



Impact Report 2023-2024

*Preserving the traditional,
facilitating the contemporary*

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Charity Registration Number: 1080292
Company Limited by Guarantee: 3391845



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Chair's Message



At a time when the UK arts sector continues to face exceptional challenges, it is with huge gratitude, pride and humility that I write the foreword to this report as Chair.

Following the welcome announcement of our ACE uplift in 2022, and the subsequent increase in staff, 2023-24 has been a busy but hugely successful year in which our core strategic priorities have been refined, articulated and illuminated. Front and centre lies our commitment to Talent Development. From spearheading new commissions by underrepresented artists through SPOTLIGHT to showcasing local and international artists via our concert series to expanding our education offer to include more disciplines and paths to engagement, we are cementing our place as a national leader in South Asian classical music and dance talent development.

None of this could be possible, however, without the partnerships we continue to forge and nurture. These partnerships, whether with regional organisations (LEEDS 2023), international foundations (InnerVision Orchestra) or local communities (Platform project), have allowed us to increase accessibility to our offer, maintain our commitment to delivering outstanding artistic experiences, expand our community engagement work in a meaningful way and raise visibility of the exceptional creative encounters that we and the artists we work with are committed to deliver.

At the same time, a focus on organisational development - which continues into 2024-25 - has resulted in a dynamic and motivated staff and trustee team without whom none of this work could have been delivered. My thanks go especially to Keranjeet for her openness and careful nurturing of this significant change to our structure.

These successes are the result of a delicate balance that SAA-uk has spent its 27 years refining: ensuring the original aims and cultural heritage of the organisation remain present whilst continuing to actively engage, listen and respond to what our present-day communities and artists want and need and, crucially, committing ourselves to always look with curiosity towards the future.

Inés Soria-Donlan
Chair of Trustees

Chief Executive & Artistic Director's Message



2023-2024 is a year that to me rings of confidence, endorsement, growth and gratitude.

This financial year we have moved forward with intention, with the support of strong partnerships within the city, and a renewed team and Trustees. With a successful outcome to our Arts Council England application, with an uplift of 250%, we have been reconfirmed on the list of National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) for another 4 years. This year we were assessed once again as a low-risk organisation by the Arts Council England, which continues to establish our reputation as a reliable and dynamic arts organisation. We also secured continued support from Leeds City Council leading to over £2million investment in the region, which has enabled the organisation to increase its capacity, retain and continue to nurture and develop talent.

Over the last 12 months we have continued to grow as a talent development hub, a centre of excellence that is committed to ensuring that access is inclusive to art and culture for everyone, by producing and supporting 19 live events in Leeds: this including student showcases, original productions, and featuring partnerships and collaborations with Opera North & Howard Assembly Room, Leeds International Concert Season, Carriageworks Theatre, and more. Our Music and Dance Academies have attracted students from across Leeds and the UK attending regularly for 30 weeks of the year. The academic year has seen several student presentations as opening acts to professional musicians throughout the season, as well as a 6-day Summer School open to all.

In 2023-24 we have continued working alongside organisations of different sizes, using our expertise to support them as a co-commissioner, advisor or programmer, to push the boundaries of their work, creating opportunities for innovation and risk-taking through embracing a wide range of influences and practices, giving audiences the opportunity to experience exceptional, diverse music and dance.

As we progress our commitment to excellence in 2024-25, we eagerly look towards a future that holds exciting possibilities, greater creative opportunities, and more ambitious artistic collaborations that build on all that we have achieved over the past 25 years of public funding.

Keranjeet Kaur Virdee MBE
C.E.O and Artistic Director

85

Freelance Artists employed by SAA-uk during 2023-24 in our education, performance, or workshop programmes, strengthening our commitment to local talent.

7

International visiting artists. One key achievement was curating each of the concerts to encourage networking opportunities for both visiting artists and UK artists.

25%

Proportion of our events in Leeds that was completely free. We achieved this through strategic partnerships and the support of our funders.

£22,234

Individual donations and projects delivered from trust and foundation support. A huge thanks to everyone who donated to us allowing us to thrive and deliver outstanding work.

5

Number of Global Majority artists supported in the opportunity to create original pieces of music and dance. This has been reflected in our Special Projects and Performance Programme.

670

Number of sessions in our Music and Dance Academies. Delivering a range of disciplines in South Asian Classical music and dance, in person and online.

25

Concerts, Music and Dance Academy showcases, and tour dates undertaken by SAA-uk this year.

