



kalasangam

Annual Review
2023/24

ACROSS THE ARTS ACROSS CULTURES

AT THE HEART OF BRADFORD

Kala Sangam is an intercultural arts hub which aims to reflect the diversity of contemporary Britain through the work we present, the artists we support and the communities we engage.

Specialising in South Asian arts and culture, most of our work takes place in our Arts Centre in the heart of Bradford (between Bradford Cathedral and The Broadway Shopping Centre) with our outreach activities extending regionally and nationally.

In Sanskrit, 'Kala' means arts and 'Sangam' means a meeting point.

Kala Sangam aims to bring people and communities together to create and experience high-quality, diverse art, to increase understanding and awareness of different cultures, and to provide talent development pathways for young people and emerging artists into a career in the arts.

Focusing primarily on music and dance, all artistic, education and outreach activity delivered by Kala Sangam aligns with at least one of our programming strands.

Our Vision

This Is Bradford

Putting Kala Sangam at the heart of arts delivery in the city, we offer rehearsal space, development support and performance opportunities to local artists and companies. We also bring work to Bradford which addresses societal issues for the city or is relevant to one of its many communities.

South Asia Now

We programme work by South Asian artists and organisations or that showcases artforms from South Asia. A priority is placed on presenting work which develops the artform or is created by British people of South Asian descent.

British Diversity

To ensure we are at the forefront of what it means to live in modern Britain, we support the creation of work which looks at cultural heritage in this context or is actively diversity-focussed. This strand also covers work that fuses together different artforms, styles and cultures.

Summary



I am very proud to present Kala Sangam's 2023/24 Annual Review.

It has been a year of celebration as we marked our 30th Anniversary and moved ahead with exciting plans for the future, including beginning our long-awaited capital redevelopment project.

We would like to thank Arts Council England and The Department for Culture, Media & Sport, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Bradford Metropolitan District Council and The Garfield Weston Foundation for investing in our vision for a bigger, more accessible arts centre that can really be at the heart of Bradford's cultural landscape.



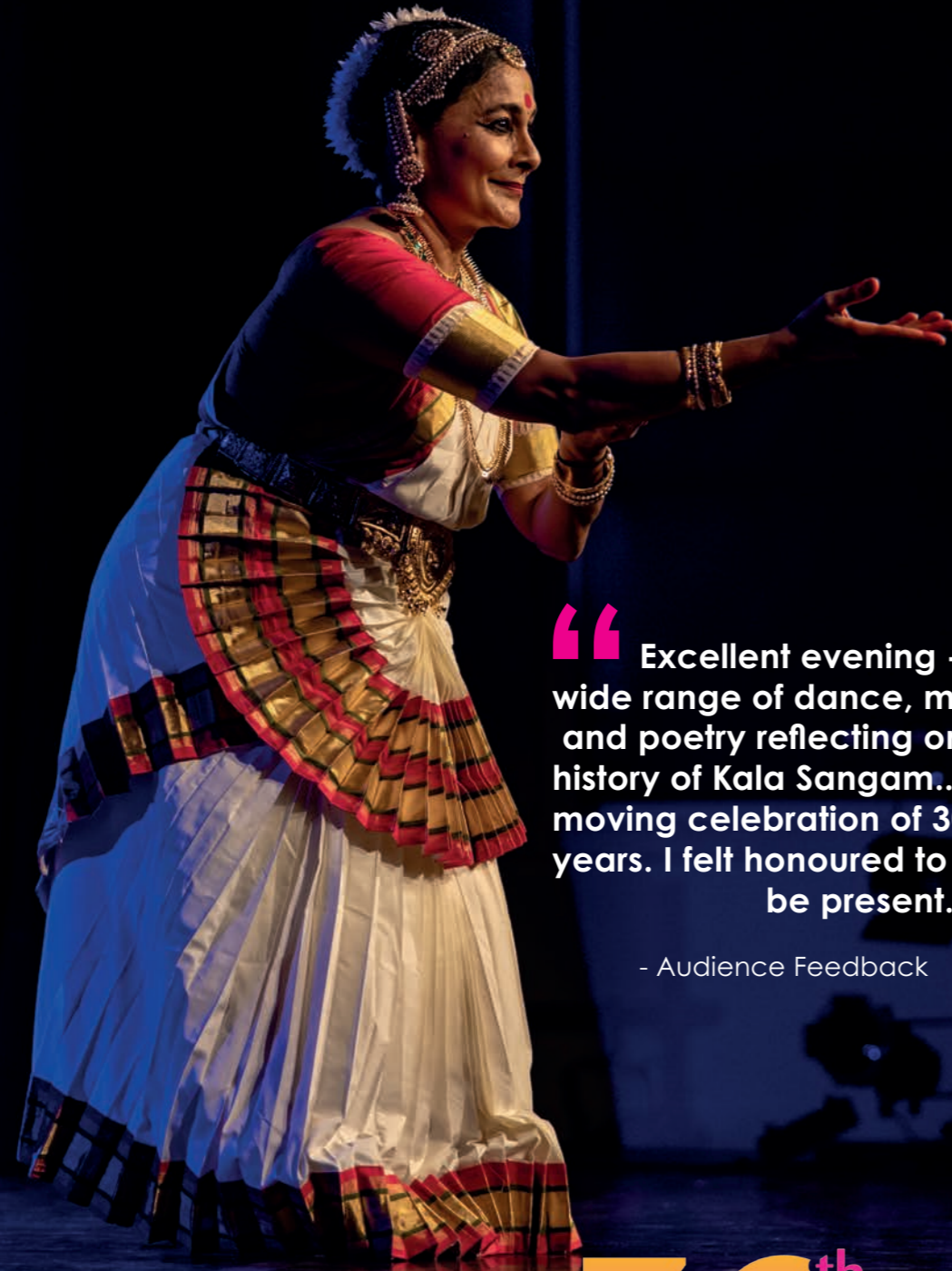
We are also grateful to the Arts Council and Bradford Council for their continued support for our year-round programme, and to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Jerwood Foundation and Amal for supporting our project delivery.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone who visited Kala Sangam or who came to one of our On Tour performances around the district this year. As we embark on a period of major change, your support has been incredible and we hope you are as excited as we are about what the next 30 years hold for the organisation.

