Developing audiences for new music and sound

the new notes symposium

spnm is in the process of developing a new organisation, planned to be launched later this year, which will unite it with BMIC, Contemporary Music Network and Sonic Arts Network.

User and audience development is one of the key stated aims of the new organisation. So how can new music and sound attract and engage with more people?

For the latest in our symposium series, chaired by Shoël Stadlen, we invited a panel of experts in the field to discuss this question with representatives of spnm and BMIC, shut the door and pressed record...

Shoël Stadlen: Matthew, you are coordinating the work that the four organisations are doing to try to create the new organisation as a user-focused organisation. Would you like to kick off by telling us about this work?

Mathew Greenall: I'm director of British Music Information Centre which is an organisation that serves a community of composers, of people interested in a particular area of music, which is, I suppose, what we call 'new music', or, rather horribly, 'contemporary classical music'.

In developing a new organisation, we are involved in creating an entirely new thing. Moving from a focus where it's served quite intensively particular communities, to try to develop a more outward-looking, user-focused, audience-focused organisation. And perhaps my own organisation, and I myself, have the furthest distance to travel. And so I'm sitting here slightly preposterously talking about audience development, because I'm not a marketer, and I don't really know anything about audience development. What I'm doing is trying to understand for myself, and for the journey of this organisation, what a user-focused organisation should look like.

We are making steady progress. The first thing we did last year was a survey of our existing users, our audiences. That provided, for the first time in new music, a picture of who our people actually are. The fact that we were doing that for the first time is, I think, an indication of our journey. It has been an extremely useful piece of research in informing our work.

What we are now doing is starting to look more closely at the theory of how we might grow audiences and then put that into practice with fresh research and consultations, so that working through Audiences London we can start to build a bigger picture of the mindset that this new organisation needs to have, as well as the structures that it needs to have to develop new audiences. And of course, we are going to be a national organisation, so we are doing this with a view to developing audiences across the UK.

SS: Can I ask the panel to give introductions to your experiences of user and audience development work?

Penny Mills: I work for Audiences London, an audience development agency which offers advice and consultancy, research, training and events drawing on an intelligence bank of information about cultural engagers (either participants or audiences) from right across London for different art-forms.

We are working with the group from BMIC, CMN, Sonic Arts Network

Suman Bhuchar is a freelance marketing consultant.

Doug Buist is Marketing Manager of London Sinfonietta.

Matthew Greenall is Director of BMIC and leads the user development work of the new organisation.

Penny Mills works for Audiences London and is working with the new organisation on user development

Bethan Sheppard is Marketing Campaigns Manager for classical music at the Barbican Centre.

Shoël Stadlen is Joint Executive Director of spnm and editor of new notes.

Hardish Virk runs Multi Arts Nation, specialising in developing new and ethnically diverse audiences.

and spnm who are looking at user development to support them in finding the path that makes sense to the new organisation. And this has to work in the context of the range of 'users' or 'engagers' that the new organisation will have – not just live audiences but also professionals, practitioners, school groups, people accessing the website, etc. The range of people the four organisations already engage with is broad, so we're aiming to build on this.

Hardish Virk: I'm the director of Multi-Arts Nation Ltd. which delivers marketing, audience development and PR campaigns for theatre, dance, music and visual arts events. I also work as a consultant, working with arts organisations to develop their policy and practice in engaging new and diverse audiences. Looking at the work that I do with organisations, it's about examining their existing audience development work, identifying the gaps and informing their communications strategy – which is integral to their business plan.

The work that I do with different types of organisations is particularly on organisation development. I've worked with the Arts Council on different initiatives looking at the wider spectrum of developing audiences for theatres across London and other regions. It's always been about developing audiences so that they are not the responsibility of one part of an organisation, but so that it's working cross-departmentally to develop their own practice and their own policy in developing audiences.