1,318,809

YouTube views on our popular channel highlighting concert excerpts, as well as full performances.

3600

The number of viewers during our online streamed events, allowing us to reach a wider audience for both SAA-uk and the artform.



The Case for SAA-uk

2023-24 marks the beginning of a new era for SAA-uk, its most prolific and transformative so far.

Following our successful Arts Council England application and uplift in 2022 and being reconfirmed on the list of National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) for another 4 years, we have been moving forward with increased support, eagerly looking towards a future that holds exciting possibilities, more creative opportunities, and ambitious artistic collaborations and workshop programmes.

Over the last 12 months we have continued to grow as a talent development hub, a centre of excellence committed to inclusive access to art and culture. Throughout the year we worked with over 80 artists, including young and international performers, and supported the development of 5 original productions of South Asian music and dance: *'Tritiya Prakriti: The Third Gender'*, *'Music of Courtesans: Ode to Chanda Bai'* (April 2024), *'One Dha at a Time'* (November 2023), *'Winter Solstice: From Within'* (December 2023) and *'Indian Soirée'* (March 2024). The last two performances have been made possible by PRS Foundation and PPL's continued support of our SPOTLIGHT programme, shining a light on underrepresented creators rooted in South Asian music genres.

In 2023-24 we stepped-up with the support of strong partnerships within the city, including a successful collaboration with LEEDS 2023, and a renewed team and Board of Trustees. In Summer 2023, following the most successful edition of our Solstice Festival so far with a 20-hour-long, free programme of South Asian Classical music at the Leeds Corn Exchange as part of the Year of Culture (page 13), we have welcomed Inés Soria-Donlan as new Chair of the Board of Trustees. Having joined SAA-uk as Learning and Participation Co-ordinator in 2015-16, Inés is delighted to have returned to the organisation as Chair in this financial year.

In the Autumn of 2023, *'Orpheus'*, our co-production with Opera North, was celebrated with several awards, including Achievement in Opera at the UK Theatre Awards 2023, and Best Stage Production at the Asian Media Awards (page 22). The resonance this production continues to have and the learnings from this experience, have given way to our latest cross-cultural production, *'Travel Light'*, which is planned to take place in next year's Autumn/Winter season.

The latter part of the year featured the final showcase of the community heritage project *'Platform'* (page 21), supported by Leeds Civic Trust & Leeds Community Foundation, in January 2024. In partnership with AMP and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, we presented a regional tour of our very first early years resource, *'Mausam: A Day at the Pond'* (page 15), and successfully concluded our 2023-24 performance programme with "Tohfa – A gift" a sold-out performance featuring some of the most talented students and junior tutors of our Music Academies in March 2024.

As we look back on our first year of renewed and increased funding, we also want to celebrate what this means for the future and legacy of the organisation: to start the important process of Organisational Development and investigate the possibilities of a SAA-uk building base, to look at new ways supporters and ambassadors can help shape SAA-uk's future, and to move with intention towards our 30th anniversary in June 2027.



PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME

This year, our programme of events platformed the work of a remarkable 85 artists, including emerging and international talents. Our focus has been on providing performance opportunities, nurturing talent, and deepening our connections with both audiences and artists. Accessibility needs were prioritised at events, as well as ticket pricing adjustments, particularly for students and people under 30.

The Spring/Summer season platformed new work by dancer and choreographer Santosh Menon and vocalist Chandra Chakraborty and culminated in August with a captivating live performance by SAA-uk alumnus and renowned sitarist Mohammed Assani, now based in Canada, alongside Shahbaz Hussain on tabla.

The Autumn/Winter season featured three Raga@Seven music events, showcasing both classical and contemporary performances at Seven Arts. We presented the contemporary dance performance 'One Dha at a Time' in November 2023 and our annual free lunchtime recital in collaboration with Leeds International Concert Season in January 2024.



Photo @ Zul Bhatia



Both seasonal programmes also featured events delivered in partnership, and in particular 'Carnatic Pearls: Music of Sri Lanka' and 'Winter Solstice: From Within' presented in collaboration with Opera North & Howard Assembly Room. These events created opportunities for innovation and risk-taking through embracing a wide range of influences and practices, and giving audiences the opportunity to experience exceptional, diverse music and dance.



