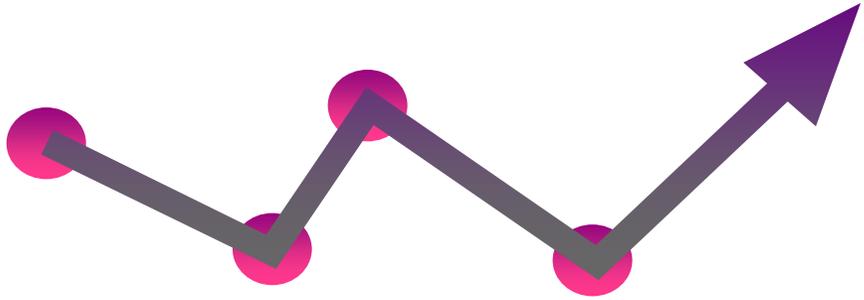




South Asian Music & Dance Mapping Study Training, Progression & Leadership

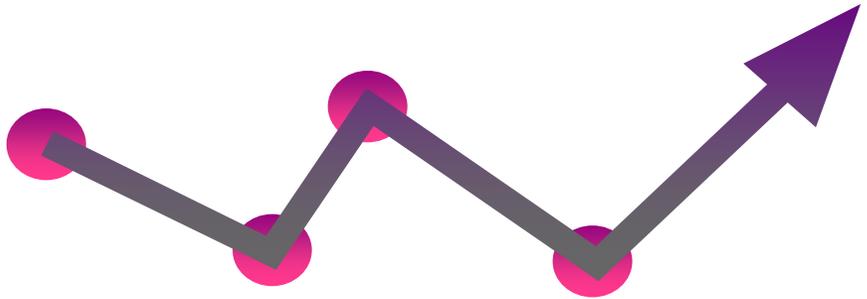
Executive Summary December 2020



The brief

Courtney Consulting commissioned in October 2019:

- ❖ Arts Council England (ACE) is seeking to appoint an experienced research supplier to undertake a mapping exercise within the South Asian dance and music sector in England. The research will draw on previous insight in combination with further consultation within the sector to help identify gaps, highlight opportunities and make actionable conclusions to the Arts Council.
- ❖ **Key Project Drivers:**
 - ❑ Applications and awards for Arts Council funding from South Asian applicants are currently very low.
 - ❑ We perceive that there are a large amount of British South Asian musicians and dancers that, despite the number of schools and tutors available, aren't able to access the professional sector for a number of reasons.
 - ❑ Other research into the South Asian sector has also revealed challenges around leadership development and progression opportunities for South Asian classical dance and music artists, as well as a need to further investigate possible training courses for South Asian dance and music.
 - ❑ The need to champion and advocate for the Creative Case for Diversity which is undermined by the above factors.



Methodology

Secondary desk research and analysis:

Literature review of relevant work in this area, market analysis and mapping excel doc with 617 entries* also programmed into a google maps doc.

1	NAME	ORGANISATION <small>(e.g. CEO, Artistic Director, Founder, Chair)</small>	UK REGION	ORGANISATION TYPE	FORM PRACTICED OR OFFERED	CORE ACTIVITIES	EMAIL	WEBSITE
2	Aakash Odedra	n/a	East Midlands	South Asian Dancer	Bharatanatyam, Kathak			
3	Aakash Odedra Company	Aakash Odedra	East Midlands	South Asian Dance Company	Bharatanatyam, Kathak			
4	Abhi Kodanda	n/a	North West	South Asian Dancer	Kuchipudi			
5	Abhinandana Dance Academy	Abhi Kodanda	North West	South Asian Dance School / Academy	Kuchipudi			
6	Abhinaya Dance Academy	Esther Sunija Binu	Scotland	South Asian Dance School / Academy	Bharatanatyam			
7	Abi Sampanthan	n/a		South Asian Musician	Vocalist			
8	Abirami Eswar	n/a	Greater London	South Asian Dancer	Kathak			
9	Akademi	Mira Kaushik	Greater London	South Asian Dance Producer or Production Company				
10	Akram Khan Company	Akram Khan	Greater London	South Asian Dance Company	Kathak			
11	Akshay Prakash	n/a		South Asian Dancer	Bharatanatyam, Violin, Vocalist			
12	Alchemy Festival	Southbank Centre	Greater London	Venue - Arts Venue	Not applicable			
13	Alaur Rahman			South Asian Musician	Vocalist			
14	Amanjot Sangha	n/a		South Asian Musician				
15	Amina Khayyam	n/a	South East England	South Asian Dancer	Kathak			
16	Amina Khayyam Dance Company	Amina Khayyam	South East England	South Asian Dance Company	Kathak			
17	Amrit Dhuffer	n/a		South Asian Musician	Tabla			
18	Anand Bhatt	n/a	East Midlands	South Asian Arts Producer or Production Company	Not applicable			

Sort A to Z
Sort Z to A
Sort by Color
Clear Filter From "CORE ACTIVITIES"
Filter by Color
Text Filters
Search

- (Select All)
- Artist Development
- Artist Development, Dance Classes, Dance Production or Curation, Dance Performance, Dance Production or Curation, Learning & Participation
- Artist Development, Dance Performance, Learning & Participation
- Artist Development, Dance Performance, Learning & Participation, Dance Production or Curation, Dance Performance, Learning & Participation
- Artist Development, Dance Workshops, Music Workshops, Combined Arts Festival, Music Performance, Music Production or Curation
- Choreographer
- Choreographer, Dance Performance
- Choreographer, Dance Performance, Dance Production or Curation
- Choreographer, Dance Performance, Learning & Participation
- Choreographer, Dance Performance, Music Workshops
- Choreographer, Dance Performance, Teacher
- Choreographer, Dance Performance, Teacher, Dance Workshops
- Choreographer, Dance Production or Curation, Artist Development, Music Workshops, Learning & Participation
- Combined Arts Festival
- Combined Arts Festival, Dance Classes, Music Classes, Dance Performance, Music Performance, Music Production or Curation
- Composer
- Composer, Music Performance
- Composer, Music Performance, Music Production or Curation
- Composer, Music Performance, Music Workshops
- Composer, Music Performance, Music Workshops, Teacher

*All data sourced from publically available sources in accordance with GDPR guidelines.

