, corporate training, workshops and large scale projects. They help singers develop to their full potential, and help them actually get work, as well as fulfilling the needs of the creative and corporate sectors by providing agency services.

Jennifer was also named as Businesswoman of the Year for Arts and Culture at the European Federation of Black Women Business Owners.

Current good news is that the Sense of Sound choir has won through to the final of their category of the Radio Three Choir of the Year contest, and they also plan a massive 2008-strong a capella performance to celebrate Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture, called *2008 Voices*.

Tarang musician Surmeet Singh Dhadyalla performing at the 'Welcome to Manchester' culture reception on 24 September for the Labour Party Conference. Photo: Karen Wright Photography



Milap

Taken from the Sanskrit, Milap means 'to meet each other in friendship', and this year-round celebration of South Asian arts has done much to promote knowledge and appreciation across the North West and nationwide.

Formed in Liverpool back in 1985, it was originally just a weekend programme – now it is a premier year-round South Asian Arts Festival, and one of our regularly funded organisations.

Milap celebrates all that is good in South Asian arts – music, dance, theatre and film are all included. It has taken a lead role in working with the Arts Council nationally to help develop promoter networks and pathways in education for the sector.

Musically, it is responsible for a wide range of projects: Samyo, the National South Asian Youth Orchestra; Tarang, the National South Asian Music Ensemble and the first ever Arts Council revenue funded South Asian ensemble; and Sangeet Sabha, the annual South Asian music conference.

On 5 November it holds Diwali Dhamaka! at The Lowry – a day-long series of events, culminating in a night of spectacular music and fireworks.

Milap has brought a diverse selection of music and dance to British audiences, as well as allowing internationally renowned music and dance maestros to come to the UK to share their knowledge and talent with new students at special residential retreats. Its director, Prashant Nyak, says: 'The retreats are extremely popular – the range of people of different ages and backgrounds is excellent, and the maestros have so much to share. It is very exciting for everybody taking part.'

Lake District Summer Music

Lake District Summer Music, based in Kendal, is another of our regularly funded music organisations. With more than 150 musicians, 18 venues, and an ambitious summer school

programme, Lake District Summer Music likes to set itself a challenge.

In 2006, they excelled: with bookings up by a staggering 35 per cent.

According to administrator Andrew Lucas, that success is down to three main elements: some excellent deals, an enhanced PR campaign that brought the festival to the attention of a lot more people, and, of course, a superb product.

Combining education through the International Summer School and Young String Venture, and performance through the festival, Lake District Summer Music brings together a unique blend of music – opera, chamber and masterclasses among them – in a mouthwatering location.

Andrew says: 'It has been shown scientifically – kind of! – that the Lake District has the most beautiful countryside in the world, so we have claimed somewhat tongue in cheek to have the most beautiful festival setting in the world. There is no arguing that it is a stunning place, and when coupled with a superb programme of music, it makes it a very attractive proposition.

'I think people are also attracted by the charm of it – we have 18 locations, throughout Cumbria, and some are professional venues like theatres and arts centres, but some are churches, and in the past we have even used a steamboat museum! That is another detail that sets it apart. It can feel quite comedic actually, arranging the logistics of what is a very ambitious programme, across a whole county and at all these different venues. But as long as the audiences come out smiling, we are happy.'

Planning is already underway for the 2007 and 2008 festivals, and the challenge is to maintain the level of success enjoyed this year.

There are also plans to celebrate the diversity of music in November, with Music From A Foreign Land – focusing on Africa this time, and South America next year.

Halle Orchestra

The Halle is feeling good – and it wants to share that with the world. Joining the seven other publicly-funded symphony orchestras in blowing their own trumpets, the Halle is taking part in a publicity and lobbying campaign not only to raise the profile of classical music, but also to celebrate all that is good about their world. John Summers, Chief Executive of the Halle, says: ‘There is a lot to celebrate at the moment. The Arts Council has been hugely instrumental in allowing us to throw off certain historic shackles, and encouraging us to take risks and move forward. We have been invested in and as a result are in pretty good shape, so this seemed like a good time to tell our story.

‘This is an exciting time for us. We want to let people know what is going on, off stage as well as on. For example, we want to work closely with

educators and local authorities, to do some really innovative work with them. The founder of the Halle didn’t just found an orchestra, but also a choir and a music college. It’s about taking what we can do into the community, to as wide an audience as possible.’