Spring/Summer 2023

- 27th April 2023
Tritiya Prakriti: The Third Gender by Khestra Dance
- 11th May 2023
Carnatic Pearls: Music of Sri Lanka
- 24th May 2023
Music of Courtesans: Ode to Chanda Bai
- 7th June 2023
Classical Platform: Summer Breeze
- 21 – 22nd June 2023
Summer Solstice:
Asian Music Festival – Chasing the Light
- 30th June 2023
Sarangi Legacy: An Evening of 100 Musical Colours
- 12th August 2023
A Summer's Evening: South Asian Heritage Month

Autumn/Winter 2023-24

- 23rd September 2023
Raga@Seven Double Bill: Lost Raga & Infinite Road
- 6th October 2023
Raga@Seven Double Bill: SAMRaga & Sonali Natta
- 25th November 2023
One Dha at a Time: Dancing towards new light
- 21st December 2023
Winter Solstice: From Within
- 31st January 2024
Midday Melody
- 29th February 2024
Raga@Seven Poetry in Song
- 23rd March 2024
Raga@Seven Tohfa - A Gift
- 28th March 2024
SPOTLIGHT: Indian Soirée

SPOTLIGHT 2023: Supporting Artists

SPOTLIGHT is our talent development programme designed to **shine a light on underrepresented creators** across diverse music genres, offering them the opportunity to explore new expressions and challenge perceptions. We are thrilled to serve as a bridge, connecting emerging talents with industry experts who provide invaluable insights through bespoke one-to-one and group sessions, covering subjects such as self-marketing, securing funding, business setup, and managing a portfolio career.

This year, our SPOTLIGHT call-out led to the selection of the talented artist **Amritha Thankachy**, who participated in a series of creative days during February and March while developing her project, *'Indian Soirée'*. A work-in-progress premiere of Amritha's original pieces was showcased to a selected audience at Seven Arts on the 28th of March 2024.

“I think the creative side of this project has really been nourished by PRS foundation and SAA-uk!”
Amritha Thankachy, Vocalist and Composer



“

“It’s been really interesting bringing all these musicians together. We’ve all come from quite different backgrounds, and we’ve shown each other new ways of performing, and new ways of playing music. That’s been fascinating.”

Liz Hanks, Cellist

“The whole process has been really, really interesting for me. And just in terms of the songs themselves, I’ve really enjoyed them, I think they’re really great. I’ve been humming them at home! I think if you’re humming the songs even before you’ve done the show, that’s a really good indicator.”

Luke Reddin-Williams, Multi-instrumentalist



SPECIAL PROJECTS

Winter Solstice: From Within

'Winter Solstice: From Within' offered an immersive exploration into the world of Indian/British musician and composer **Baluji Shrivastav OBE** and his unique journey with visual impairment. The concept for Baluji's original piece was exploring how the mind can conjure vivid images through the senses.

Accompanying Baluji were an ensemble including Linda Shanson on vocals, Takashi Kikuchi on viola, and Yousuf Ali Khan on tabla and percussion. The performance was enriched by the contributions of Dimitris Menexopoulos, projection and sound artist, who added a compelling visual dimension to the audience's experience.

The project was carefully crafted to meet the needs of the artists and audience alike. From SAA-uk's Artistic Director traveling to London to experience the initial development of the piece, to **the creation of an audio-described programme** with support from the Opera North & Howard Assembly Room teams, and offering complimentary tickets to carers of blind and visually impaired attendees: every detail was thoughtfully considered.

In our third year as PRS Foundation's Talent Development Partners, we have continued focusing on supporting artists rooted in South Asian music. The artists involved have personally benefitted from the expertise we have as a team, our contacts, our 25 years of experience, and the opportunity to connect with a receptive audience providing feedback on their work in progress. Funded by PRS Foundation and PPL as part of our Talent Development Programme SPOTLIGHT, 'Winter Solstice: From Within' was a resounding success, with tickets selling out for this now regular appointment ahead of the busy festive season.



"This commission and the whole programme was a refreshing opportunity to reflect on my experiences as a composer without sight and how I can translate my inner relationship with sound into this work. It is very important to me to have the stimulus to approach my musicality in a different way and to be free to draw on my imagination within and beyond the boundaries of my traditional framework."

Baluji Shrivastav OBE, music creator and sitarist

"I really enjoyed this concert. Inspiring musicians and what a great idea for a commission! It was very thought provoking, and I loved the amazing light projections. One section moved me: the violin and percussions together. More please!"

Audience member

"Baluji Music Foundation has a long-standing relationship with SAA-uk. It was a creative challenge to be asked by SAA-uk to create a seamless piece of music of 40 mins. This is a challenge for any composer but especially challenging when the visually impaired artists come from different musical traditions!"