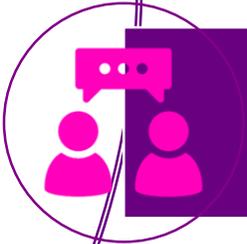
Primary research – quantitative and qualitative:



Sector Survey – 219 responses



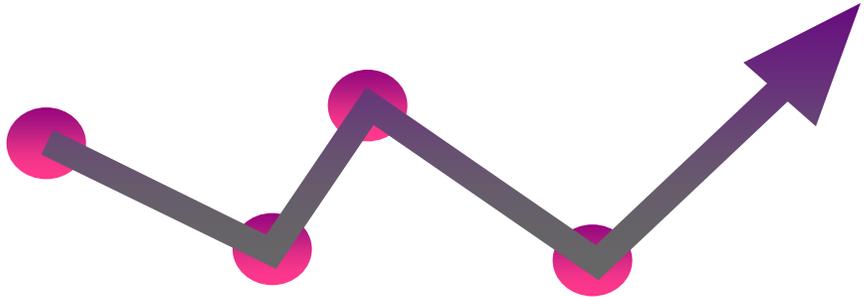
One to one artist depth interviews x 84



One to one stakeholder depth interviews x 18



Round table discussions x 3 with 42 artists (London, Birmingham, Manchester)



Market Analysis Key Findings

Market Analysis - Key Findings

The community who self-identify as South Asian in the UK make up more than 5.3% of the population, the largest sub groups being those who self-identify as Indian (2.5%), Pakistani (2%) and Bangladeshi (0.8%).

Relative to the general population those of Asian ethnicity tend to be younger, with a significant proportion being aged under 18 years.

The Bangladeshi ethnic group had the highest percentage of people under 18 years (38.3%), followed by Pakistani (36.2%); the Indian ethnic group had one of the lowest under 18 yrs groups (15.6%) .

According to the December 2019 Govt 'Taking Part Survey', 59.7% of people with Asian ethnicity took part in the arts, the lowest percentage out of all ethnic groups.

According to the mapping research Bharatanatyam, Kathak and Odissi appear to be the most practiced classical dance forms, whilst Bollywood is the most practiced of the popular forms and Bhangra the most practiced of the folk dances.

According to the mapping research Vocal appears to be the most frequent South Asian music form amongst musicians followed by Tabla, Sitar, Harmonium, Bhajan, Guitar and Veena.

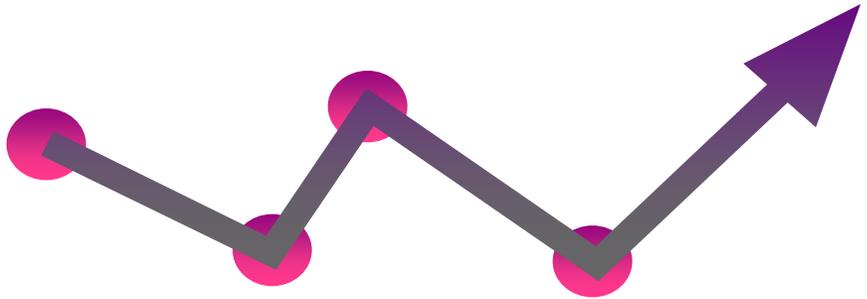
It appears that the current spread of South Asian dance and music activity is particularly dominant in the region of Greater London, most closely followed by the West Midlands, South East and East Midlands.

Current applications from the South Asian dance and music sector to ACE across all programmes is low but particularly low for National Lottery Project Grant applications for over £15k and National Activities.

A lack of information and the proposed project not having been thought through enough were the principal reasons for ACE applications being ineligible due to being 'underdeveloped'; whilst lesser quality, less clear artistic and public outcomes, and less public outcomes overall were principal reasons that South Asian applications weren't favoured compared to successful applicants.