'Audiences', for me, consists of participants, staff and bums-on-seats or visitors and customers. So it's across the board, and that includes training, it includes the recruitment policies. It's about looking throughout the whole organisation to identify what needs to be strengthened so that it can take audience development seriously, and I've been doing this work for nearly 20 years now.

Doug Buist: I'm the Marketing Manager for London Sinfonietta. First and foremost, we exist as a performing group of 'contemporary classical music'. The phrase 'contemporary classical music' sits a little more comfortably with us, because that is the group of musicians that we perform with. For us, audience development is about advocating our strong belief in new music being created now that has a strong orchestral tradition at its heart. But at the same time we are also firm believers in new music connecting with the world around us.

So we are very much into collaborations with different types of musicians (from different genres and cultural backgrounds) and also with different art forms, in order to engage with wider contemporary culture.

Bethan Sheppard: I'm Marketing Campaigns Manager for classical music at the Barbican Centre. My particular remit is to deliver audiences for the classical music programme. What we've been doing in the last three years is focusing on the fact that we are actually quite good at getting new people into the Barbican, but perhaps, not very good at keeping them coming back and building a relationship with them. We've focused on this have initiated a new audience development strategy so that every time somebody comes to the Barbican for the first time, we communicate with them and offer them a way to come back. They would get a welcome pack saying 'we hope you enjoyed the performance' and letting them know what the Barbican is about and what else is going on. That is one focus. The other focus is to get regular attenders to think about trying things at the Barbican that they haven't tried yet. And this has been a part of our 'do something different' campaign.

Suman Buchar: I work freelance in marketing, PR and audience development. Mostly, I'm in what you might call the 'coal-face' end of the marketing, delivering audiences for a specific show and working with companies over a period of time to develop an audience base and take it further by creating a friends', sponsors' or patrons' network.

Most of my work has been theatre-based but recently I've worked at a west-London arts venue called Watermans, which has a new media gallery and a programme that features sonic art, which has been an interesting departure for me.

Over a period of 20 years, I think the way of reaching out to audiences has changed, certainly Asian audiences in the UK. It's much tougher now than it was 20 years ago, and there are lots of reasons for it. Audiences have segmented, people are interested in different things, the external influences of the wider media amounts to too many choices. It has affected all that work.

MG: Well, I think we've come to the term 'user' because the term 'audiences' seem to become so confined to people that actually attended events – what we would call 'bums-on-seats'. I think Hardish had a very good definition around 'users' being everything, being people that use the organisation, that work with the organisation, people that engage with you online and at your participatory events. It's everybody that is engaging with your organisation. That is what we mean by 'users'. And I think in Penny's work with us, she has used the word 'publics' as well. All these terms seem quite strange, but they are about us understanding that we're an organisation that will be working with very different groups of people in different ways.

I think that one of the reasons we are using the term 'users' is because we are trying to do something with marrying the work we do in the area of live events with the work we are doing in the area of learning and participation, and then backing that up with the area of information and resources. We are trying to create an integrated organisation that will draw upon all of those areas, to put user development and learning at the centre of the organisation. That's an ambitious undertaking, but it means potentially that there are many entry points for people to use the organisation in different ways and travel between those areas of work to gain a greater level of depth of engagement with the organisation.

So, that is what we are attempting to do, and that is why 'user' was an appealing word for us, because it did feel participatory and so people would engage with the organisation in a different way through travelling around these different areas of work. In the case of all of our organisations [BMIC, SPNM, SAN and CMN] we've been better at some things than others. Many of the organisations are events led, or, like my own, focused on information and resources, and all of us are relatively new to the area of learning and participation and web. So by bringing ourselves together, and bringing those other areas of work up to speed, we can hopefully create a more holistic and rounded organisation.

SS: What does 'new music' mean to the new organisation?

MG: We have different starting points as organisations. Some of the organisations are very niched in what we call 'contemporary classical music', some, like Contemporary Music Network have worked cross-genre,

some like SPNM are increasingly working cross-genre, others like Sonic Arts Network have diversified across a range, starting from electro-acoustic music to essentially working across the full range of sonic art. So, it will be about all of those musics, without, I think, prioritising any one, but recognising that we do have specialist resources in certain areas.

