

MISSION STATEMENT

MIDLANDS AND SOUTHERN CO-ORDINATOR

I was appointed as the Midlands and Southern Co-ordinator at the end of 1978 and started work in February 1979. Initially I had premises at the Malsall Community Relations, but subsequently moved to a base offered by the Midlands Art Centre. This has proved an extremely fruitful alliance leading to a greater involvement by local Ethnic Artists with the centre and a greater reflection in the centre's workings of the needs and presence of ethnic arts.

BRIEF BY MAAS

- a) Acquiring a sound working knowledge of the groups and artists working in the regions: by talking with them, attending workshops, performances etc;
- b) Acquire a sound working knowledge of the structure and personalities in relevant arts funding structure. Build up contacts with Local Authorities and Regional Arts Ass;
- c) Respond to requests for advice on funding, venues, budgeting, organisation, outlets, touring etc;
- d) Generating activity, where it seems desirable: in helping organise exchanges between groups, festivals, workshops, practical teach in etc;
- e) Setting up where desirable Regional MAAS/Ethnic arts structures - to take on function of local advice, support and lobbying for their members.

Objectives of the post are two fold (a) immediately to provide advice, support and overall perspective for regional groups and artists, (b) on a longer term to help bring into being a structure that will take on the issues of ethnic arts at a regional level.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA COVERED

Includes the following Regional Arts Associations: Southern Arts, South-West arts, South-East Arts, Eastern Arts, South-East Wales, West and East Midlands. Since the area of work is extremely broad it was necessary for practical purposes to divide it up into priority areas.

1. SOUTHERN ARTS REGION.

Previous to my appointment with NAAS I was commissioned, on request of NAAS, to conduct a survey of ethnic arts in their region. The aim of the survey was to produce an ethnic arts register and a report with recommendations to SAA. (copy of report attached)

Needless to say the research created a great deal of demand amongst ethnic arts groups and artists in the area. I have kept in contact with artists and groups such as Ebony Rockers in Southampton, African Roots Organisation in Oxford, West Indian Community centre, Southampton, who recently promoted the play entitled 'SAS', Athis Subramanian, Bharat Natyam dancer, Lalitha Kumari- Indian Classical dancer based in Swindon, the Progressive Writers Group from Reading, plus number of Arts Centres interested in developing ethnic arts. I assisted Southampton CRC in organising a programme of ethnic arts activities for school children during the Easter and Summer holidays. Both the projects were so successful that Southampton Leisure Department and Southern Arts will be supporting a similar venture in the coming year. Many of the artists contacted in the Southern region have also performed in the West Midlands, for instance, Athis gave a performance in Birmingham, Ebony Rockers, a reggae group, played at the WELD Youth Festival in Handsworth, Lalitha Kumari toured several venues in the Midlands, to mention but a few.

I have also maintained contact with SAA particularly with Mr. Bill Duffton and Mr. M. Launchbury both responsible for ethnic arts. Southern Arts published the report in August and on firm request have circulated it to all the ethnic organisations and local authorities contacted.

A Southern register will be published by NAAS as soon as they manage to raise the funds.

2. SOUTH-EAST WALES AND SOUTH-WEST ARTS

I have continued to maintain the contacts made, (Purkays, Bristol Arts) and have attended meetings of the projected SE WAAS. Have acted as an advisor to meetings called by Cardiff CRC together with SE Wales arts to examine the situation of ethnic arts/artists in the Cardiff area. The outcome of the second meeting was the establishment of an Ethnic Arts group to look at the promotion of ethnic arts and the setting up of an ethnic arts centre in the Cardiff area. I have continued to provide advice

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Further the two arts associations and WMAS have advertised for a researcher to compile a report for the two regions.

