



Summer Newsletter 2008

A Word...

It seems that my last 'note' prompted varied responses – some saw it as a Cri de Coeur, some as a rallying cry; some thought it raised important issues, some thought it was contentious... different strokes for different folks! The variety and number of responses certainly tells me that I'm touching on issues that matter to a lot of us.

It's certainly not all doom and gloom. The fact that we exist in such challenging times is proof that we are adaptable - like the chameleon - and can change our identity in response to our changing environment. Indeed the third sector is a valuable asset in terms of our independent ability to lobby for change... as long as this position is not compromised by our reliance on public sector commissions and service level agreements once they begin to replace old style grant funding; which was often considered as 'no strings attached'. Is it acceptable that we take resources with one hand and [however constructively] criticise the systems which put it there with the other? Is the alternative of taking the cash and simply doing as we are told - equally untenable?

As people who have chosen to work in social settings, we tend to be activists
- it's in our nature.

I am happy to report that TVA is trying to develop one kind of solution to a specific area of work that we know our public sector partners need to address; young people who fall outside of mainstream education.

Here at TVA we believe that the visibility of some community provision that effectively reaches these very hard-to-reach groups is less than clear. As a result, the sustainability of funds to support this valuable work is patchy. Local Authority teams are also working hard to meet this acute need - but shouldn't we all be joining up and growing excellence and innovation where it exists?

We are working hard to join up some of the excellent Cultural provision which exists in the Tees Valley which targets young people categorised as NEET (Not-in-Education-Employment-or-Training). TVA hopes that through a hub and spokes model we will be able to provide a coherent, quality assured Cultural E2E (Entry to Employment) young peoples offer that currently has the working title Creative Routeways. The programme will be working with six regional partner organisations that will provide local centres for local young people wanting to get into the creative industries. We hope to reach 200 NEETs per annum and establish a model that demonstrates the strength of the voluntary sector working together as a viable alternative to the mainstream.



We hope that this approach can be expanded into other areas of third sector Cultural provision, one example being the development and role out of the schools Culture Offer and even support for the 14-19 Diplomas - who knows where this joined up approach might end?

TVA are exploring the idea of a Community Gateway to Learning that clearly describes what's on offer in the voluntary sector in terms of learning opportunities and for whom it is appropriate; a prospectus just like a mainstream college. I think a Cultural Gateway hub is just the start...

In this quarter's issue of our News Letter read about our great community Fish Supper in Skinningrove and our exploits with crude oil at High Tunstall School!



Rosi Lister
Executive Director

Creative Links in Redcar & Cleveland

TVA has recently delivered a twilight training programme of professional development 'tasters' for established and emerging artists and designer-makers in Redcar & Cleveland. The sessions, delivered by Rosi and Rowena, took place at Saltburn Artists Studios and covered topics as diverse as 'Understanding Learning Styles' for artists working in schools, 'Effective and Efficient Networking' for creative entrepreneurs, 'Marketing' your products and services and 'Preparing Funding Bids' for arts based projects... and much more... The feed back has been overwhelmingly positive and asks for more!

This training was supported by Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council Arts Development with Local Economic Growth Initiative (LEGI) funding.

Contact Rowena for more information: rowena.sommerville@teesvalleyarts.org.uk

Building Schools for the Future

Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council is preparing for BSF by making sure they are well informed. The biggest public investment into schools in 50 years - Redcar & Cleveland want to make sure that the Arts and Culture are at the forefront of what the Government calls 'educational transformation'. TVA have been subsequently commissioned to conduct an audit of Cultural provision in lifelong learning