SB: If you transpose that into an Indian context, what is Indian classical music? Is that 'new music'? If it sounds classical because it has an orchestra and a percussion base does that make it new music, or does it make it popular music, or does it not fit into this whole scheme at all?

MG: Well, we are talking about an organisation here that doesn't even exist, so it's a little bit difficult for me to give a hard and fast answer – I'm talking about our going in point. But one of the values we will have as an organisation is working in innovative ways. So it could be that we could work with all kinds of music, so long as there is an element of the new and innovatory about the way in which we are working with that music.

HV: Is the new music indicative of new audiences? For example, if Indian classical music is new to your organisation, is there a new way of working with music which is new to your organisation and audiences as well?

MG: The ambition to take existing audiences to new music, or to different music, certainly exists.

HV: You could bring anything from around the world and introduce it to a new audience that comes to new music. It's interesting.

PM: It's interesting whether you talk from the perspective of the music being new, i.e. contemporary classical, or by someone who is alive and wrote it yesterday. We've had conversations around theatre and new writing: Is 'new writing' a play that was written yesterday? Or is it a play that when it was first produced was perceived as new writing, but now it's ten years on and it's still being produced – is it still new writing? My take on it is that there is an asset in being deliberately open to possibilities, and then you could populate all sorts of different places. When we talk about 'circus arts', it's a bit indefinable in lots of ways and it can populate all sorts of places, but you don't necessarily need to call it 'circus arts'.

SS: I'd like to ask for examples that we can learn from, where audience and user development has really succeeded.

DB: I think that there is a fear in arts marketing of the niche. At the London Sinfonietta at the moment, we are going through lots of discussions about where our artistic direction is, and how we engage with people on many levels. I think we all start from the point of trying to be everything to everyone, and you very quickly begin to compromise your artistic integrity. I think you have to accept that there is nothing wrong with saying that 'we are going to do these three things, which will appeal to only a certain group of people'. Or that the things we do generally will appeal to these three different groups of people. But there are quite a lot of those people out there, and we are not even reaching all of them, so why are we trying to get to someone who hasn't even had any live cultural experience? Why are we trying to take them from Mozart to the avant-garde in one step? It's not on their journey. But we may take someone who is into electronica and bring them into a Steve Reich concert, because it makes sense to them. It's already on their cultural radar.

PM: That's an interesting point: things really work well when you know your audience, you know what your potential is, you understand the relationship between the work and your audiences, and you make your choices accordingly. That really resonates with audiences and filters through to their understanding. I think Doug's is a perfect example of a sensible way of thinking, based on the idea that 'this is what we do, this is why we do it, we understand that we can do this, actually, if we push it too far in the wrong direction we are not going to be successful'.

HV: Any audience development work, if it's taken seriously, has to be realistic in relation to the resources that are going to be dedicated to the work. So therefore trying to meet every market's needs is impossible for any audience development campaign. It doesn't work that way. It needs to be economically sound for the organisation, and it needs to be effective as well. I don't believe in having six different prints for different markets, it's how you use that print and how you engage with people. If you are engaging with two or three markets and developing that audience and sustaining it, you can start using what works as a template for other audiences, as well.

DB: Social networking is an area that can have a big impact if it's done in the right way. Our work in this area came about because of a shared artistic passion between two people: someone at the top of the London Sinfonietta, and someone who ran the Warp record label. I don't know how the connection was made exactly, but I think Warp said 'our guys really like all that John Cage stuff', and the response was 'it's amazing how many composers you meet who are into Squarepusher'. So, now we have this interesting series of collaborative concerts.

Artistically some things work better than others, but where I think it works really well is where it doesn't patronise the audience. It actually says to these guys who are into electronica, who may be all sorts of ages and cultural backgrounds: 'you're interested in this so we think you are probably quite a curious person. Why don't you just come and see what it is that Ligeti, and Reich and Cage, and all these different people, do.' I think it's a really good connection to make because it encourages people on this journey.