So, thanks to SAA-uk, and Keranjeet in particular for her faith in Baluji to create a marvellous performance. The welcome that all the staff gave us at the theatre, hotel and restaurant was wonderful and made it a memorable and precious experience for us all."

Linda Shanson, Co-creator and vocalist

Summer Solstice: Asian Music Festival

Presented by SAA-uk for 12 consecutive editions, this unforgettable event **transforms the longest day of Summer into an extraordinary celebration of live music every year**. Held at the iconic Leeds Corn Exchange for this special Year of Culture, this time the Summer Solstice celebrations were delivered in collaboration with LEEDS 2023, as we marked **World Music Day** and **International Yoga Day** with an evening of captivating performances.

SAA-uk's all-night celebration of Indian classical music, the '*Summer Solstice: Asian Music Festival*' is the only event of its kind in the UK. This year we included yoga sessions, games, and 10 live music performances over the longest day and shortest night of the year, taking place for the first time at Leeds Corn Exchange.

The stellar line-up featured the Shah-e-Mardaan qawwali ensemble and a mesmerizing whirling Dervish. Award-winning musician Qais Essar travelled from the USA to enchant us with the ancient melodies of the 2,500-year-old Afghan rabab. Joining them were the remarkable Sarangi player Sardar Satwinderpal Singh from Scotland, rising star Kaviraj Singh, and award-winning singer Anamika Chowdhury.

With the support of our project partners LEEDS 2023 and Leeds Corn Exchange's owners Rushbond, we were able to design the event as a **Pay-What-You-Can** experience, inviting all to immerse in an evening of cultural celebration and musical excellence without the barrier of a fixed ticket cost.



EDUCATION

Education Programme

This year, we prioritised the growth and development of our new team, ensuring they received the mentoring, training, and practical experience needed to lead and plan our Education programme effectively. These efforts allowed us to successfully deliver key events, including two Academy showcases (Dance on 9th July and Music on 22nd July), our annual **Summer School** (6th -11th August), the final concert of the Spring/Summer season on 12th August, which featured a warm-up performance by our Music Academy students, Open Days for Dance and Music on 9th and 10th September, and the launch of our Autumn term in the week starting 18th September.

This year also saw significant expansion within our Education Programme. We introduced **Odissi Dance**, now offered every Friday alongside our Bharatanatyam classes at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance. We also reinstated our Sunday Music Academies, introducing a family-focused **Gurbani Kirtan** singing course and the Sarangi. Weekly classes continued to be offered both in person and online, covering nine key music and dance disciplines, with enrolment rising by 16% to 98 students since last year.

We also laid the foundation for the **SAA-uk Enrichment Programme**, providing Academy students with opportunities to learn from internationally renowned artists. These enrichment events were free for registered students and open to the wider public, further enhancing our educational offerings.

The final part of the year featured a **regional tour of our early years resource**, and a sold-out performance by our Music Academy students. Highlights included student debut performances at key concerts, an increased interest in Odissi and Bharatanatyam, and a growing Kathak programme, with students set to perform at Leeds's *'Reclaim the Night'* event in April 2024. We also made significant progress in **curriculum development**, with plans to implement new findings in the next academic year.

“

Our partnership with AMP, OAE, and SAA-uk has explored the blend of orchestral and South Asian music to create a unique early years' experience. 'A Day at the Pond' featured a new commission by Preetha Narayanan and integrated Kathak dance to bring the music to life for young children. We look forward to collaborating with SAA-uk to expand this project to more communities next year.”

Becky West, Regional Producer North, Orchestras Live

“SAA-uk has been a valued partner, enriching our early years project, *Mausam: A Day at the Pond*, which evolved from an online resource to a live touring performance. Their collaboration with OAE has created a unique blend of music that introduces children in remote areas to different cultures.

The inclusion of Kathak dance has been particularly thrilling for them. This partnership has also inspired SAA-uk to develop its own early years program, and we look forward to supporting its growth with training and mentoring.”

Sarah McWatt, Director, AMP (ex-NYMAZ)



Photo © Maria Spadafora

**YOUTH
MUSIC**

Mausam: A Day at The Pond

This year, our early years initiative saw significant progress as we participated in the regional tour organised by AMP (ex-NYMAZ), Orchestras Live, and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, featuring our very first school resource, *'Mausam: A Day at the Pond'*.

This tour provided valuable opportunities to engage with teachers and early years settings in North Yorkshire. To further enhance our expertise, we encouraged our tutors to attend the **Note Weaves Early Music Conference in Skipton**, deepening their understanding and expanding their skills in early childhood music education.