3. WEST MIDLANDS ARTS

This has been my most extensive area of work. The initial three months were spent basically scouting the region and identifying the various ethnic groups and the nature of their activities. During that period I visited the main towns of Wolverhampton, Walsall, Coventry, Leamington Spa, Rugby and of course Birmingham. The main source of information were the local CRC's, MMS Regional Directory, West Midlands Arts- particularly Jane Wilson, Assistant Community Arts Officer. There was no shortage of activity amongst the ethnic communities and during that period I visited community projects, community arts centres, youth clubs, social clubs, schools, Asian religious, cultural, social and political organisations, Afro-Caribbean self help projects, youth clubs, arts and cultural organisations. During this period I made contact with well over 85% of the known ethnic groups and have compiled an ethnic arts register in conjunction with West Midlands Arts. In main I have acted in an advisory capacity, giving advice on organisation, funding, contacts with WMAS, venues, tutors and putting artists in touch with each other. Some groups who have benefited from the advice/support include Asian Arts Production reviewed grant to set up a wardrobe of Asian Theatrical Costumes available for loan to other groups.

Afro-Peoples Organisation given £500 to develop arts and crafts activities.

Talunke Association given similar grant to develop photography workshops.

Handsworth to Janica Project, Smethick Festival, Sparkhill Community Centre, Weld Festival to mention but a few.

Have further assisted several local festivals in suggesting suitable groups both from within and outside the region as well as helping in the planning, organising, publicising of the festivals. These have included the Smethick Festival, WLD Youth Festival Living Together Festival, Coventry Carnival, Walsall Festival, Wolverhampton and Birmingham City.

TOURING OF ETHNIC ARTS

Many more ethnic artists have been able to tour in the West Midlands and the work has ranged from giving performances to running workshops in schools, community centres

in Leamington Spa; Tara Rajkumar presented a lecture/demonstration to Secondary school teachers organised by the City Physical Education Advisor, Alpina Sen-Gupta Kathak Dancer recently toured the West Midlands giving performances and workshops; Steel 'N' Skin have toured the Midlands on several occasions giving performances and teach in sessions; Paul-Keenes Douglas, a Trinidadian folk lore poet, touring the country was able to come and give a quick performance at a very short notice, Themba Theatre Company toured their recent play entitled 'Breast'; a tour of the play 'SUS' was organised by myself. Above are just a few of the ethnic arts events that have come to the West Midlands and the most important development has been that the groups have used ethnic based organisations for their performances and workshops. Most of the artists have been financially assisted by West Midlands Arts.

On the Visual arts side I have organised an exhibition of traditional folk embroidery of the Punjab called PHULKARI. The work was exhibited at the Midlands Arts Centre; Have also assisted in the setting up an exhibition for the Rainbow Arts Group again held at the arts centre.

Following a regional meeting of Asian artists/arts groups in the West Midlands an 'ASIAN ARTS ACTION GROUP' has been set up. This volunteer group is drawn from groups in Birmingham, Coventry, Leamington Spa, Walsall and Wuxton; its purpose is to articulate the needs of regional Asian artists/arts and press for improvement in the relationship between them and the funding bodies. I am at present servicing the group to formulate its aims and objectives.

WEST MIDLANDS ARTS ASSOCIATION.

I have worked closely with the arts association particularly with the Community arts, Drama, Dance, Music and Literature panels. At my suggestion ~~we~~ now have the following people serving on their various panels:

Norman Beaton.....Drama Panel

Kathy Williams.....Chairmans Panel

Mr. Mosleh Uddin.....Music Panel

Bob Randani & Mr. Myrpurry.....Advise on the Literature panel.

These are people drawn from the West Midlands working ethnic communities and developing ethnic arts activities at grassroots level.

I have recently been co-opted on to the Management Council and the Executive Committee of West Midlands Arts Association. I am further seeking co-option of ethnic representation on to the Association of Community Artists.

In consultation with Jane Wilson(Assistant Community Arts Officer) and Pat Gilchrist (Drama Officer) a policy paper on Ethnic Drama in the West Midlands has been produced (Copy enclosed). All the recommendations were fully accepted by the panel members.

Am drawing up a similar paper in conjunction with the Dance and Music panel officers; with the aim of developing an overall policy paper on Ethnic Arts for the WMA.

The area of work is being extended to involve the Regional Sports Council who in conjunction with the East/West Arts Associations plus the CRE are planning a conference on Sports/Leisure in Ethnic communities and a weekend of workshop/sports coaching course. I have been actively involved in the planning of both the conference and the weekend residential course, in suggesting the main area of interest and putting forward names of tutors for the workshops. Asian Folk Dancing, African Dance and Drumming, Black Theatre and Steelband are the four main areas of ethnic arts activity. The other major development in the West Midlands regarding Ethnic Arts has been the setting up of an Ethnic Arts Touring Circuit. The aim is to develop potential ethnic venues by adding resources and incorporating them into the existing MA touring network.