Market Analysis - Key Findings

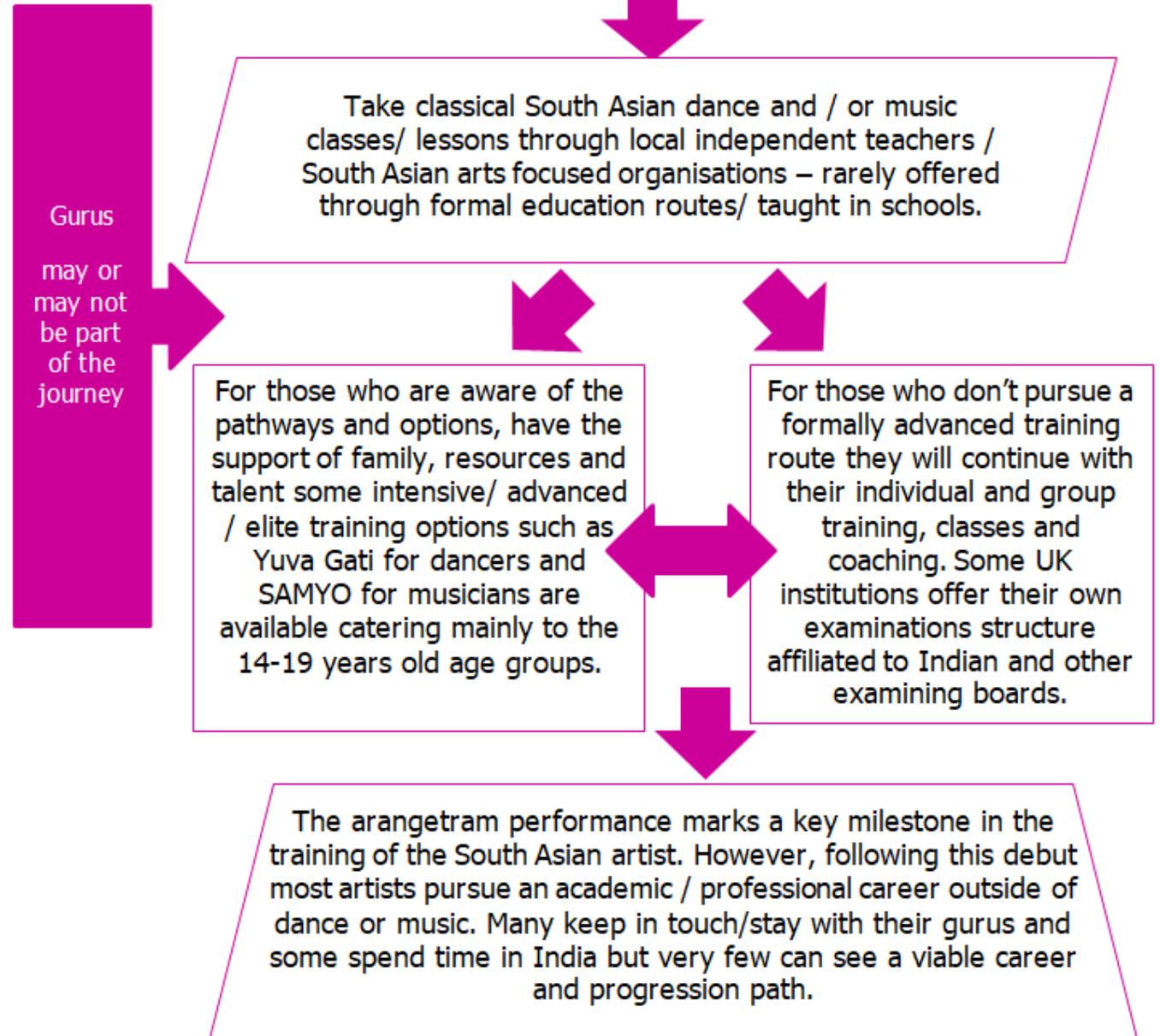
- ❑ There is a need for any activity and development of the South Asian dance and music sector to be mindful of the great diversity that exists within England's South Asian communities, with particular focus on those of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and Afghani ethnicity (who represent the most significant populations). It will be important to ensure that those from all ethnic groups/countries of births are targeted with opportunities.
- ❑ **The research undertaken during this study has highlighted a strong perception that, in its current state, the sector is strongly biased towards artforms and practitioners linked to India and, as such, the term "South Asian" is disingenuous.** The profile of respondents to the online survey delivered as part of this study suggests a great deal needs to be done to better engage with those who self-identify as Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Afghani, or Nepalese, with little to no representation from these communities.



Training Insights

Training Insights

South Asian dancers and musicians both share a similar training trajectory:



Training Insights – our survey said...

❖ The most important factors that have enabled individuals to be a practicing South Asian musician and/or dancer in descending order were:

1. Individual time spent training and honing my practice
2. Training under a guru
3. Support of parents/family
4. Weekly dance/music lessons at a local dance/music school

❖ **74% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement:** The current training and progression routes for most South Asian dancers and musicians in the UK does not adequately prepare them for the professional rigour and standards required to work, develop and achieve at a world class level.

Respondents were provided with an opportunity to state if there is anything else that has been important or very important to helping them develop a career as a professional dancer or musician. Answers that came up repeatedly included:

- Performing
- Dedication and hard work
- Peer support and networks
- Funding
- Networking
- Accessing/experiencing the work of other artists
- Collaborating with other artists
- Mentors
- Love/passion of their chose artform
- Expansion of their knowledge and understanding of the artforms.
- Other things of note were access to affordable space (studio, rehearsal, performance) and having the necessary business skills required.

Training Insights



Socio economic and class factors influence the talent pool

- “When you start chipping away at it, posh actors will always talk about their parents taking them to things, that’s no different to South Asian posh families – it’s a bit of an echo chamber in my opinion for the NPOs focusing on the classical bubble. You’re performing to the same people with the same thing. That stunts training and progression.”



Dance/Music not generally considered a credible career option culturally

- “Awareness needs to be created with parents that artist careers can be possible. We need to challenge the mind-set in the culture.”
- “The cultural barriers are huge, most South Asian families don’t feel dance is a viable option as a career.”



Relevance to their lives is critical to artform engagement and connection for young artists

- “There’s not much thinking about where the art forms fall within contemporary England and the young people and artists living here.”
- “I feel worried about Kathak that it might become some faint history of India that we used to have in Britain. I was in a school today, nearly all Asian kids, but they had never come across Kathak. If I told them it was a vegetable, they’d have believed me.”