This was also our first year of being supported by the Youth Music Trailblazer fund, which is helping us **develop an early years music programme** designed to introduce South Asian music and cultural themes to pre-school children (aged 0-5) in a way that is both enjoyable and accessible.

Following this successful first trial, next year we will pilot two existing early years resources across five early years settings in Leeds and Bradford, all **located in areas with significant South Asian populations**. The insights from these selected settings will guide the development and refinement of the two early years packs, ensuring they are tailored to better meet the needs of the communities we serve, and further refine our early year provision.

TRAINING

Generation 21 Programme

The arts sector faces a significant underrepresentation of skilled individuals from global majority backgrounds: from artists to arts administrators and leadership roles. In response to this disparity, SAA-uk's **Generation 21 Programme** aims to cultivate the next generation of arts and cultural leaders through three key schemes:

1. Pathways

Providing structured support and development for young students of music within the SAA-uk Academies, helping them progress in their learning and, at the same time, develop skills to teach South Asian music.

2. HeadStart

A two-year, full-time training programme for individuals aged 16-30 from global majority backgrounds, offering a competitive salary and comprehensive training, mentoring, and coaching.

3. Sahara

Focuses on breaking down barriers for underrepresented artists rooted in South Asian performing arts, providing targeted support to help them reach their potential. From financial contribution towards creating new work, advice and guidance, signposting, development of an idea through to drafting funding applications.



Photo © Zul Bhatia

SAA-uk remains committed to promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion, ensuring a dynamic and representative cultural sector through its training programmes, as well as placement schemes and volunteer opportunities.

SAA-uk offers **university placements** through the University of Leeds and **volunteering opportunities** to further engage individuals in the arts sector. Placements allow students to gain valuable experience and insights into the impact of arts and cultural programming, and volunteering opportunities contribute to various aspects of SAA-uk's work, giving volunteers experience and networking opportunities.



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

SPECIAL PROJECTS

After Orpheus

ANOMALY: UK and EU Tour

In the same year he was composing brand new music for the SAA-uk and Opera North co-production 'Orpheus' (2022), Jasdeep Singh Degun released his debut album Anomaly, a project showcasing musicality, improvisation and technique through music rooted in the ancient repertoire of raags and delivered with contemporary flair.

With the support of SAA-uk, Jasdeep was able to bring live performances of his work to UK and EU stages alongside an eight-piece band, combining the richness and scale of chamber music with the spontaneity of Indian improvisation. The artists featured included, Kaviraj Singh (santoor) and Kirpal Panesar (esraj) from the 'Orpheus' ensemble; Jasdeep's regular duo partner Harkiret Singh Bahra on tabla; Dutch/Irish film composer Aisling Brouwer on piano; Glenn Sharp, a specialist in flamenco and Arabic music, on guitar; versatile cellist Liz Hanks and jazz bassist John Pope.

After a successful opening night in Leeds, the tour dates continued in Norwich, Nottingham, Southampton, Manchester, Liverpool, and internationally in Rotterdam, Netherlands, supporting Jasdeep in his next step of becoming an established name in the UK and European musical scene.



“For me it’s really not a matter of different worlds meeting. It’s just me: as much as I’m steeped in Indian classical music, I’m a product of this country; I’m a British composer”

Jasdeep Singh Degun



Ode to Chanda Bai: Music of Courtesans

Leading Indian classical vocalist Chandra Chakraborty, following her successful role as Proserpina Queen of the Underworld in 'Orpheus' (2022) was keen to take forward her creative idea of recovering the long-lost legacy of Urdu poetess and courtesan Chanda Bai, who ruled the hearts of 18th-century Hyderabad.

From becoming the first female poet to publish a diwan (a collection of Urdu Ghazals) comprising 39 bewitching ghazals that dabble with the worlds of love, mysticism, and spirituality, to charging into wars and hunting exhibitions in male battle attire alongside the Nizam, Chanda Bai proved a woman could conquer a man's world. Chanda's devotion to arts was as powerful as her desire to grant a new generation of courtesans the opportunity to inherit the rich culture of South Asian music, dance, and arts. And so, she established a centre of learning, where 300 women were trained by herself and other renowned teachers in the performing arts.

Though a figure so monumental in her time, Chanda Bai's story is not widely known today, and Chandra Chakraborty's intention was to take Chanda Bai's story back to life in the original production 'Music of Courtesans'.