MEDIA.

Main sources of advertising in the West Midlands are local radio, news papers/letters and regional television. Am having discussions on the possibility of using the existing Arts programme on BBC Radio to present a monthly diary of Ethnic Arts events in the West Midlands. I have been able to put both the Radio and Ethnic groups in touch with each other thus encouraging a greater use of programmes like the regular Arts programme, Roundabout and the Ethnic slots.

ETHNIC ARTS OFFICER FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS

An appointment of Ethnic Arts Officer was made by Midlands Arts Centre in June, 1981, however the person was forced to leave due to personal circumstances. Further talks with the CRE, WMA and the Arts Centre has resulted in the re-advertising of the post (interviewing at present) with the strong possibility of WMA continuing the funding of the post. The appointed person will be given a region wide brief and will be based at the Midlands Arts Centre.

CADBURY'S TRUST

The Cadbury's Trust have been most sympathetic and have supported small scale events like the cultural function held at the Sparkhill Education Centre; Asian Arts Conference and several groups have also benefitted from small capital grant aid. Recent talks with Anna Southall and Eric Adams has resulted in the setting up of an Ethnic Arts budget with the aim of supporting/ aiding small projects. Support is primarily for West Midlands region.

EDUCATION

Unfortunately I have not been able to devote as much of my time as I would like to have done since I consider this to a very important area in development of Ethnic Arts. However I have made contacts with several schools, including Sydney Stringer Community School, Holy Head Community and several others providing information on ethnic artists and advising on organising Ethnic Arts activities in schools. I have also given talks to B.Ed. students at Amnasy College on Ethnic arts in education, Coventry School of Music and London College of Dance and Drama.

This to summarise — the main achievements in the West Midlands:

- 1). Completion of an Ethnic Arts Register for the West Midlands.
- 2). Increased support for Ethnic Arts .
- 3). Greater Ethnic representation on the WMA panels.
- 4). Move towards drawing up an overall policy on Ethnic Arts for the WMA and policy papers for each panel.
- 5). Increase in Ethnic Arts touring the West Midlands and the setting up of an Ethnic Arts Touring Circuit.
- 6). The appointment of an Ethnic Arts Officer to be based at the Midlands Arts Centre.

7). Setting up of a grassroots based action group for Asian arts/artists in the East Midlands.

8). Setting up a MAAS support group for the Ethnic Arts Officer.

EAST MIDLANDS ARTS ASSOCIATION.

I began work in the East Midlands region in October 79. I had already been involved with the East Midlands Arts Working Party on Ethnic Arts as well with general multi-ethnic meetings in Nottingham. The Ethnic Arts Group in Nottingham have met regularly and are in the process of setting up a Third World Film Society. The EMA Working Party on Ethnic Arts has been extended to include representation from the main areas. I have also established contacts with groups in Northampton, Loughborough, Derby, Leicester and Wellingborough. The main purpose of the Working Party is to come up with Policy statements on Ethnic Arts for EMA to implement for the positive development of Ethnic Arts in their region. My programme for January 1980 is to make the EMA the area of priority. I intend to research the Ethnic Arts of the area, compile a register and coordinate existing interests to form a support structure and advisory service for Ethnic Arts that will service after I have left the area.

CONCLUSION

Clearly the appointment of Regional Officers by MAAS has benefitted the development of Ethnic Arts. I have succeeded in gaining a high degree of credibility with groups artists and the indigenous society and funding bodies. I have serviced existing ethnic arts groups; initiated several ethnic arts projects; assisted ethnic organisation to obtaining grants, premises etc; helped with the numerous festival. One could go on enlisting the work done during the last ten months but the scope of work is so vast and I have merely touched the surface. We at MAAS consider it vital, as we are sure Regional Arts Associations will agree, that the work in the Regions continue to receive full support.

Support —
Advice
Training
Provision

1 Bring support gp. together — receive grant
2 Fill in post job description
Basic
relat Sub Support gp.

WMS - 50%
Trusts - 50%