If you can’t see it you can’t be it – young artists need visibility of other people like them who’ve ‘made it’

- “That’s where dance and music advocacy comes from and the need to do this from the school level. If children see what to aspire to at school and train from then they can achieve their dreams of being a musician or dancer in this field.”
- “As a youngster, it would have changed all the events in my life if I’d seen or been exposed to people in the career and seen the possible career or pathway I could have followed.”

Training Insights



Current training routes aren't producing 'rounded' artists ready for all aspects of professional practice

- "Once you know your technique well you then you need to learn to perform. That is another type of training. I've struggled to find performers; I find those who are well trained are not always good at performing."
- "Indian classical teaches pieces that already exist, you're not pushed to compose and write and that's a skill you don't learn in classical music so it would have been useful to have had some training in."



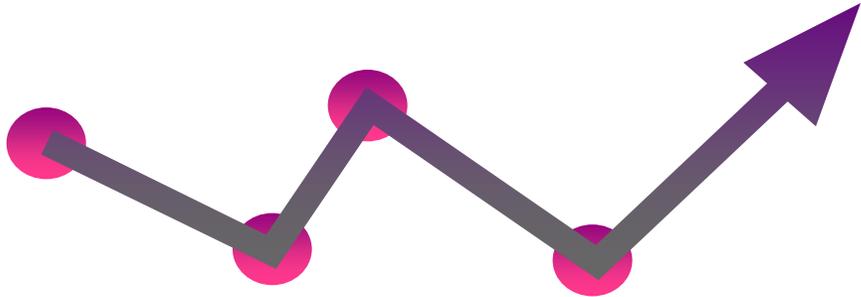
Lack of standardised accreditation/quality indicators undermines credibility and limits opportunity

- "I see no evidence of the benefit of ISTD training. They enter into formalised training up to 16 – 18 years, then go to University and become doctors and never dance again. We aren't creating artists."
- "So when we talk about how you measure quality you end up falling into the same measures, in ballet for example there's a whole range of levels that says, 'that's good' and some organisations you just know that will be good because of their reputation. For non-westernised art forms, we haven't cracked how we confidently talk about what good looks like."



Young artists feel undervalued and sometimes exploited

- "When I got to the professional stages I saw a lot of negativity about being a South Asian dancer or musician in the UK. An institution would hire you if you're prepared to do it for free or peanuts. I helped my teacher to teach which was great but the leaders know the problems musicians have and they still prey on you to do it for free or they'll go to someone else who'll do it for free."



Progression Insights

Progression Insights – our survey said...

- ❖ 40% of respondents were practicing as a South Asian dancer or musician alongside another job/career – the proportion for dance was higher at 24% than for music at 16%. Where respondents had a career outside of the arts and culture sector, the top five statuses/sectors cited were Student, Medicine, Education, Marketing & PR and Finance & Accounting.

When asked to rate their current level for a range of skills and attributes that might be considered important for artists, the skills that, overall, artists felt they were most lacking in were:

- Fundraising
- Brand and marketing
- Digital skills
- Networking
- Partnership/collaboration
- Producing/entrepreneurial skills

Those who had been through the ACE funding application process were asked about the experience. The most common feedback was:

- Assessors seem to have a lack of understanding about South Asian dance and music, which inhibits their ability to fairly assess applications (and applications are assessed through a 'white lens')
- For many it was a positive experience, with a good level of support provided by advisors at ACE and a need to push one's thinking in making the application
- Several respondents stated it was a straightforward process, however for others the process of applying was seen as long, tedious and involving too much paperwork
- Some had difficulty putting into words projects that were at heart visual and/or auditory in nature and doing this within the specified word counts, with some having the added challenge that English is their second language
- Several people struggled with putting together a budget and the value-in-kind element was singled out as a particular challenge
- There was a perceived imbalance between the quality of the art versus the quality of the application (i.e. projects were successful because someone was a good bid writer as opposed to having a high-quality idea)
- There was a perception that classical and/or traditional work is overlooked and accorded less value than work which has a more contemporary focus, whilst certain South Asian dance styles were felt to be more 'fundable' than others
- Some did not find the online portal user-friendly

Progression Insights – our survey said...

❖ 'What has been the biggest barrier or challenge to progressing your career as a practicing dancer or musician so far?'

Answers that came up repeatedly were:

- Funding
- Lack of/level of pay and consistency of pay
- Lack of high-quality gurus and teachers
- Lack of support
- Lack of opportunities
- Lack of time to dedicate to practice and/or activity to support practice
- Family, other work and/or study commitments
- Perception of favouritism existing in some South Asian arts organisations
- Lack of affordable space (studio space, rehearsal space, etc.)
- Lack of interest in or awareness of South Asian artforms by others
- Cultural barriers, including language or ethnicity
- Lack of other skills required by artists to make a successful career

'What do you think would help you to move forward on that sliding scale over time towards being an established professional and/or leader in South Asian dance or music?' Answers that came up repeatedly were:

- Marketing, publicity and promotion
- A better understanding of South Asian arts amongst the wider sector and more specifically with funders, including an openness to fund more diverse South Asian dance and music styles and roles in the sector
- Better support from local authorities
- Ensuring opportunities are open to all, including a need to combat perceived nepotism
- Increased opportunities for networking
- Mainstream performance opportunities, including venues and festivals
- Opportunities for collaboration, apprenticeships and mentoring
- Having the skills and/or resources to establish a dance or music school
- Affordable venues for performance
- Affordable spaces for practice, rehearsal and teaching
- Audience development for the South Asian arts
- Ability to focus full-time on their artistic practice, as opposed to having another career alongside it to support them
- Better integration of South Asian artforms into the education system
- The support and opportunities to do intensive study in South Asia

Progression Insights



Lack of access to spaces and equipment is stunting progression

- "My company has a space in London now so we provide low rate space for South Asian dancers in the hope it will become a cultural hub for them to work and meet. I don't charge my dancers, if they want to practice, I tell them just use the space and practice because it's so badly needed, and I know they can't afford it."