With the support of SAA-uk, Chandra's creative concept was transposed in a musical theatre production, featuring actors and singers, and live musicians, welcoming audiences at Seven Arts in May 2023 to explore the extraordinary world of an even more extraordinary woman.

GOVERNANCE & BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Testimonials for SAA-uk

In this financial year our capacity increased to a 9-members Board and 8 full-time and 1 part-time team members, with new roles being created in Marketing, Fundraising and Education.

By the end of the financial year, the increasing engagement and commitment of the Board was accompanied by a process of Organisational development, guided by trustees and team members with the support of consultants FentonMickle, who will continue their work with SAA-uk in 2024-25.

The approach of SAA-uk's Chair, Board of Trustees, and team continues to be entrepreneurial and Kaizen - small continuous steps - refining, innovating, seizing opportunities, and taking calculated risks to evolve, grow, be resilient.



"It is a great privilege to be on the Board of Trustees of SAA-uk, I joined the Board in March 2023, and I am thoroughly enjoying my role as a Trustee. Over this period, I have attended most of the performances which SAA-uk arranged together with my wife, all of them were excellent, especially 'Orpheus' which was performed at the famous Grand Theatre in Leeds. SAA-uk also has various Academies in music and dance. Students can learn to play instruments like Sitar, Tabla, Santoor, Sarangi and of course Vocals from qualified teachers. Likewise, they can also learn the popular dance forms of Kathak, Bharatanatyam and Odissi. SAA-uk is there to nurture young talent.

The Summer School this year was a huge success and in particular the students were very fortunate to have Anuradha Pal from India, she is the number one female tabla player in the world, to teach the young, eager students.

I can see SAA-uk going from strength to strength and I am very happy to be part of the team."

Ramesh Chauhan, SAA-uk Trustee

"I've been a Trustee for SAA-uk for a year and what a thrilling year it has been. Prior to joining as a Trustee, I had been an audience member for many years and closely followed SAA-uk's journey; it has always brought a sense of belonging for me and even more so now that I am part of the organisation. Coming into the role, I always admired the wide range of events it hosted, the diverse audiences it attracted, and the beautiful varied venues it embraced. SAA-uk has always felt genuinely inclusive, welcoming all to experience its offerings.

Now I am a Trustee I can see why. The organisation comprises a team of dedicated individuals and artists which is spearheaded by a visionary leader. Keran ji and team demonstrate authenticity and humility in spades which is their secret masala. It is this, together with the drive to exceed year on year which contributes to SAA-uk's growth, challenging boundaries and remaining true to their purpose. It's wonderful to work alongside fellow trustees and allies bringing different life experiences and perspectives to this incredible organisation.

Over the past year I have had attended the Summer Solstice and other events including a confluence of East and West music. Being a Trustee has given me valuable insights into the vast amount of outreach work SAA-uk undertakes. I admire the organisation's dedication to paying it forward and ensuring it reaches out to those who would not necessarily have a chance to either make music or experience a breadth of amazing activities.

Watching SAA-uk as an audience member now comes with the added joy of knowing the unbelievable amount of work, rigour, commitment and that goes into every single breath of work produced."

Sidrah Warburton, SAA-uk Trustee



CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

SAA-uk has a longstanding tradition of collaborating with local arts organisations and community groups throughout Leeds. Our Community Engagement strategy, rooted in our **commitment to celebrate South Asian culture**, has been evolving organically to enhance the broader cultural landscape of Leeds.

In 2023-24, we focused on both forging new partnerships and deepening existing ones. We capitalised on key opportunities for creative community engagement, notably participating in LEEDS 2023's **My LEEDS Summer**. Our performances at local events in Harehills & Gipton Festival, Headingley & Hyde Park, and Kirkgate Market reached 750 audience members from across the local area.

Our involvement in the **Culture at Leeds** event in October 2023 featured an engaging pop-up performance by Anamika & Dave Evans' Jazz band, attracting around 200 students. This event not only promoted our work but also generated enthusiasm for volunteering, with many students expressing interest in contributing to our initiatives.

Lastly, SAA-uk's community heritage project, *'Platform'* (2022-2024) continued to build connections within the city and culminated in a successful conclusive showcase in January 2024, which garnered significant media coverage from BBC Look North.

Reflecting on our future work, we envision the delivery of a new strand of our Creative Communities programme starting from 2024-25, **Pop Up Culture**. Over the past few years, the local city centre has increasingly become a place where people want to socialise rather than simply shop or work, and *Pop Up Culture* will be maximising the potential of Leeds's local high streets by offering activities reaching new audiences by bringing a carousel of events and workshops to the inner city and annually rotating in each of the 33 Wards.