Jasbir Athwal DL - Chair of the Board



Celebrating 30 Years of **kalasangam**



“Excellent evening - a wide range of dance, music and poetry reflecting on the history of Kala Sangam...a moving celebration of 30 years. I felt honoured to be present.”

- Audience Feedback

30th anniversary

In October 2023, the company celebrated its 30th Anniversary. We marked this special occasion with three performances and an exhibition reflecting our rich history.

Emerging artist Akshay Sharma brought his new work, *Can This Place Be a Temple?* which combined Kathak with contemporary dance and stunning set design.

Pagrav Dance Company brought some of the UK's best Kathak dancers to present *Aunusthan*, a piece that showcased the beauty of Kathak Movement in a modern context and setting.

Maitri, curated by longtime Kala Sangam collaborators Rashmi Sudhir and Vijay Venkat, was a true celebration of our history. As well as performances of Mohiniyattam by Dasyum UK, Kuchipudi by Amrita Jaya Krishnan, and music from Vijay's Jazz Fusion band, we were honoured to welcome our founders Dr Shripati Upadhyaya and Dr Geetha Upadhyaya back to the stage for a performance of Bharatanatyam and poetry.

Alongside a timeline of the key events in Kala Sangam's history, our 30th Anniversary exhibition featured two specially commissioned pieces of work. Zareena Bano's beautiful mandala, *Joy*, was inspired by the colours, movements and sounds of Kala Sangam. Jean McEwan and Terry Greene delved into our archives to create a mural telling the Kala Sangam story, from our earliest beginnings in Leeds and our time based at Carlisle Business Centre to making our home at St Peter's House.

As part of the anniversary celebrations, we launched the Kala Sangam Commission. This bi-annual commission will support the development of new work in Indian Classical artforms.

The first recipients of the Kala Sangam Commission are Akshay Sharma and Meera Patel. Akshay will be exploring themes around migration and queerness through dance, music and spoken word. Meera's work is centred on how dance can be opened up to Blind and Visually Impaired audiences. Both pieces will premiere during our reopening season in autumn 2025, as part of Bradford's City of Culture year.



Creative Director Alex Croft and Founding Artistic Director Dr. Geetha Upadhyaya OBE



Looking Ahead

This year saw the start of some exciting changes at Kala Sangam.

In December 2023, we closed our home at St Peter's House to begin a major capital redevelopment.

After years of planning, we have raised almost £8 million of funding - from Arts Council England and the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Bradford Metropolitan District Council and the Garfield Weston Foundation - to turn our building into a landmark arts centre.

The project will open up the building, creating a new 200-seat theatre, five studio spaces for artists, communities and schools to use, a permanent home for BCB Radio and, most importantly, make the building much more accessible - with lift access to all floors, a Changing Places facility and a new front entrance.

Following a two-stage tender process, Simpson were appointed as contractors for the project which has been designed by local architects Halliday Clarke. Work started on-site in April 2024, and is scheduled to last fourteen months.