Limited performance opportunities means less performance ready artists

- "There is a lack of performance opportunities and that is what progresses people towards being better quality. Performance is fundamental to all South Asian arts."
- "The National ensemble is for 18+ till you're about 22-24. After that there is nothing for artist development. That's where we're spat out and not given opportunities to progress and perform. That's where you hit a brick wall as a musician. There aren't enough concert opportunities."



Visible success stories and mentoring would inspire faster progression

- "We're disempowering artists when they can't see pathways to progress."
- "The problem is that there aren't enough idols. People don't see role models because they're not there."
- "I mentor some dancers now but there is no one to mentor me. I'm in the same position as I was 30 years ago."



The lack of investment and opportunity at mid-career level is stopping artists from flourishing

- "The investment is pitiful into this sector compared to what's invested in western music. The structure for western music is so well supported with millions being invested in classical music, orchestras, infrastructure, music schools – Asian people pay as much tax money but don't have that investment."
- "If you give small crumbs to artists, they end up demoralised. They need bursts of meaningful investment."

Progression Insights



Lack of networks and networking is holding artists back

- "Peer networking is underestimated, things like that. Giving people the confidence to do this and allocate time each week or month to meet people and get their work out there. There is a false idea that social media is enough, it is if you're Beyoncé, but if no one knows your work you have to get out there and eyeball them."
- "A dance artist doesn't just perform and work in the studio, there's a lot of networking, admin and selling your soul and for someone like me who isn't interested in all of that I found that really daunting."



Sector support organisations have historically not been as effective as they could be

- "I came across many sources of dissatisfaction from artists that the gatekeepers created fiefdoms and enclaves of power. Whilst those organisations would say the right things there was a reluctance to work in partnership as they felt they'd lose control and it was the same people in power for many years."
- "The amount of times I've been used as a tick box for South Asian NPOs to tick their funding box."



Sector organisations / leaders can accelerate progression

- "I joined SAMYO, and I met lots of high-class musicians there. It was instilled into me there to do lots in the sector and we were guided in the right way knowing about Arts Council. You need a 360 outlook about surviving as a classical musician in this sector."
- "Because of the Bhavan I got to perform in some really prestigious venues like Buckingham Palace and Wembley stadium."



Partnership working progresses artists

- "We're not a venue-based organisation so we rely on excellent partnerships and equitable relationships. We need them to put as much effort into marketing as they would with anything else. That's really important."
- "We're stretching our collective resources. We've chosen key partners who will enable us to move forward. We're trying to ensure that we're engaging with the wider world to both influence and learn from them."

Progression Insights



Time spent in India is time well spent

- “My friends who are western musicians, they have like personal development grants but the person I need to learn from is not in the UK. My further training guru lives in India, but I do not have the funds to go there and pay her and the accommodation and that’s a big thing that I really need in life.”
- “Spending 6 months in India will make you a much better performer than taking a weekly class in between your engineering degree.”



A bias for Indian artists is impacting performance opportunities for British South Asian artists

- “A lot of foreign artists come from India; people don’t realise the talent here is just as good. Musicians from here get the scraps, we end up playing in foyers for free.”
- “Whether it’s true or not there’s still a feeling that performers from India are of a higher quality. It could literally be that they’re working more. Unless you’re from here and one of the very few with international careers then you’re not working enough to be seen and get better.”



Gurus are intrinsic and instrumental to South Asian artist development and progression

“The contact with my teacher was much greater, my mum felt that she didn’t have a daughter anymore. We were rehearsing 12 hours a day. My guru was my second mother.”



Gurus can also be detrimental to development and progression

- “I’m not aware of any other art form where artists are indoctrinated into such a narrow point of view as the guru system – that’s 100% part of the problem.”
- “The one to one relationship is professionally isolating.”
- “If I went to another company my teacher would have been upset so there’s this emotional blackmail that goes on behind the scenes.”

Progression Insights



Professional rigour is mission critical and holding some artists back

"The attitude of so many South Asian artists isn't professional – how people do things on time, not signing contracts, they don't understand technical runs and lighting plans, backstage is a commotion. Walking in the audience before the show in costume, not respecting the producer, not keeping to what's been agreed, music not edited correctly – all these little things make the sector look immature and amateurish. I've always been professional because I have a contemporary background – that discipline and project management is all built in."



Producers (or producing skills) for South Asian dance and music are pivotal but doesn't substitute talent

- "The role of a producer is fundamental in the change that the ACE is seeking. Musicians and dancers need one. It's the bridging point between the venue and the artist."
- "You can't bypass the hard work it takes and training to have the talent through just having a producer. Producers are vital but you must stand up in the market."



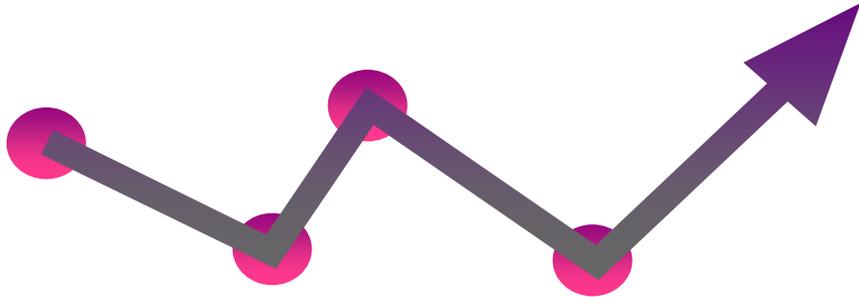
A turbulent touring circuit is a key barrier to progression

- "Touring is a broken model in the UK at the moment. Venues have been hit hard with cuts so are even more risk averse than they ever were. South Asian dance tends to get pigeonholed in places where for example there's a mela."
- "There is a challenge of seeing the art form through a white lens. Most producers will be white middle class. To get into the mainstream you need to appeal to those producers too."



