

PRESS RELEASE

Monday 11 May 09
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Art Exchange and Nottingham Asian Arts Council

Present



Nottingham Mela 2009

“21 Years of Mela - From Bhangra folk beats to Dancing Gods”

Date: Sunday 7 June 2009

Venue: Old Market Square, Royal Centre and Sky Mirror (Nottingham Playhouse)

Times: 12pm - 7pm

Admission: Free

This year the Nottingham Mela returns for a very special event in its 21st year since launch, with celebrations set to take place on Sunday 7th June 2009 at Old Market Square and Royal Centre.

Performances will take place at Old Market Square’s Main Stage and Fountain Arena, hosted by award-winning DJ’s Adil Ray and DJ Kayper from the BBC Asian Network. The Royal Centre Stage will highlight the best of local talent from Nottinghamshire, whilst Anish Kapoor’s Sky Mirror will host special dance performances at Nottingham Playhouse. The site in Old Market Square will also host many speciality stalls selling Asian arts, textiles, music and freshly prepared Indian food.

Skinder Hundal, Chief Executive of New Art Exchange stated:

“From dancing Gods to Bhangra-folk beats, Nottingham Mela is back with a bang this year, showcasing the very best of Asian Arts, Bollywood, Bhangra, Dance, Pop, R’n’B, Qawwali and Fusion. The Mela scene started off in Nottingham and Bradford over two decades back, and has since enjoyed huge success all over the UK. This year we bring it back to where it all started - Nottingham, for a very special gathering to celebrate 21 years of Mela in the UK.”

Mela is a Sanskrit word meaning 'gathering', 'to meet' or a Fair. This year’s Nottingham Mela has a great line up led by iconic Bhangra superstar **Jazzy B**, Ghazal soulstress **Najma Akhtar** (who performed at the 1st Mela), South Asian dance impresario’s **Akademi** with their latest production - *Initium*, Brit-Asian music genius **Niraj Chag**, and all the way from India especially for Mela 21, Gujarati folk dancers **Vasuki Sanskrutik**.

Dr Hemant Bagalkote, Chair of Nottingham Asian Arts Council commented:

“We are extremely happy to bring Nottingham Mela to the people of Nottingham once again. Community interaction is the essence of Mela, and hence it’s imperative that the local community get involved each year. Nottingham Mela has continually brought together young South Asian artists and visitors from around the country in an environment of creativity, tolerance and respect. The event has always provided a unique

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opportunity to experience and partake in a weekend of live performances, interactive workshops and something slightly different. We look forward to seeing you at Mela 21!"

Aside from events on the day, there will be numerous activities in the weeks leading up to the event, with local community and youth groups producing site specific decor for Mela 21. This creative work will be showcased on the 7th June, and then at the Bradford Mela between 13-14th June.

Mela Heritage Project

As this year is 21 years since launch of Mela's in the UK, the Nottingham and Bradford Mela Committees have received funding for a special project. This year members of the public will have the chance to tell their personal Mela stories and recollections from past years, as Nottingham joins forces with Bradford to record the Mela's history. This will culminate in a book and special exhibition to take place in 2010.

It's going to be fun, fabulous, and best of all free! So please join us on Sunday 7th June, or if you would like to get involved in any of the activities in the lead up to Mela, or as a volunteer, please contact us on mela21@thenewartexchange.org.uk. Further details can be found through the event website: www.mela21.com.

Mela 21 has been co-produced by New Art Exchange and Nottingham Asian Arts Council in association with BBC Asian Network, with funding support from Arts Council England, Nottingham City Council and New Deal for Communities.

- Ends -

**For further press information please contact - Raam Tarat, *Marketing and Communications Manager*,
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Notes to Editors

Event

- **Event:** Mela 21 - Nottingham Mela 2009
- **Date:** Sunday 7th June 2009
- **Event times:** 12pm - 7pm
- **Venues:** Old Market Square, Royal Centre and Sky Mirror (Nottingham Playhouse)
- Admission to Mela 21, and related arts / dance / community workshops are FREE
- This event has been co-produced by New Art Exchange and Nottingham Asian Arts Council, with funding support from Arts Council England, Nottingham City Council and New Deal for Communities.
- BBC Asian Network will be co-hosting Mela 21, and are official media partners for the event

A Brief History - 21 years of the Mela, in Nottingham

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The aim of the first ever outdoor *Festival of Asian Arts & Music* in 1988 was to provide the public with an event which would go a long way to satisfy the artistic and cultural needs of a diverse Asian community, whilst at the same time providing opportunity for the wider community to enjoy the rich cultural traditions of the Indian Subcontinent.