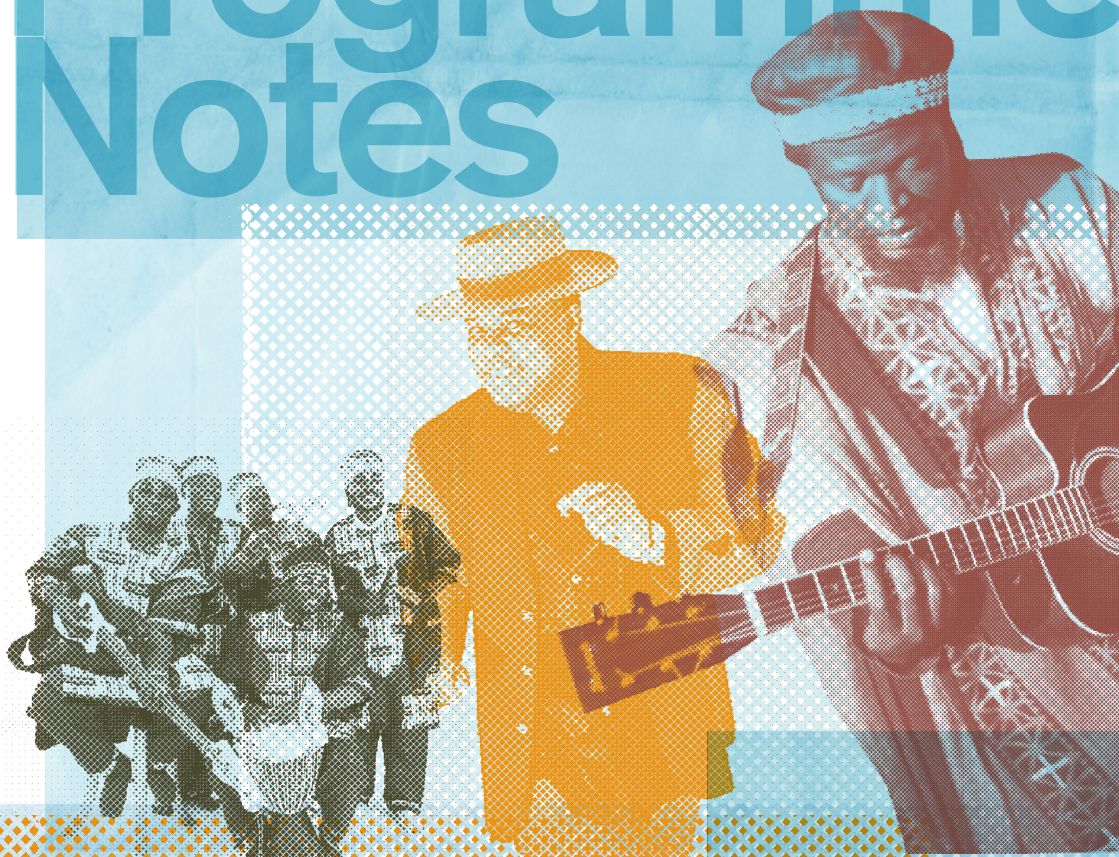
in the borough, with a view to making recommendations into how provision can be grown in order to meet the high expectations of the wider Arts Development and Children's Services Directorates.

Enquiries related to BSF are being coordinated by Jane Gray; Education Officer jane.gray@teesvalleyarts.org.uk

Beautiful day today as I'm writing this - about the third nice day of the year so far - let's hope this weather stays with us from now on, for a few months. The trees are covered with blossom, the hedgerows are full of primroses and violets, the sun is out, the sky is blue, there's not a cloud to spoil the view and/but is it raining in our hearts? Well - you wouldn't expect to read one of these articles without encountering a moan about fundraising, would you - so let's take that as read, and I'll stick with the Pollyanna thing.

Joe Dunne is settling in nicely as Heritage and Environment Officer, and we take Jane Gray and Tim Coyte completely for granted now in their new roles, so that's got to be a good sign! All projects in delivery are bubbling along nicely, and this quarter's highlight for me has been the Fish Supper at Skinningrove - that was fish n chips for 35 - as part of the Environment Agency sponsored project carrying out creative community consultation. There was an afternoon just before this when I was deep in the throes of grappling with VAT, and Tim was at the next desk on the phone trying to source sufficient quantities of tomato ketchup - who wouldn't want to work in the arts?

Programme Notes



Rosi and I have been delivering some sessions of CPD training for creative freelancers at Saltburn Artists Studio, looking at issues such as business development, networking, residencies in education and community settings, and all the attendant aspects of applying for/ delivering such activities - necessarily a wide but not deep introduction. We have mentioned VAT, but not ketchup, so far.

My biggest event of this quarter hasn't happened as I'm writing, but will have by the time you're reading - and that's the WorldFest of course (brought to you in partnership with African Arts Association and Middlesbrough Council). I'm sure it will be stupendous, the afro-pop spectacular with Kanda Bongo Man at the Arc will have been a great night of dancing, the youth event will have been enjoyable, varied and well-attended, and Gregory Isaacs at Middlesbrough Town Hall will have been legendary - and you will all know that because you will have been at those events and they will be seared on your memory - in a wholly good way, of course. Last year some people missed Tinariwen and then regretted it ever after - don't make that mistake!

Comments on WinterFest 07 included - shame it's only once a year; another fantastic evening; totally blown away; atmosphere of complete joy; absolutely superb - I'm sure I'll be receiving the same feedback on WorldFest 08. Thanks to all our sponsors!

Meanwhile, back at the less 'glamorous events with exotic musicians' end of the job and rather more in the 'VAT and ketchup' sector, I'll keep bashing those computer keys and bunging in those funding applications.

See you round!

Rowena Sommerville
Director of Programmes





Educ

Plays involving Sergeant Majors & human pyramids, and visual arts work including animations and canvases are probably not what you'd expect in a Year 10 Chemistry lesson, but it's exactly how one group of students from High Tunstall School in Hartlepool are learning about separation techniques and crude oil. Artists from Tees Valley Arts have been working with Industry professionals in partnership with NEPIC (North East Processes Industry Cluster), the teacher and students to explore the topic creatively. Learning physically is proving a hit with the students; by getting out of the lab and onto their feet, actively learning and exploring the topic through drama enables kinaesthetic learners to flourish. Likewise, using paints and canvases to visually explore the processes involved in the production of crude oil stimulates a different kind of learning; there is no right or wrong on canvas, we don't need to fear failure and through that freedom comes the confidence to learn.