Artists as Entrepreneurs progress farther faster

- "We decided early on not to use the south Asian classification because that would cage us. We wanted to stay clear of political correctness. We didn't want to be a charity, we wanted to make money through touring and never compromise quality of the art. We didn't hire dancers on a full-time basis but on two-year contracts and helped fund some of their careers. We were determined to work with the best people in the world. Every project had to be a learning opportunity that extended our boundaries. 72% of our money was earned income."



Leadership Insights

Leadership Insights – our survey said...

Respondents were asked in the survey if they considered themselves a 'leader' in the South Asian dance and music sector:

- 33% replied 'Yes'
- A further 33% replied 'I don't consider myself to be a leader now, but I feel I will be in the future.'
- The remaining respondents said 'No' (21%) or 'I'm not sure if I'm a leader or not' (12%)

86% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement: The current leaders running South Asian dance and music organisations in the UK have a responsibility to collaborate within and outside of the sector to create a greater number of training and performance opportunities for a more diverse range of South Asian musicians and dancers.

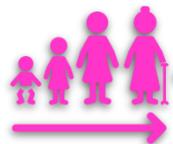
82% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement: Communicating the relevance and meaning of South Asian dance and music is mission critical to making it accessible, developing and sustaining audiences.

- ❖ The top 5 factors that respondents felt would be most valuable to developing South Asian dance and music leaders were:
 1. National exposure and engagement and International exposure and engagement
 2. Greater partnership working and collaboration within and outside of the South Asian dance and music sector
 3. Funding conditions/programmes to enable, empower and inspire true risk taking/innovation in creative practice
 4. A greater understanding of and engagement with the wider UK cultural sector beyond the South Asian sector
 5. Higher visibility of successful role models/credible leaders in the sector and wider society

When looking at the combined totals for those who rated the given factors as 'incredibly valuable' or 'valuable' the following also appeared in the top 5:

- Formal mentoring from an established and credible leader from the wider cultural sector
- Formal mentoring from an established leader within the South Asian arts sector
- A bespoke leadership development programme targeting South Asian artists in leadership and entrepreneurial skills

Leadership Insights



Generational divides in leadership approaches within the sector are evident and emerging

- “The younger generation are much more about ‘let’s work together’. There’s no egos. We learn from each other.”
- “The current leaders can be very intimidating. They’re strong characters. It’s a question of survival of the fittest and leadership is integral to that and knowing which way the winds are blowing politically.”



South Asian creative leadership should be inspired by and practiced beyond the South Asian sector

- “We’re never going to break people into leadership roles unless they can work outside of the South Asian sector. It’s too small a sector – there’s just not enough leadership roles. So, the wider sector like Northern Ballet having a South Asian director, getting that right across the whole sector is mission critical.”



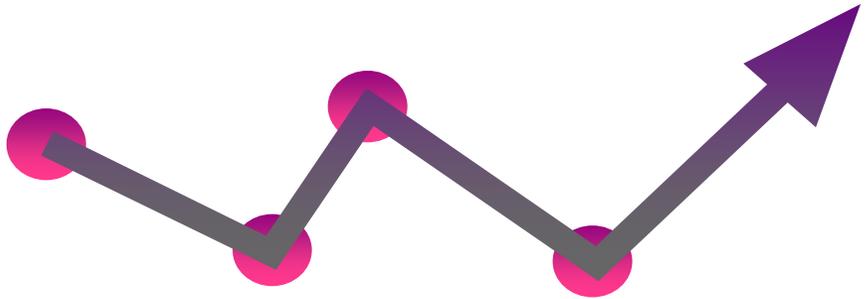
Organisational leadership doesn’t always translate to sector leadership

- “Money means power so the NPOs are the guardians of the sector and power. This is not India it is Britain and young emerging artists don’t feel supported at all. I can say that hand on my heart because I speak to my contemporaries all the time about this. We feel grossly misrepresented and unsupported by these organisations.”
- “Leaders seem to have been created by longevity only. They’ve led organisations but I’m not sure that they’ve led the sector and I think the sector is lagging far behind.”



Sector leadership succession planning is challenging and urgent

- “We’ve really struggled to recruit a new chief executive, we tried three times to recruit. There are not enough BAME leaders out there. We have a lot of artists but not many leaders, they don’t want to be bound by paperwork and being accountable to the arts council and funders.”
- I’ve been in the game 22 years now. Every time I advertise a post for the arts, I never see applications from BAME backgrounds. That’s terrifying, who will take the baton when I leave?



Collective Insights

Collective Insights

Classical versus contemporary is a conundrum

Ascribing loaded labels to split these two common approaches to practice in the sector was a source of contention. A common conclusion, particularly when this area was debated in the round table discussions, was that the artist and their voice and talent should be the primary focus. Style, whether classical, contemporary or fusion should not interfere with or undermine what a musician or dancer has to say through their practice.

"There are only two types of dance – a good dance and a bad dance."

"I am a very traditional musician, but you can have a traditional thought and make it sound contemporary through presentation."