If you go onto somewhere like Last FM, that's really fascinating because it's entirely based on a recommendation system of someone saying 'oh yeah, I've heard Reich's Music for Eighteen Musicians fifteen times now', and someone else would come along and go 'oh, I've never heard it, but if you like it and you are into the same thing as I am, then that must be really good.' It is quite labour intensive to engineer as the person trying to do the marketing, but it is much more successful than if someone says: 'Can you go and find 100 people at that club'.

BS: We are in danger of pigeon hole-ing people and saying 'right, you came to this, so you must like this as well' and only communicating that to them. That is some of the work we are doing at the Barbican – to stop looking at people like that and look at them in terms of cultural attenders and arts attenders generally. We've actually found a big cross-over between our music audiences and our theatre audiences. There is a segment of our theatre audience that is actually quite experimental and willing to try new things, and we've been able to introduce them to our music programme as well.

HV: How do you do that?

BS: If we are, say, doing a direct mail campaign, and we look at the data, we don't select the data in terms of individual events. We select the data

in terms of frequency, recent attendance, and value – the amount of money that people spend – and just looking at people who come to things regularly across the whole arts centre, and perhaps put them into a mailing about contemporary classical music, for instance. That has produced quite good results. Then, with our new attendees, after they've been to see, say, a theatre event, send them a welcome pack which includes information about other art-forms (concerts, for example) just to get people thinking a bit more across the art-forms.

PM: And that accords with some of the data analysis that we have done. There are identifiable groups of people who are broadly into contemporary cultural work, and are up for trying something new. I think they are an interesting, rich group of people if you can communicate with them appropriately.

There are lots of ways that you could possibly communicate with them, and I think we probably need to learn a lot more about this idea of social networking, and where that is going, and how we can support that, to find out a bit more about these people and how they choose things and make decisions.

BS: Yes, and to grow this audience sector we need to think about what it is that makes those people willing to take those risks and be interested in trying new things.

HV: Developing new audiences is a business objective. It's not just about just bringing people in for the sake of it – it's a long-term business objective because audiences are changing and new audiences are going to be the future audiences. You need to look at the organisation and see what needs to be done within it so that it is thinking more strategically about engaging new audiences. The organisation as a whole needs to be responsible for audience development. Audience development needs to be integral to the business plan, so that it is not just seen as an add-on.

It's important to have a dialogue with audiences (questionnaires, face-to-face research, going out into communities and bringing people back into your organisation, backstage tours, introducing them to your senior staff, introducing the organisation to an ambassadors scheme, engaging with musicians or artists in their communities, etc.) and building up relationships between the community

and the organisation. And whatever you do, it should be supported by realistic resources and should be sustainable, where there is an on-going dialogue between the two parties. There are different approaches, but it has to be viewed as a one-year, two-year, three-year strategy. It has to be built into your organisation.

I'll give you an example: The Hawth in Crawley, West Sussex. I worked with them for twelve months in 2004 and for the first three months I did an internal audit. The first thing I did was to go to every single head of department and ask them about their experience of working with the local South Asian community. A lot of people said they hadn't worked with them, but when I had trawled through their documents and records, they had actually done about fifteen years of work with the local community. The local mela took place on their grounds every September/October time, so there was a sustainable audience who used to go to the Hawth theatre. Then I went out into the community and got their perception of the Hawth, and they said: 'We don't go there, we don't know what goes on there, it's not for us' but [I said] 'do you go to the mela?' and they said 'oh, we go to the mela'. So, it's building a dialogue between the two.

What I've learnt from my work is that people remember productions, but they have no relationship with venues, organisations. After that, what we set up an ambassador group of South Asians who came into the Hawth and advised it with relation to programming, to training, and staff recruitment across the board. Through that process, the Hawth became confident to start programming what they were using as a studio space into a main house. The first production they did in the main house (as a co-production with RIFCO Arts from Slough) was called The Deranged Marriage. That was their first co-production with any company and they sold out. And that show went on to sell out three times in three years.