Last season, more than a quarter of a million people heard the Halle. Around 20,000 of them were young people, through the orchestra’s education programme.

The Halle was also performing as part of the Labour Party Conference last month, with the youth choir singing *Jerusalem* and *Red Flag* at the close, and a brass quintet contributing a rousing start to the first proper day of the event.

The chief music critic for *The Times* recently rated the Halle as number one on the league table for British orchestras!

Mark Elder at Halle Summer Roadshow, with pupils from St Peter’s RC High School, Longsight. Photo: Halle Concerts Society



Cumbrio



Zeus representing Cumbrio at Solfest

The pop music business is high profile in the British economy – the annual ritual of finding out who is number one; following the careers of our favourite stars, waiting for new albums to come out. It's an integral part of our culture.

But at grass roots level, it can be a tough industry to crack: hard for bands to find good venues; hard for venues to find good bands; hard for promoters to do their stuff and take risks.

The Cumbrio project is operated by Generator and is creating a network of gigs, nights and promoters across the Cumbrian region. Promoters are given special training and support, and each runs at least one night a month. There is a Resource Guide packed with information on the music scene in the county, showcases and seminars with industry experts. The long-term aim is to raise the profile of the music community in Cumbria, as well as developing a network of like-minded people who can share their skills on the creative and the practical aspects of music. Bands benefit by finding great nights run by enthusiastic people, and venues and promoters gain access to the talent and support they need.

As the Cumbrio website wisely advises: 'Stay involved – or stay in your garage.'

Visit www.cumbrio.org.uk or www.generator.org.uk for more information.

NWJazzworks

As already highlighted by Eddie Thomas, our Music Officer, in his introduction to this feature on music, there is remarkable strength in the region's jazz festivals. However, this success for jazz festivals is not mirrored by the infrastructure for the genre. This is a nationwide problem and last year we asked musician and activist Kathy Dyson to consult the region's jazz community on how this problem might be approached. Kathy found that a lot of work was needed in helping to promote, develop and structure a proper jazz community, and that one of the main issues was a lack of consistent performance opportunities.

The Arts Council listened, and the result was the creation of a new North West jazz development agency, NWJazzworks, to take on the role of supporting the sector. NWJazzworks is one of only three jazz music development agencies in the country. It concentrates on three main strands – the jazz musician, the jazz venue/promoter, and the audience. Its aim is to improve the touring network, improve quality and simply get more bums on seats as well. They want to see professional development of musicians, and venues, as well as offering marketing contacts nationwide.

Run by the team behind the Manchester Jazz Festival – Mick Waterfield, Carolyn Broomhead and Steve Mead – it also has a superb website resource at www.nwjazzworks.org, coordinated by Lucy Power from getintojazz.

When asked about NWJazzworks' progress so far, Mick Waterfield explained: 'At the moment the website is to some extent the public face of the organisation. We aim to keep it as informative and relevant as possible. We also focus on offering support and advice to musicians, and trying to set up a touring network. We visit different places, I'm just back from Liverpool for example, to make sure we know and keep contact with the jazz communities across the region.'

Creative Rural Economy Conference

Farmers, rural leaders, artists, architects and designers recently gathered to discuss how the arts and creative industries can play a key role in rural regeneration.

The conference, held at the University of Lancaster, was funded through a partnership between Lancashire Leader + and Northern Marches Leader + and the Arts Council and coordinated by Littoral, a regularly funded organisation based in Rossendale.

Creating employment, attracting visitors and new businesses all formed part of the debate alongside study tours to creative projects in Lancashire and Cumbria.

The conference attracted over 200 delegates from across the globe including the UK, Europe, USA and Australia.

The final day culminated in discussions on how best to ensure the creative sector connects into, and can benefit from, the changes to rural funding and structures.

A key objective of the conference was for North West partners to place this region at the forefront of promoting new models of creative practice in the social and economic revitalisation of our rural communities.

Strawthenon by Amazon Nails at Lancaster University, launched as part of the Creative Rural Economy Conference. Photo: Neil Morrin





Big Dance

Big Dance, an eight-day national celebration of dance, took place across the UK from 15-23 July. As previewed in the last issue of *news*, there were lots of opportunities to get involved in Big Dance in the North West, and many people did just that.

