

Sampad

Sampad was founded in 1990, under the directorship of Piali Ray OBE. The arts organisation was established to strengthen the infrastructure of South Asian arts in the West Midlands and Birmingham region. Due to Director Piali Ray's background as a dancer, this south Asian arts development agency has retained its strengths in dance, however its current remit is much wider, covering cross art forms of music, theatre, crafts and literature within education and community environments.

Since its inception fourteen years ago, Sampad has grown into one of the UK's leading arts development agencies, instilling a deep and distinctive structure of South Asian arts in Birmingham and Britain through its productions, education and outreach activities, employing and advocating for South Asian Arts and artists. In establishing Sampad, Piali Ray wanted to ensure that South Asian arts in the Midlands, became an integral and distinctive strand of the social fabric of contemporary Britain. Its primary endeavour was to maintain the growth of south Asian arts, to stimulate and enable new ideas and ventures and to recognise opportunities for capacity building, whereby south Asian arts professionals, programmers and managers can effectively apply their talents. Presently, Sampad has core funding from Birmingham City Council and from the Arts Council and, while its founding purpose was to strengthen the infrastructure for South Asian arts in the West Midlands, its influence and remit are currently much wider.

The word 'Sampad' in Sanskrit means wealth, and the organisation translates this as cultural wealth to be shared as widely as possible. The Birmingham arts organisation has aimed to lead the way in promoting the appreciation and practice of arts originating from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Within these arts, Sampad engages in a multi-disciplinary approach. Its activities are a range of cross-art and cross-cultural initiatives and are rooted in the three main art forms: dance, music and theatre. However, crafts, literature and storytelling have more recently played a strong role in the production of cross-art projects.

Since 1990, Sampad's programmes have fallen into three categories: performance arts programmes: which endeavour to develop, sustain and raise the profile of south Asian arts in the UK; education arts programmes: in which Sampad works with regional LEAs and artists in education agencies and develops programmes to reach young people outside formal education or those who have limited access to South Asian arts; and the capital development programme: involving efforts to raise financial resources for the organisations longevity. This has included an Arts Council grant of £0.5 million towards the development of Sampad and 'mac'-Birmingham to improve the Midland's centre for arts. Sampad is based in the Midlands Arts Centre ('mac') in Birmingham's, Cannon Hill Park and its chairman is the academic, physicist and head of the English National Forum, Ranjit Sondhi. He sees Sampad's alliance with 'mac' as a natural partnership since they both share the same philosophy of how a multicultural country should be and both acknowledge the importance of promoting diverse cultures and arts in the community.

Sampad also involves itself in groundwork with artists, teachers and community workers, arranging networking forums for the development of South Asian arts in the Midlands. It has implemented Summer schools for art form skills, master classes for professional dance development and teacher training placements and administration training opportunities. Education and community projects are integral to Sampad's vision of development and in order to gain profile and partners, events are promoted directly and in partnership with venues and organisations.

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SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA **ARTS ARCHIVE**

Examples of Sampad's key outreach and community projects are 'Pipli', 'Goddess of Mahi River' and 'Heer Ranjha'. 'Pipli' (1996/1997) was a crafts project delivered in conjunction with Craftspace Touring and local authorities in the West Midlands region. This involved women from various Asian communities who produced a touring exhibition of embroidery and appliqué patterns. The 1994 production 'Goddess of Mahi River', was a high profile production with eight Birmingham schools in partnership with English Sinfonia and Symphony Hall. 'Heer Ranja' the legendary Punjabi love story was a theatre musical with over eighty participants performing with dance professionals and was produced in 1997.

Sampad's education and outreach programmes are well bedded in and around Birmingham and currently operate in Leeds, Bradford and Newcastle as part of an audience development programme run by Sampad's bursar, Caroline Griffin.

Since 1990, Sampad's activities in music, dance, theatre, education and literature have expanded. We have featured below highlights of Sampad's community and high profile arts projects within these five categories of work. Within the field of music, Sampad's initial work began by implementing master classes in South Asian music composition and vocal training, tutor training in collaboration with Leeds College of Music and Birmingham Conservatoire, young musician national tours, annual showcases of talent, and ad hoc collaborative commissions such as the one with Ananda Shankar and Sam from the British Asian band, State of Bengal. However, after nine years, in 1999, Sampad was able to employ a dedicated Music Officer who piloted projects to determine the future Sampad's music work. Highlights of the project were: 1999's 'Outlawz Wit Attitudez' - a youth project in Coventry which involved training twelve young men and women from Hillfields, one of the most deprived areas in the city, in DJ-ing and video making. The group then presented their efforts at a local club venue; a 'Sampad/Caliche' collaboration where Sampad joined forces with South American Music group, Caliche to hold a cross cultural artists development week with South Asian musicians from Birmingham. In 2000, Sampad produced 'Out of Babel' which also featured five musicians from South Asia and South America to create a music ensemble in an educational collaboration and performance. 'Milan Geet', is an example of a Sampad community music project, which brought together wedding songs from diverse Asian languages - Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali, Sylheti and Mirpuri. This event was performed in 2000, at 'mac' by women's groups from Birmingham and Sandwell to a female audience.