They then set up a young person's ambassadors group, and young people wanted to come to more music events, and they became more involved in the programming: learning about programming, and learning about marketing and quality of programming. They have continued to programme the main house. That is just one example of what worked, and the principles are relevant to music as well as to theatre.

PM: Another example of success is

The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's 'Night Shift' series. The OAE are perhaps a rather niche orchestra, in terms of what they do, though not necessarily in their audiences. They have gone through an interesting journey with the 'Night Shift'. They tried something new. They have a main concert in the evening and then a late night concert of extracts and shorter pieces. It's much more informal, they have a dialogue around it, and they have really had to experiment with their marketing and information, and grow that audience to something that is now a fantastic event, perfectly pitched. It's not for everybody, but it has introduced some people to a different kind of music.

I think possibly they got some of their regular users to get a different perspective on their music. If you want to go to the people who don't engage, you've got a body of people who might be employed on your behalf to communicate beyond their sphere, if they were given the tools, as it were. And that might be an event, it might be information, it might be for the website, or it might be through direct incentivisation.

DB: I think what the OAE have done very successfully there is to keep the essence of what the performers do on stage. Their management have been unusual, in that that they've stuck by something that initially wasn't that successful, but given time and patience to grow, has begun to draw in bigger and bigger crowds and new audiences.

The problem for contemporary music is accentuated by the fact that a lot of what we do is very one-off. Last summer we did a fantastic new piece by a German composer called Heiner Geobbels. No-one knew how amazing it was going to be until we all sat there on the day and thought 'this is amazing. It's a shame there are only 300 people here and there is now nothing we can do with this'. The moment had passed. One of the things I think we really need to be better at is the whole online, digital thing. We don't have a venue, so we don't have a lot of the advantages that the Barbican or Sadler's Wells have when it comes to building audiences. Sometimes our venues can actually be an obstacle to us developing our audiences because of issues around sharing audience data.

But, I think it is also a case of how we use our content. Of actually seeing live events not as the end of the journey, but as the start of the journey. We have to transform the

attitudes of the people who are creating it. We need permission to record this, to stream it online, and then start to use 'online' as an environment where we become a venue or broadcaster. People can come and engage with the content, rather than having to engage with a particular event on a particular day. I think that's what your four organisations and the London Sinfonietta have as a common link. We are advocating something that is very difficult to get to grips with, and audiences need repeated experience.

PM: I think acknowledging and imagining the experience of a newcomer for everything you do is essential. If you take the experience of children, you can read them a story and then go and see the show, and then read the story again and again, and they will get different things from that each time. And I think that works in the same way for everyone when they experience something new.

SS: Following up on Doug's point about the problem with data, do the panel think that data sharing is the way of the future? Should venues share their data more?

SB: From my experience, the bigger venues do not share data. I've done things at the Southbank Centre, in the Purcell Room mostly but occasionally in the Queen Elizabeth Hall. It's great when you want to use that data to promote the event, but if you bring in a new audience through your own marketing endeavours, there is no way of actually identifying them, because the venue will not give you the data. If you are a small organisation that is doing things in a bigger venue you are always going to be in that position, and I think that needs to be addressed in a serious way.

However, some venues are better in terms of putting information about your product on their newsletter or e-flyer or their letter, but I do think it is a big problem. I find it most frustrating because I am constantly having to 'reinvent the wheel' to get the same results.

BS: I fully understand that for organisations coming into a venue to promote, it can be frustrating not to access that data for promoting your performances elsewhere. What I would say is that we, at the Barbican, have a real problem with over-communicating with our audiences, and we manage very carefully the communications that our audiences receive from us and from our external promoters. If people

are receiving communications from us, and from the promoter, they very soon get communication overload, and they don't respond to it, and that benefits nobody.

