

Poshak Puralekh Executive Summary



A Costume Archiving Project For The Centre for Indian Classical Dance

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Introduction

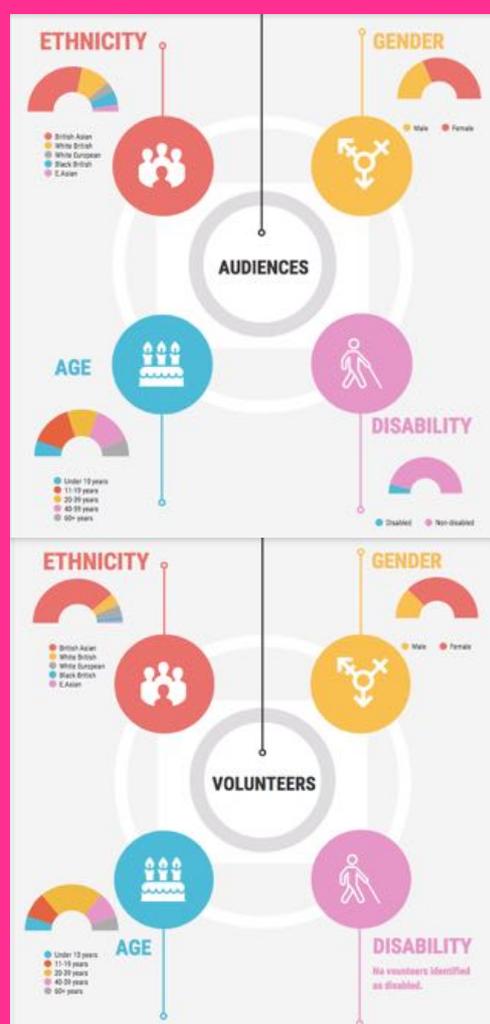
Poshak Puralekh was the last in a series of NHLF projects to help the Centre for Indian Classical Dance (CICD) digitise, archive and celebrate its significant collection of paper, film and materials charting its 40 year history. This project engaged 4355 people, across 15 events to celebrate 150 vintage Indian classical and folk dance costumes which were 'at risk' of being lost or neglected. The funding also enabled CICD to record, catalogue, organise and find ways of reducing this substantial collection.

Key Impacts

People learned about heritage of the costumes, history of Indian dance, Kathak and CICD's role in the cultural heritage of the city. The collection of over 1000 pieces is now better managed identified & recorded through a visual inventory of 250 pieces. 280 costumes have been identified for future performances, 68 were labelled. Over 250 'hidden' costumes were interpreted and explained through performances, talks, workshops, written material, mannequins, films, conversation and oral history interviews. Future public access is ensured through a new CICD website which will include multiple resources from this project including the archive film, visual inventory, Oral Histories and accompanying text . 370 costumes were saved from going to a landfill. thereby reducing negative environmental impact by 37%.

The *Costume Disposal Policy* (appendices) will continue to ensure that the collection finds good new homes over the coming years.

Audiences , participants and volunteers enjoyed many aspects of *Poshak Puralekh* such as the performances, learning about cultural heritage, feeling civic pride, participating in a team and understanding CICD's



"Welcoming, cheerful, insightful - a cultural experience of extraordinary intimacy."

“CICD is now definitely stronger than it was before this project.” **Nilima Devi, MBE, Artistic Director**



Much of the audience was new to South Asian culture, as the events were programmed in many areas across the city, including those with largely White communities. People found the events accessible and that it changed their understanding of Indian dance. A team of volunteers of diverse ages and backgrounds brought a plethora of skills to the project which increased CICD’s capacity. They were involved in all aspects from event management, logistics and marketing to choreography and performance. Volunteers brought many new skills to CICD but also gained new expertise from working on the project. Most of the training was informal and ‘on the job’ including event management, communication, digital processes, choreography and performance. Some formal skills training was delivered to volunteers and staff in Oral History, which was well received. A dynamic, diverse, intergenerational volunteer base, new administrative and artistic personnel to work in the future has enabled CICD to strengthen its core, grow its civic profile, social media following, reflect on its legacy, and think strategically about the future.

Learning and Recommendations

This was an extremely successful project, however some challenges were experienced in areas such as **volunteer management and organisation, logistics and communication**. CICD will continue to redistribute the remaining costumes as per the disposal policy, maintain an ‘on demand’ hire service, build on the relationships with Leicester Museums and other venues in this project, and create further professional training opportunities for local emerging talent.