Photo © Zul Bhatia

Marketing and Fundraising

Marketing, Communication and Audience Engagement

In the past year, SAA-uk's Marketing Department has evolved into a distinct entity with its own strategy, team, and clear mission: **to effectively communicate SAA-uk's story to both local and national audiences.** The impact of this development has been visible in live audience attendance and the increase of SAA-uk's social media presence impact can be measured by the 1.3 million views on our YouTube channel, for videos of past performances and live streams. This development stemmed from an in-depth data analysis, including insights from the LEEDS 2023 data, the 2021 Census, and various audience segmentation profiles. The department benefited from expert guidance in communications and engagement from the arts and culture sector.

The marketing strategy for 2023-24 includes a blend of traditional and digital marketing, with elements of innovative messaging. We currently produce **2 Seasonal Brochures, flyers, posters, and programmes for each live event**, which are distributed physically in locations across West Yorkshire, as well as digitally.

Our communications spread across our website (now featuring a digital gallery of photos and videos of past events), a bi-monthly newsletter, local and national marketing networks, and our YouTube channel followed by over 50,000 subscribers and with a renewed offer of **high-quality video content.**

Our commitment to inclusivity is reflected in the removal of financial barriers to participation, ensuring diverse and excellent programming. Notably, *'Orpheus'* our 2022 co-production with Opera North, received several awards this year, including **Achievement in Opera at the UK Theatre Awards** and **Best Stage Production at the Asian Media Awards.**



Keeping South Asian Arts Alive: Fundraising and Development

At the core of SAA-uk's mission is a deep commitment to **keeping South Asian arts vibrant and accessible for generations to come.** We believe that enriching and culturally relevant artistic experiences should be available to all, and this vision resonates deeply with many across the globe.

In these challenging times, the creative opportunities for young and aspiring creatives are under significant threat. The current climate of uncertainty puts these opportunities at risk, making our work more crucial than ever.

Witnessing the transformative impact of the arts on our **SAA-uk Academy students**, who shine on prestigious stages worldwide, reinforces our dedication to investing in their futures. To support this, we provide **free-to-hire instruments** and **bursaries** for those joining our Academies, ensuring that financial constraints do not prevent anyone from accessing the joy and opportunities of learning and creating.

However, **this mission cannot succeed without the funders, donors and volunteers' support.** Their generosity helps us nurture talent, support emerging artists, and maintain our Music and Dance Academies, making a tangible difference in people's lives and the cultural landscape.



SCAN HERE TO DONATE



FINANCE AUDIT

Financial report 2023-24

The most significant change in the organisation's finances from 2022-23 is the substantial increase in the annual funding from the Arts Council England (ACE). In 2022-23 this funding was £184,330 per year, but from this year and for the following three financial years this has been increased to £684,330 per year.

The Net Income for the year has increased to £146,173 from a Net Expenditure of £17,650 last year so that the Total Funds Carried Forward at the year-end have increased from £49,179 to £195,352. It is always important to maintain a level of reserves in order to provide financial security during periods of unexpected adverse conditions (e.g. Covid pandemics), but it is also important to use as much of our funding as possible to further the aims of the charity. The Board is very aware of the need to keep these two aims in balance.

In order to utilise the increase in funding, it has been important to create a larger staff team and so there has been a consequential increase in Staff-related costs (Wages, Social Security, Pensions) to £291,596 (2022-23 - £118,500). The team has been built over the past year and so it is expected that the Staff-related costs will increase next year when all the positions will be filled for a full year.

There have been notable increases in Artists Fees from £27,307 (2022-23) to £98,342 (2023-2024) and Tutor Fees from £39,765 (2022-23) to £76,957 (2023-2024). This is indicative of the utilisation of the addition ACE funding to promote both artists and education in the field of South Asian arts.

Although it is not a regulatory or legal requirement, the Board of Trustees has decided that, in view of the significant increase in funding, it would be prudent for a full audit to be undertaken each year. The accounts have always been reviewed by external accountants, but this is the first year that a full audit has been undertaken.