Lack of investment in audience development has had a detrimental knock on effect for the sector as a whole

- Representation and relevance creates audience connection
- Audiences engage when product reflects and responds to place
- Evidence of audiences advances opportunity
- South Asian work is not just for South Asian audiences
- Quality is as important as, and in some cases more important than, quantity where audiences are concerned
- Brand and marketing are weak across the sector

"The sector stands on a precipice a bit, because it hasn't found a way to represent contemporary stories on stage. It needs to use traditional movement and vocabulary but find a way to remain relevant."

"Understanding who your audience is is vital but it's not something that's built into training and thinking for South Asian dance and music."

Collective Insights

Internal politics and a lack of joined up thinking and practice has isolated South Asian dance and music from within and across the wider cultural sector

A core theme that ran through every conversation was the unhelpful politics and power paradigms of the sector. This has undermined collaborative and partnership working to date resulting in a lack of joined up thinking and weak sector advocacy. Combined, these factors have impeded the sector's ability to be truly integrated and influential in the wider dance, music and cultural sector ecology in the UK and internationally.

"People of colour are very diverse under that rather large umbrella. A lot of folk traditions are not included in the sector and not in this room or any other when decisions are being made. This often is the result of who has founded a particular organisation and the focus they give. The less affluent in the sector are often more linked to folk traditions than the classical ones. There is a total lack of awareness on all sides that they are part of a bigger ecology."

"It can be a bit tribal, but I suppose when people have developed something over many years, they will be protective of it."

External advocacy and leadership is required to leverage sector impact and sustainability

The sector clearly contains some hugely talented artists across every career level making an incredible contribution to the arts and society. It is also doing brilliant work in settings impacting life all over the UK from health and wellbeing to social action youth projects to improving community cohesion, shared experiences and understanding. Importantly the people delivering all this brilliant creativity and societal benefit represent significant minority communities in the UK and can connect with people who suffer more barriers than most. These are powerful messages and could be transformative for the sector if heard, embraced and acted upon with key stakeholders but current external advocacy messaging and channels are low.

"We're undermining our own ecology and landscape by not developing our own talent and shouting from the rooftops about the amazing work we do."

"There's no brown faces on any rosters outside of the Indian classical music bubble which is atrocious. The organisations are so narrowly focused that they're not connecting with the wider sector and that's wrong."

Collective Insights

ACE is invisible to many and overwhelming to the majority

What we heard most in relation to the role of ACE and support it has given or could give the sector followed two core themes. Most artists, particularly those at the early and mid-career had very low, if any, awareness of who or what the Arts Council is and the support it can provide. For those who have heard of ACE and explored it further they found the whole process and requirements complicated and overwhelming at best and inaccessible at worst. These dual factors are undoubtedly preventing more South Asian dancers and musicians from engaging with Arts Council England and leveraging its support.

"Is there another way of doing it? Having an interview or video evaluated? There's so many talented people who don't apply because they're terrified of the applications. Some of them aren't confident with English or educated and just don't have that mind-set."

"I have never been successful in getting ACE support because I have no idea how to go about it. Where do I go? How do I go about it? I've no idea!"

Many artists feel they experience institutional racism

Institutional racism was defined by Sir William Macpherson in the 1999 Lawrence report (UK) as: "The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people."

A concerning theme throughout the vast majority of the conversations we had with both artists and stakeholders was the presence and experience of institutional racism as a barrier to progression and realising creative potential.

"We're a tick box not an artistic decision."

"There are no BAME faces where the actual power lies in the arts."

"I've literally faced comments from programmers about not wanting the "sari brigade" in their venue. Racism is alive and well within the venues we're trying to place performers in."

Collective Insights

Quality is contentious

Another common theme and bone of contention across the majority of consultees was the issue of what high quality South Asian dance and music is and looks like and who is best placed to make this judgement. It was clear from the consultation that the current measures of quality are not considered fit for purpose by the wider sector.

"Integrated panels is what's needed that understand all these areas. There needs to be an array of different perspectives, so we arrive at quality from different angles."

"People who receive funds are not the most dedicated artists."

"How many South Asian AQA's are trained to assess the ballet or opera? They can go there and say the music is beautiful or the costumes are pretty but they won't know the intricacies on ballet or opera and yet that happens for us."

There is confusion over the role and conflicting experiences of South Asian and wider sector NPOs

Regardless of whether artists had had positive experiences of being supported by NPOs there is a common confusion over their role and responsibilities to the wider sector. The significant length of time that many South Asian leaders of NPOs had been in place was discussed many times as a problem in terms of progressing new voices and ideas within the sector. Conversely when we spoke to the NPOs they made a valid case that they are not overarching art form sector support organisations such as One Dance UK or UK Music. The disparity between a majority of the artists we spoke to having had no or negative experiences with South Asian and wider sector NPOs and the work NPOs, particularly those that are South Asian focused, are tasked with delivering with the limited resources available to them needs to be addressed.

"This raises the question of what is the role of an NPO? Judge and Jury for artists? That doesn't feel right."

"People think some NPOs are a sector organisation. One Dance UK is actually the sector organisation and should be the voice for all dance. The first thing people think about in terms of support is money, but as NPOs we struggle to cover costs and commissioning is very difficult and very limited."

Collective Insights

'South Asian' as a catch all term is a barrier towards inclusion, relevance and representation for both artists and audiences

The diversity of the countries and communities that comprise the 'South Asian' sector is rich in contrast and complexity. This study repeatedly evidenced the use of the term South Asian as short hand for Indian. This is a significant issue for cultivating meaningful inclusion and relevance. The ACE Let's Create strategy has a specific 'Inclusivity & Relevance' investment principle which states:

"We also expect the organisations we support to change in other ways. We want them to build closer connections with their communities, particularly those that they are currently underserving. We want them to mean more, to more people: to strengthen their relevance to the communities, partners and practitioners with whom they work.... In future, we will judge organisations for the way in which they reflect and build a relationship with their communities, as well as for the quality and ambition of their work."