The festival aimed to increase the general awareness about Asian music within the UK and thus it was felt that Melton Medes could benefit. In the longer term, the aim of the festival has been to provide the public with an Asian event with the equivalent artistic content of the Edinburgh Festival, whilst having the carnival atmosphere of the Notting Hill Carnival.

The formative years' festivals were two-day events which attracted national and international media attention. Links with activities and events on the European continent were also established, especially within the world music scene. For example, thanks to the first festival, Bhangra band "Pardesi" performed on the continent at huge events such as "Le Printemps de Bourges" (France) and in 1990 at the "Roma-Europa" concert (Italy); and had a video made about them by "Suisse Romand Couleur 3" national TV.

For the fourth annual festival a new environment was chosen to play host to the event - the Victoria Embankment. By this time the educational aspect of the festival was very strong, and growing. In addition to workshops in Sitar and Asian dance, traditional craftwork, mehndi, painting, sculpture and storytelling were some of the activities taking place.

APNA Arts continued to move forward in the 90s with more determination. The annual festival grew from strength to strength on various aspects, including a greater emphasis on visual arts, addressing environment issues and heritage. In later years the emphasis and focus of the festival has changed, looking closer at developing younger people, as well as nurturing the creative arts in an all-inclusive manner.

Britain's premier Mela festival has consistently showcased live performances by national and international artists including the likes of *Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Nitin Sawhney, Anup Jalota, Najma Akhtar, Baluji Shrivastav, Aziz Mian Qawwaal, Alaap, DCS, Apna Sangeet, Golden Star* and *Apache Indian* amongst others. The best in performances from the diverse artistic cultures of South Asia such as Bhangra, Ghazal, Qawwali, classical & folk dance and theatre.

In recent years it has condensed from a two-day festival to a one day event, but the thoughts and spirit behind Mela remain the same, that of creativity, music, respect, and celebration in diversity.

Educational / Community workshops

- In support of these events we are working closely with local education and artistic practitioners, presenting a creative arts programme based around the residual themes of NAE's *An(other) Story* and Mela 21
- There will also be physical / dance-based workshops courtesy the Shree Vatsuki Sanskrutik Group (India)
- For further information on these workshops and the NAE educational programme, please contact Indy Hunjan on education@thenewartexchange.org.uk or 0115 924 8630.

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- **New Art Exchange** was awarded £5million of funding from Arts Council England, Nottingham City Council, the Greater Nottingham Partnership, East Midlands Development Agency, Radford and Hyson Green New Deal for Communities, and European Regional Development Funding, and took 18 months to build. The organisation was a big winner in Arts Council England's the January 2008 review of national arts funding gaining a 58% increase in its annual funding grant. The award was made in recognition of the organisation's vital role in supporting visual and performing arts.
- **Mission:** The New Art Exchange's ambition is to become a national centre of excellence promoting contemporary arts development within the cultural and creative industries, to deliver an innovative and exciting programme of activity to promote, support and advocate contemporary multi-cultural arts development in visual and performing arts and new media. To be a cultural centre led by African, African Caribbean and South Asian arts practice. To serve an international community from roots firmly embedded in the local area.

Nottingham Asian Arts Council

- **Nottingham Asian Arts Council (NAAC)** is a non-for-profit organisation which is dedicated to the promotion of South Asian Arts within the Nottinghamshire region. It is a voluntary organisation formed in October 1986 with the specific aim of promoting South Asian Arts in Nottinghamshire. NAAC began its work directly in Nottingham City with members of the resident Indian sub-continent communities, but later broadened out across the various boroughs of Nottingham. NAAC now works across the County, whilst also developing contacts nationally and internationally to support cultural activities and artists.
- NAAC is funded through a grant received from the Nottingham City Council and the East Midlands Arts Council. Various other grants are secured to deliver specific projects.
- The organisation has been instrumental in encouraging the promotion of cultural diversity through the education of the public in all areas of Asian Arts and culture. NAAC has successfully started up classes and workshops in Asian music and dance via liaison with the Arts Council England East Midlands. It has also been behind the promotion of various local artists in the Nottingham area.