PM: I think there are two levels of data sharing. There is one for marketing purposes and there is one for understanding who the audience is in a research context. In terms of the data sharing for marketing, our experience in London is that people are extremely venue loyal. We have statistics that show that people, despite responding to shows, tend to be going to the same venues. There is definitely something about strengthening that relationship between companies and venues, in terms of understanding their audiences and constituencies on both sides.

We run a data sharing initiative called 'Snapshot for London' which is taking data from box offices, for shows which are not un-ticketed, for organisations. But that does mean that you can put particular audiences from shows, or groups of shows or venues in context. So then companies that come into venues have a stronger position, and venues have a more balanced platform where they can have conversations about the audience that is being attracted. The conversations between venues and companies should become more intelligence-based on both sides, so that there is a more interesting relationship.

HV: The reason that we have data protection is to protect the people who actually form the information, so I respect where the venues are coming from. It also depends on the relationship between the company and the venue, as well. If the venue is working in partnership with the company, they can market that work through their means and the company can still continue to develop their database.

Organisations can capture their own data through audience questionnaires. The venues get lazy and they don't do questionnaires. Places, such as the Barbican, are quite happy with the data they get from the box offices. But what they get is the intelligent information so they can tailor the marketing specifically, and they've got thousands of contacts. I think data sharing is really important for venues and organisations.

SB: For somebody like myself, I wouldn't be able to make an impact in terms of the organisation's programming and outreach because people like me are still coming in at the tail-end to market their vision, whether

it happens to be musical theatre or film or music. However, I think it [those parts of the organisation] is quite crucial, in the sense of the organisation's own vision and growth for the future, because if you have produced a particular product that got a new audience in, then it is up to you to decide whether you wish to be able to develop this audience, and whether it fits in with your vision, or whether you do something different the next time and don't bother with these particular people who have engaged with you.

One of the companies that I have worked longest with is Tamasha. In the beginning, the task was simply about bringing in Asian audiences to the theatre space, because Asian audiences didn't go there, they went to community centres and other kinds of venues. Once that was achieved, it led on to this idea of looking more closely at who they were: what age they are, what background they are, and what class they are etc. Did people want to engage with the company more than just coming to a show once a year? We were doing the questionnaires and trying to get the data. And then thirdly, some people wanted to do a little more. They felt that they wanted to put a bit more into the arts, so this led to the whole idea of developing a friends' scheme and later on development within the company, for example, fundraising and sponsorship. But that entire process has taken at least twelve to fifteen years.

SS: I'd like to ask you what you think the relationship between an organisation's programme and its users – and its potential users – should be?

PM: I suppose it's a constant dialogue between the two. If audience development is in your mission, or vision, then you have to take it seriously. It takes time, and it takes understanding, but I think an understanding of your audiences and your potential audiences and how you might relate that to what you are producing is important. In creating the new organisations, the four existing organisations have signed up to an idea of Charles Leadbeater's, that 'successful arts organisations are arts led but audience focused'. And actually it's a balance. Having said that, there may be organisations who are very specific about artistically-focused activity, and actually engaging with the public is not a huge priority for them.

And that's fine – there should be space for both types of organisation.

We've begun to talk about the elements that make up the relationships between the new organisation's programme and users, in some instances you are developing artists; and in others the focus is on developing audiences. You think of the motivations around what you are trying to do and develop a dialogue accordingly.

SB: I am inclined to agree with what Doug said earlier on, that to a certain degree it helps if you have a sense of who your audience is or your users are, because that helps you programme more strategically. I don't think you should compromise the production value of what you are programming. It will be difficult because you are not a venue; you are a network or an organisation. When you programme stuff, you will be on at venues, I assume. From my point of view, it is better to have a sense of where you want to reach and use that as an outward 'funnel' to attract new audiences.

SS: I'd like to ask what people see as potential barriers for people engaging with, and taking part in, new music and sound?