The project is at the halfway stage, and towards the end of the Summer Term, there will be a celebration event to showcase the work created by the students. Watch out for an update in the next newsletter. We would like to thank our partners, NEPIC, who have generously funded and supported this project and the artists, Adrian Moule, Les Simpson and Kev Howard.

Impressive Stats

In the past 12 months, TVA have raised over £240, 000 to deliver projects for over 2000 children and young people across the Tees Valley

124 creative practitioners have been employed on those projects, delivering 405 sessions

Over 7000 people have been a part of these projects as audience members



It's been a pretty busy year (although I can't exactly claim a huge part in that, given that I've just finished my fourth month!) The value that these projects bring cannot just be about pounds and pence, 'bums on seats' or sessions delivered. The emotional, educational and social impacts are powerful for our young people, and society as a whole. The 'return' on the initial investment is huge in more than simply financial terms, put wonderfully by one of the teachers from an Evolve residency:

"We just have to look at the children - their enthusiasm, their commitment, the way they were engaged, their enjoyment and their growing self-confidence."

(Teacher, Evolve residency)

With all that in mind, I'm looking forward to a busy and challenging year ahead - from the highs of successful projects, to the disappointments of unsuccessful funding bids; the emotional rollercoaster that is working in the arts. Quite frankly, I wouldn't want to be anywhere else!

Jane Gray
Education Officer



Heritage



My search for a job/profession that really stimulates me has seen me move from the arts (my first love), into recycling then sustainable development, then working with adults with learning difficulties to environmental education and finally to a masters in environmental management. It has also seen me move from Norfolk to Bristol to the Midlands to Aberystwyth, as well as East Africa and New Zealand. And now here I am in the north east in a position that draws (excuse the pun) on all my previous experience and qualifications in an exciting and developing role.



My time working in Tanzania gave me a real understanding of the importance of and the techniques involved in sustainable development, which I see are extremely relevant to my current position. I see that by providing local communities with skills and knowledge through education and for them to take ownership of projects that make positive changes to their own lives is critical for the long term sustainability of the project, and in turn the community. I also saw how powerful and valuable the arts are in engaging communities and individuals in projects and to act as a conduit for education. I initially went to Tanzania as a volunteer with the charity Student Partnership Worldwide to work on education based small scale development projects, addressing key health issues such as HIV/AIDS and water borne diseases, as well as environmental issues such as deforestation, soil erosion control and sustainable organic farming. I then worked for the organisation overseeing two more programmes of volunteers from Tanzania and Europe that used peer education and non-formal education techniques, such as the arts and sports to address the before mentioned issues.

My real passion is for environmental protection and nature conservation through the promotion and encouragement of biodiversity. I see that public involvement and participation twinned with guidance and education is of significant importance to achieve this. This is why I am extremely excited about working for Tees Valley Arts, as the arts are a wonderful means of engaging people with their local environment (and the Tees Valley has such an enormous wealth of amazing countryside and natural heritage) and to provide simple yet important messages in fun and stimulating ways.

This passion for the environment started at an early age from growing up on a small holding in rural north Norfolk. It then developed further through conservation volunteering for organisations such as the Wildlife Trust and BTCV, working for a recycling company for 2 years, and accumulating most recently in my masters in Managing the Environment.

I think it is wonderful that finally the environment, and particularly climate change is now a major topic for discussion and action is being taken, yet a fall out of this is that, a lot of people are disassociated with and confused as to what is really happening as things are getting lost in science and there are so many conflicting views. I see that used in the right way, the arts can be a great tool to stimulate discussion about, to explore themes and improve understanding on such as issues as climate change in more accessible and enjoyable ways. This is why I am also extremely keen to develop strong partnerships with environmental organisations to generate discussion and to bring important yet simple messages to as many people as possible.

Joe Dunne
Heritage Officer





Fish





Tees Valley Arts and The Environment Agency are working in partnership delivering a “creative consultation” with the Skinningrove community.

This first stage has involved local artist Derek Mosey delivering arts workshops with the play scheme and youth groups at The Riverside Building. These workshops have involved working with driftwood and other flotsam to explore the processes of the proposed flood defences. The workshops have produced some superb artwork including colourful mosaic fish and driftwood picture frames which display images of the proposed flood defence site.



Skinningrove Upper



A fish supper was held to celebrate the work by the children and young people with an exhibition of their work and, yes, fish and chips for the thirty five children, young people, parents, play scheme and youth club staff and other community members who attended the event. The event was very well received (aided by a liberal dashing of tomato sauce) providing an opportunity for Derek to launch the next phase of his “roving artist” role.

Derek worked with Skinningrove in the nineties, building fire sculptures for the annual Skinningrove Bonfire Event. Derek is pleased to be working with the community again and is enjoying his role of “roving artist” which involves talking to Skinningrove folk and developing artwork that explores memories, thoughts and feelings relating to Skinningrove Beck past, present and future.

Tim Coyte
Projects Officer



Tees Valley Arts can work with you to plan and set up a programme of creative activities, find a suitable artist, help to frame a budget and secure funding, and then manage the project, both artistically and administratively. If you have an idea you would like to discuss, please contact us:



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