Sampad's strongest area of expertise is dance and over the years, the organisation had endeavoured to put in place strategic dance initiatives. As with music, Sampad commenced its work through the implementation of workshops in South Asian and non-Asian choreographic development, individual training programmes, youth dance training for emerging companies, showcasing talent, community productions, an exchange programme featuring choreographic exchanges with emerging South Asian dancers from USA, Canada and Europe and 'Chaturang' - an inter-regional dance development initiative covering the West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside and the North of England. More recently, collaborative productions with renowned dance artists have taken place such as 'Moves', in 2001. Sampad brought together Kathak dancer Nahid Siddiqui and Birmingham-based Patrick Acogny. A Senegalo-French, Patrick Acogny is an international choreographer and teacher. In 1995 he became the Artistic Director of Kokuma Dance Theatre in Birmingham. The pair worked for five days with students experimenting with diverse dance forms, which was then performed in London and Birmingham. In October 2002, Sampad initiated a second collaboration with the Sonia Sabri Company entitled 'Drishti' where Kathak dancing was repositioned in a digital environment. Inspired by Indian folk and Western contemporary folk dancing, the dances were digitally amplified, triggering aural and visual effects.

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This collaboration included choreographer 'Shobana Jeyasingh' and digital artist John-Marc Gowans. Sampad's endeavours in theatre have only recently evolved. In July 2001, as part of Birmingham's Forward Festival Millennium celebrations, Sampad joined 27 music and dance artists from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean together on the theme of journeys and dreams, in 'Dounia', which means universe. In November 2001, 'Identify Yourself' was a culmination of two projects coinciding with Black History month where young people from Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities presented their own views on identity.

In keeping with Sampad's integral education policy, education projects are run alongside the performing arts programmes. Several small projects aim to introduce south Asian music to children and young people and those with special needs. In addition, Sampad organises workshops for increasing numbers of artists to work in schools and lead workshops. One such large-scale initiative was entitled 'Bollywood to Birmingham', which commenced in October 2002 and consisted of workshops run by performing arts professionals from the Midlands. The event was geared towards the production of a short Bollywood film in which students from two schools participated in an entire film making process. The production was due to be filmed in February 2003.

Within its literature work, Sampad, in association with The Birmingham Readers and Writers Festival and The British Centre for Literary Translation, organised several events to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence and the founding of Pakistan in 1997. These included a South Asian literature conference promoting the last half century of south Asian literature translated in English. Talks and workshops raised awareness of the literature from the sub-continent available in translation. In 1998, Sampad embarked on two youth-based projects: 'Baato Bachho Ki' was a two-week national tour of libraries aimed at promoting south Asian children's literature held in partnership with the Nehru Centre and Birmingham libraries and 'Yuv-Vani', a collection of poems by 12 British south Asian youth from the West Midlands. This event was held in collaboration with the Gitanjali Literary Circle and was launched on World book Day in 23 April 1998. In 2002, Sampad worked with renowned storyteller Graham Langley, and ran a storytelling residency with Asian community groups in Coventry, Nuneaton and Rugby as part of Year of the Artist.

Such initiatives have run parallel to numerous projects such as, 'choreo-labs' (Choreography Laboratories) where British South Asian dance and choreography professionals and western choreographers work with young people to experiment with diverse dance forms, such as 'No Male Egos', featuring world renowned Mavin Khoo and Akram Khan touring as a partnership in 1999. In addition, over eleven productions of touring dance, music and theatre productions have been commissioned, as well as conferences and seminars featuring national and international speakers, have been held; for example the Performing Arts Conference in 1992; Theatre Conference in 1994; and the Literature Conference in 1997. Seminars have included 'Media Opportunities for Asians' in partnership with the BBC and Promoting Literature in Translation, held in partnership with Birmingham Libraries.

Sampad has been acknowledged for its imaginative and inclusive approach to creating and presenting the arts of the Indian sub-continent to audiences in the UK and internationally. Its current organisational structure consists of a board of trustees, Director Piali Ray OBE, an artistic team which includes a programme manager, a performing arts co-ordinator a trainee programmer and a projects assistant. Sampad also employs an education & outreach co-ordinator and a senior bursar.