With some notable exceptions, the status quo for the majority of 'South Asian' work does not appear to be meeting the needs of all of the communities that fall within that broad brush and this must be addressed moving forward.

The guru-shishya relationship works best when the guru is open and supportive of wider learning and progression routes

Where these relationships were most valued was when gurus actively encouraged their students to immerse themselves in their own and other art forms and to find their own voice. The strongest guru-shishya relationships were inspirational and highly motivational to artists. Where artists felt the tradition wasn't helpful was when gurus imposed rigid views on form and expression and actively discouraged artists from working with or learning from any other teachers or sources.

Whilst the majority of the sector clearly feels strongly that the symbol and role of the guru is instrumental to training and progression, there is a growing recognition that it is not the only way to learn and progress. Finding ways to identify, engage, connect and support gurus and place one to one teaching into a wider sector ecology will have a knock-on beneficial effect to the artists and wider sector that they are directly influencing.

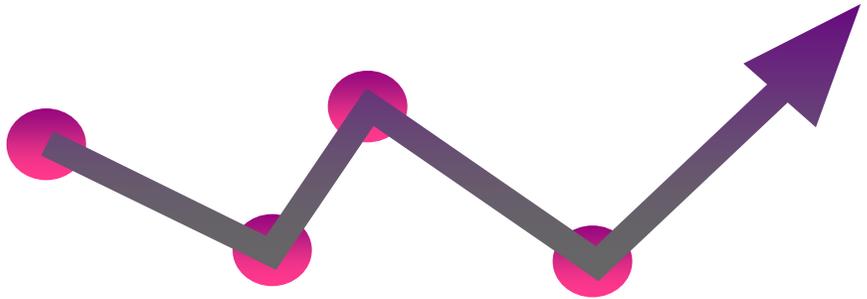
Collective Insights

The impact of technology on the art form and training, progression and leadership are currently under utilised

Whether used as a training, learning, development or networking tool; advocacy, brand, audience development and promotional purposes; or as part of the development and application of creative practice and performance, the potential of technology for South Asian artists is vast but currently heavily underutilised.

The success and engagement of Indian Raga (<https://indianraga.com/what-is-indianraga/>) who we spoke to as part of this research evidences the power and potential of digital platforms. Over the past 5 years Indian Raga has connected over 3000 artists, aged from 6 to 60, from 40 cities. They have collaborated to produce 400 performance pieces viewed by 10 million people across 65 cities.

www.pulseconnects.com was launched in 2018 and its aim is to connect, inform and energise the South Asian dance and music communities and highlight cutting-edge practice. Like a huge section of the South Asian sector this important platform is currently run largely on the goodwill of passionate volunteers with no defined business model. Whether it is Pulse or an evolved iteration of Pulse the research indicates that there is a gap and missed opportunity to both provide a 'one stop shop' digital platform and develop digital literacy within the English South Asian dance and music sector.



Conclusion

Outcomes

We believe that there are four potential outcomes which would address the key challenges that have emerged from this research. This would require the broader arts and cultural sector to come together to support these outcomes, summarised in the quadrants below:

More young people from more diverse South Asian backgrounds pursuing a career as a South Asian dancer and/or musician and/or wider creative careers such as organisational roles, producers, composers and choreographers.

A new era of equality, excellence, inspiration and inclusion for everyone at every stage of their career in the South Asian dance and music sectors.

South Asian Dance & Music Sector - the future

A bigger and more diverse audience and appetite for South Asian dance and music across the UK.

A stronger and more diverse arts and cultural sector in the UK overall that is representative of and influenced by its South Asian communities and creative leaders.

The report outcomes also support the key Outcomes and Investment Principles of the ACE 10 year strategy Let's Create:

- ❖ **Creative people** - Everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life.
- ❖ **Cultural Communities** – Villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture.
- ❖ **A Creative and Cultural Country** – England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international.
- ✓ **Ambition & Quality** – Cultural organisations are ambitious and committed to improving the quality of their work.
- ✓ **Dynamism** – Cultural Organisations are dynamic and able to respond to the challenges of the next decade.
- ✓ **Environmental Responsibility** – Cultural organisations lead the way in their approach to environmental responsibility.
- ✓ **Inclusivity and Relevance** – England's diversity is fully reflected in the organisations and individuals that we support and in the culture they produce.

Next steps

Whilst the research for this study was undertaken before the extent of Covid-19 was fully realised, from October 2019 to March 2020, the draft report was produced in April 2020 when the impact of the virus was beginning to hit the UK.

The pandemic has caused a seismic shift across the cultural landscape, with significant Arts Council and government resource focused on supporting the sector's immediate response to Covid-19 and recovery.

In light of the current context, we would advise the following next steps –to address some of the concerns raised by this research and foster collaboration across the cultural sector to support the development of South Asian Music and Dance:

- **Disseminate this report as widely as possible throughout the sector**
- **Find an existing digital platform to host the excel mapping document**
- **Set up a strategic digital network the South Asian music and dance sector to engage with one another and the Arts Council**
- **Encourage the relevant sector support agencies and NPO's serving South Asian dancers and musicians to specifically target South Asian artists with training, progression and leadership opportunities**
- **Issue a call out to all South Asian NPO's and the wider sector to provide case studies**
- **Develop a regular programme of ACE 'open days' targeting South Asian artists**
- **Convene a sector symposium using the key insights and learning of this report as a catalyst for discussion**