



Response to South Asian Dance and Music Mapping Study:

A Strategic Overview

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Introduction

In response to growing discourse and evidence highlighting the challenges facing the South Asian dance and music sectors, Arts Council England commissioned Courtney Consulting to undertake a mapping study in order to present a clear and detailed picture of the current breadth of practice within the South Asian dance and music ecology in England. This research was undertaken between October 2019 and March 2020, and the results are published here within the ***South Asian Dance & Music Mapping Study***.

The Arts Council receives few applications from South Asian artists; despite a relatively high number of schools and tutors, it appears that these artists are not making the transition to professional practice. Further investigation revealed challenges around leadership and training opportunities. The report was commissioned to provide evidence and inform how the Arts Council and the sector can best respond to these challenges.

The following outlines the initial phase of Arts Council's strategic thinking and our commitment to work with the sector to ensure the continued growth and development of South Asian music and dance in England. We acknowledge the challenges highlighted within the report, that many of the concerns raised are not specific to the South Asian music and dance sectors, and that success in addressing these can only be achieved in partnership with the sector. We will look to forthcoming developments within our broader programmes to respond to some of the conclusions of the report, although we also recognise that achieving long-term change will be an ongoing process.

As is noted in the report, the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the wider cultural sector has delayed the publication of this work. It has also caused a seismic shift in the UK and indeed in the global cultural landscape. Although the implications of the pandemic are not specifically referenced in the report, its impact is being considered in all our work moving forward. As we continue to develop the Delivery Plan for Let's Create, we will ensure this report contributes to our thinking in finalising Arts Council's new investment principles.

Advocacy

We will ensure that this report, and our response, is disseminated widely to key stakeholders and have encouraged the wider sector to share it with their networks.

In order to begin to address the findings of the report internally, we will bring together an internal working group to specifically look at the evidence provided by the report and the issues raised. Over the coming months, this working group will be open to conversations with the sector, and we will support Relationship Managers to work with National Portfolio Organisations and the wider sectors to understand how they can better support practitioners and target opportunities.

Funding

The report clearly highlights the importance of extending training and practice through visits to India and other South Asian countries. Developing your Creative Practice (DYCP) is a clear route for such activity - and we have increased investment in this programme to £18 million between October 2020 and October 2021. We will work with the sector to target specific groups for advice-giving, to ensure that more South Asian applicants are aware of the possibilities of this fund.

Our data shows that although we receive fewer applications from South Asian artists to National Lottery Project Grants (NLPG), success rates are generally higher than average. As with Developing your Creative Practice, we will target advice giving and work with the sector to encourage more applications. However, we also recognise the need to reach a wider pool of applicants and broaden the range of South Asian genres we support. These are areas which we hope to address through changes already being made to the NLPG programme, which will be relaunched in 2021.

Relationship Managers will work with other partners, such as local authorities and local cultural organisations, to offer advice-giving surgeries, and we encourage sector organisations and artists to make use of these opportunities and to work with us to develop similar support mechanisms in their own right. We will also work to prepare case studies of successful applications to share across our website and social media channels.

Networking

Arts Council England will convene our South Asian National Portfolio Organisations, all of whom engaged with the consultation phase for this research, to ascertain their response to the project and how the findings within the report will impact their future thinking. We look forward to discussing their views, especially around the barriers that artists have reported within the consultation.

We will seek support from our Digital Culture Network to provide advice and sessions, where possible, on the specific digital needs as highlighted in the report. The report has provided a resource for the sector that maps South Asian music and dance organisations, individuals and activity nationally. As well as feeding into Arts Council's own place-based thinking in terms of how and where we target resources, we hope that through discussions, we can find an appropriate place to host this new digital resource, which will be shared widely for the benefit of the entire sector.

The Arts Council will work with the sector to convene a symposium to discuss the outcomes of the report. Through this symposium we will seek to facilitate conversations within the sector that will help develop future actions, empower sector stakeholders of all kinds and identify responsibilities.

Conclusions

We are encouraged by the enthusiasm of the many organisations and individuals who have already indicated that they are keen to respond to this report and have used its development to shape their strategic thinking, demonstrating the value of commissioning this piece of work. We would encourage all those working across the South Asian music and dance sectors to engage with this research, to consider the impact on their own

practices, and to join with others in exploring how, collectively, we may be able to respond.

Arts Council encourages the development of partnerships and will, where appropriate, seek to facilitate these to respond to particular barriers and challenges set out in the report. As an extensive piece of work, we envisage that the outcomes of this report can only be fully realised through a long-term and strategic approach, which – if embraced and embedded across the wider sector - will align with our 10-year strategy.

Arts Council England is committed to this long-term approach to support, build and develop South Asian music and dance, in partnership with relevant sector bodies. Through the initial steps of convening our existing South Asian National Portfolio Organisations to discuss their response to this research, and by holding a sector symposium next year, we will begin to shape the more detailed and long-term actions that can be taken forward from this insightful report.

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