One of the aims of Big Dance was to introduce new audiences and participants to dance. When evaluating the impact of the project, of those people questioned, two thirds of 'new attenders' said they would be likely to come to another free dance event; 37 per cent of those questioned already took part in dance activities; and 52 per cent already watched dance activities.

Other findings of the evaluation, which was conducted by Arts About Manchester, were that Big Dance appealed to a diverse range of people; it was the first attendance at a dance event for approx 53 per cent of those questioned; and the most popular activities for respondents were attending music concerts, and playing sport, attending a museum, or going to the theatre.

When asked about her personal favourite memories of the event, Pam Johnson, our Dance Officer, commented: 'Seeing passers by and shoppers stop to watch dance performances and then enquire about where they can take part in a local dance class. And being asked by tourists if Manchester was always like this and if their Big Dance balloon would stay inflated all the way back to the Lake District!'

Pam added that this event would not have been possible without partnership support from Manchester City Council, Big Dance festival producers Dance Initiative Greater Manchester and Manchester International Arts to name but a few.

Big Dance North West/Urban Moves - Freedom in Dance performing 'What you looking at?' aka 'In da hood', cross-generational dance, choreographed by Resonance Dance Company. Photo: Brian Slater

Welcome to Manchester

The Arts Council hosted a 'Welcome to Manchester' culture reception on 24 September for the Labour Party Conference.

The night was a huge success, with just over 300 people in attendance from both the arts and political sectors. Guests were treated to a variety of performances throughout the night, with speakers including the Minister for Culture, David Lammy MP.

The Culture Reception was hosted in partnership with the BBC, Museums, Libraries and Archives, Manchester City Council, and Northwest Regional Development Agency.



'Welcome to Manchester' culture reception at Manchester Art Gallery. Photo: Karen Wright Photography

Staff update

Tina Taylor, the Operations Manager for Creative Partnerships Merseyside began her maternity leave on 23 June. **Jo Silvester** has been seconded to this role from 19 June 2006, with **Walter Ward** covering the role of Finance Assistant Officer until the end of January 2007. **Lindsey Vigurs** joined us from West Midlands Creative Partnerships as the Assistant Officer, Higher Education on 12 July 2006. **Claire Garratt** has taken on the role of Assistant Officer, Touring from 24 July 2006, with **Ewa Panfil** covering the role of Departmental Administrator, Performing Arts until the end of December 2006. **Rebecca Hilton** returned from maternity leave on 13 September as the Social Inclusion Assistant Officer, working part time (2 days per week). **Lisa Evans** left us on 29 September 2006 to take up the role of Senior Administrator working in a Victim Care Unit.

Liverpool Biennial

Liverpool Biennial, one of our regularly funded organisations, is the UK's only recognised international festival of contemporary visual art.

The fourth Liverpool Biennial opened on 16 September and runs until 26 November. The main activity is around International 06 which as well as taking place across several venues also includes work in the public realm by celebrated artists such as Matej Andraz Vogrincic, Priscilla Monge and Rigo 23.

Other strands of the festival include John Moores 24 painting exhibition and Bloomberg New Contemporaries. Running alongside the main festival is the artist-generated Independents Biennial Liverpool 2006. This showcases artwork by over 150 North West, UK and international artists across 62 venues and spaces throughout the city of Liverpool.

Further details and news about the festival can be found at www.biennial.com

news

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The next issue of *news* is due out in the new year.

You can get this publication in Braille, in large print, on CD and in electronic formats. If you need any of these formats, please contact us as follows.

Phone: 0845 300 6200; textphone: 0161 834 9131;

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If you move house or premises or if your newsletter is being sent to the wrong person, please notify our communications unit on 0161 827 9256.

information update

Issue 12 of our bi-monthly online *Information update*, which includes details of funding, opportunities, jobs, courses, conferences and seminars, and publications, is available on our website. The production schedule for the next issue is as follows:

issue	copy deadline	publishing date
13	Monday 27 November	Friday 1 December

Please let us have any material you would like included by 5pm on the copy deadline date, by post, fax or email. The email address to send copy to is digest.nw@artscouncil.org.uk

Please note that we do not include listings of arts events.

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