DB: What I am going to say does actually pick on your last question as to how programming and marketing relate. I think a potential barrier can be getting a balance between the fact that you have a fragmented audience and also trying to get some consistency in terms of programming.

We've got a project in October next year with a group we have coming over to work with us from Uganda. The project itself doesn't fill me with a great deal of fear, but what happens afterwards, does. Because, if you bring in a reasonably good amount of new audience on the basis of performing with Ugandan musicians, where do you go with that afterwards? If the programming department don't pick up on that in six months, eighteen months, three years, and have a plan for that, how do you expect the marketing department to also pick up on that and have a plan?

What you can't say is 'you once came to see us play this, and you probably enjoyed it, so come and see this completely different music somewhere else'. It just doesn't work as a strategy, and that does become a barrier because you very quickly get to a period where three, four or five years has gone by, and then you do another

project which is vaguely related to Uganda, and you want to go back to that audience but you've not kept in touch.

SS: Many ensembles, venues and organisations use artists to lead them to new audiences. Spnm currently has Kuljit Bhamra as artistic director, and for the new organisation, this artist-led approach seems to be an area that could be worth investigating. But what happens when Kuljit steps down in 2009? How can we retain the interest of the people who have engaged with spnm through being interested in his work?

SB: I think it is a perfect opportunity to introduce people to a range of innovative new music. Of course, not everybody will follow, but you will have to identify from the audience that comes what they have come for. Have they come for the Bhangra element or the compositional element? I think the most important thing is that you make it clear to them all that when they come to your event they are coming to something unusual, experimental and innovative. That way, when you go back to them, you can say 'we'd like to offer you more of that, with different types of music'. It's a great experiment, a real opportunity.

PM: That is the perfect thing about pulling out those relevant details. The other thing I would say is to make sure that we don't work in a vacuum. In a city like London, or any other big city around the country, there is an openness that could, perhaps, support developing audiences, not just for one organisation, but across a whole sector.

MG: To speak more generally about retaining audiences, I am hoping that the new organisation and the work it does will attract and grow different audiences by its nature and the increased resources it has compared to the current organisations. Once upon a time, BMIC had a review for an event that we did. Fiona Maddox came to one of our Cutting Edge events, and she said something like: 'new music, which has sounded cool for some time, in this company actually looks it.' And we thought: 'Wow! Somebody has said we are "cool". If we could bottle that and turn it into something bigger, we'd really be on to something'. Of course, we never really had the resources to do that, and I've often wondered what we could have done. I think this is where the new organisation has a

chance, because it has the chance to develop a brand that could be 'cool'. In fact the designers who are working on the brand as we speak are exactly the kind of people who should be interested in us, and who are interested in what we are doing, but for whom the current organisations just aren't big enough to be on their radar. So this seems like a really exciting opportunity for us.

HV: Just because Kuljit has done these performances, it doesn't necessarily mean that it'll introduce new South Asian audiences to your work, unless there is a strategic audiences campaign to target that community. It may bring new audiences to his work, but not necessarily new cultural audiences. It's really important to address the challenges and the barriers. Marrying up partnerships, for example, utilising events at the Tate Modern, or the British Library, or the work that took place at the Royal Academy of Arts (where they had club events which took place after the exhibition) to continue to sustain that audience afterwards. One of the most important things is how you continue to develop that brand in relationship to that audience.

SS: In one sentence, how will we know in five years' time if we have become a user-focused organisation?

HV: One way is to look at your organisation and see how the staff has changed in terms of its diversity. That's the way a lot of things start.

SB: Damon Albarn will be wearing your T-shirt.

BS: Are people in the industry, outside, talking about you? And when you say who you work for and what you do, does it invoke a reaction and a 'Wow, I think what you do is really good'?

DB: You do all these things that create these results, because you just do them and not because you have to sit and think about ticking boxes.

PM: I think that you will be successful if you don't actually have to have it as an agenda item on any meeting, but it just happens naturally.