Key Financial KPIs

All budgets are drafted with a strong awareness of associated risks. Which is the reasoning behind each activity being planned with fluidity in mind, so that we can respond with agility to any risks, make carefully considered cuts without a negative impact on core artistic programmes:

- Build organisational infrastructure on the exponential growth achieved through the uplift in funding from Arts Council England from £184,330 to £684,330.
- Secure at least £15,000 in project funding from PRS, PPL, and Youth Music Foundation.
- Achieve a minimum £3,000 surplus to be carried forward to 2024-25 and re-invested in the delivery of Artistic projects and Organisational Development.
- Remove financial barrier for music and dance classes by offering: 5 full bursaries of £500 each, 50% discount for university students and parents studying the same discipline as their children. Sensitive ticket pricing to performances and provide enrichment opportunities. This is to be achieved with a combination of individual giving support and contributed income through Trusts & Foundations e.g., Future Talent bursary support.

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year ended 31 March 2024

(including Income and Expenditure Account and Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses)

	Notes	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	2024 Total funds £	2023 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies	2	686,561	51,500	738,061	217,229
Charitable activities					
Charitable activities	4	41,920	-	41,920	45,085
Invested income	3	2,343	-	2,343	209
Other income		17,310	-	17,310	7,247
TOTAL		748,134	51,500	799,634	269,770
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities					
Charitable activities	5	254,445	36,500	290,945	124,809
Other		362,516	-	362,516	162,611
TOTAL		616,961	36,500	653,461	287,420
NET INCOME / (EXPENDITURE)		131,173	15,000	146,173	(17,650)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		49,179	-	49,179	66,829
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		180,352	15,000	195,352	49,179
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	11	8,284	-	8,284	6,201
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	12	27,849	-	27,849	6,251
Cash at bank and in hand		220,046	15,000	235,046	71,744
		247,895	15,000	262,895	77,995
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	13	(75,827)	-	(75,827)	(35,017)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		172,068	15,000	187,068	42,978
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		180,352	15,000	195,352	49,179
NET ASSETS		180,352	15,000	195,352	49,179

STAFF & TRUSTEES

The Trustees who served during the year 2023-24 were:

The Board

CHAIR

Paul French (April - September 2023)
Inés Soria-Donlan (Sep 2023)

TREASURER

Paul French

TRUSTEES

Dr Jasjit Singh (joined 2021)
Flora Yang (joined 2022)
Ramesh Chauhan (joined 2023)
Sidrah Warburton (joined 2023)
Mohit Chaturvedi (joined 2023)
Adele Newman (joined 2024)
Barsa Ray (joined 2024)

All Trustees are non-executive and are not remunerated for the services rendered to South Asian Arts UK (SAA-uk).

Management and wider Team

C.E.O AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Keranjeet Kaur Virdee MBE

FUNDRAISING MANAGER

Barbara Cardone

SENIOR CREATIVE MANAGER

Simona Kaur Sawhney

ARTS MARKETING MANAGER

Sherin Sara Alex

PRODUCER

Himanshu Pankaj Khinchi

DANCE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Jyoti Manral

MUSIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Maryam Jameela Sajad

ARTS ADMINISTRATION OFFICER

Gaia Cardone

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT

Dimple D'Cruz

Placements

University of Leeds, School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science placements

(October 2023 - March 2024):

Daisy Wright, Karishma Phandey

University of Leeds, School of Fine Arts, History of Art, and Cultural Studies placements

(February - May 2024):

Arisa Hara, Isa (Yan Leung), and Nini (Yifan Ni)

Artistic Team

MUSIC

SENIOR ADVISOR AND SITAR ONLINE

Ustad Dharambir Singh MBE

SITAR TUTOR

Luke Reddin-Williams

JUNIOR TUTOR

Kirtan Kaur Virdee

TABLA LEAD ACADEMY + ONLINE

John Ball

BOWED INSTRUMENTS TUESDAY ACADEMY

Harjodh Singh

SANTOOR LEAD

Ustad Harjinderpal Singh

SANTOOR TUTOR MUSIC ACADEMY

Eeshar Singh

VOCAL LEAD TUESDAY ACADEMY + ONLINE

Mrs. Poulomi Chakraborty

DANCE

BHARATANATYAM

Santosh Menon

KATHAK

Jyoti Uniyal

ODISSI

Sayani Ghosh



Registered Office:
Mill 1, Ground Floor North,
Mabgate Mills, Leeds LS9 7DZ

Charity Registration Number: 1080292
Company Limited by Guarantee: 3391845

Legal and administrative details
The registered name of the charity is South Asian Arts-uk. The charity was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee 10th June 1997. The charity is governed by the provisions of its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Professional Advisors

External Auditors: KJA Group
Bankers: Lloyds Bank, Briggate, Leeds

FUNDERS & PARTNERS

Principal Funders



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



Leeds Music Education Partnership

Project Funders



Event & Academies Partners