In January 2024, the Kala Sangam team relocated to temporary offices at 41 Bank Street in the centre of Bradford. As well as providing space for our tenants, Dance United Yorkshire and Freedom Studios, we also have a studio space for artists and rooms available for commercial hire. Our 'On Tour' programme of events at venues across the district began in January with the premiere of Kerry Wright's new play, *Kailey*, at Keighley Creative.

We will reopen to the public, as Bradford Arts Centre, as part of Bradford's City of Culture celebrations in Summer 2025.

Becoming Bradford Arts Centre

In July, we announced that we will change our name to Bradford Arts Centre in 2025.

This follows extensive consultation work lead by design agency, Out of Place Studio, with communities from across Bradford and the wider cultural sector, including Classical Indian performers. The research showed that many people don't know what Kala Sangam means, what we do or who we are for. This confusion creates a barrier to people visiting us.

By becoming Bradford Arts Centre, we hope to change that.

It is a simple, clear name and can be understood by people for whom English is not their first language. Our consultation also showed that Bradford was a uniting word for people from all backgrounds across the city.

The full consultation report can be found on our website.

Although our name is changing, our commitment to South Asian arts is not. South Asia Now remains one of our programming strands and we will continue to programme and support South Asian artists and artforms. The Kala Sangam Commission will support the development of new work using classical Indian dance and music.





Artistic Programme

Including our first On Tour events, in 2023/24 we presented 53 performances and 4 exhibitions. Every performance aligned with at least one of our programming strands (This Is Bradford, South Asia Now and British Diversity) and more than 75% of the performances featured South Asian artists or artforms.

We had 7 premieres of new work, including Jaivant Patel Company's *Waltzing the Blue Gods* and Dhamaka Arts' *Besharam* – two pieces exploring queer South Asian stories.

We began and ended the year with *Open Arts Iftars* to celebrate Ramadan. The first was at Kala Sangam in April 2023. We then partnered with Bradford Museums & Galleries, in March 2024, for an Iftar in the stunning surroundings at Cartwright Hall.

Along with the programme of events celebrating our 30th Anniversary, we hosted Payal Ramchandani's new show, *The Forest Dream*, and welcomed the next generation of Bharatanatyam talent from Nina Rajarani's *SRISTHI Pathways*. RiRi's Dance Academy combined dance and theatre to captivate family audiences with *Dancing Elephant*.

Learning Disabled-led Blink Dance Theatre shared their passion for food in *Elvis Died of Burgers*, and Shewolves took us on an adventure to discover our inner climate activist. Falling Stars Theatre tackled the highs and lows of the menopause with their new show, *Meet Parveen*, and Tribe Arts explored the story of the Bradford 12 in *The Middle Game*. Kerry Wright's *Kailey* shone a light on the struggles of being a teenager with a parent in prison, and Bloomin' Buds Theatre Company previewed their new shows before successful runs at Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Bradford South Asian Festival packed the Ganges for an evening of female-led comedy at *Gigglewallahs*, and MOVES Festival platformed local musical talent which included Lunar C and Blazer Boccle. BRAVE Festival took over the building for a day of classes and events celebrating dance with Black origins.

“As a South Asian queer person, this event really spoke to me. I did not realise I was missing this form of representation until I saw it in front of me.”
– Audience Feedback

We once again turned our carpark into a performance space for BD Festival, with Vince Virr creating a unique aerial dance show, *Underlooked*, along our retaining wall. Kasko San returned to Kala Sangam with *The Roma 600*. We also welcomed back Baluji Shrivastav and the Inner Visions Orchestra for an evening of beautiful music played by Blind and Visually Impaired artists.

Our exhibitions featured work by Pyramid of Arts' Why Don't We group, for adults with learning difficulties, and the Amal-funded Quranic illumination group run by Mahmud Manning.

“We love being at KS, it's always full of positive and friendly people. Although we are a very small group, our members have huge potential and some great ideas for future projects. On behalf of everyone at Pyramid, a very BIG thank you.”

– Sandy Holden,
Why Don't We group leader.



Over the year, we have given 143 days of free studio time to 28 artists. 60% of the artists using our space were South Asian or working with South Asian artforms.

New shows including Jaivant Patel Company's *Waltzing the Blue Gods*, Dhamaka Arts's *Besharam* and Unbound Dance Theatre's *Fireflies at Dawn* were rehearsed and developed at Kala Sangam this year.

In partnership with Jaivant Patel Company, we launched Samanata, a new micro-commission for LGBTQIA+ identifying Classical Indian dancers. The first commissions were awarded to Nikhita Devi and Mithun Gill.

We partnered with Devika Rao to deliver a stunning opening performance for the National Media Museum's Wide Screen Weekend Festival.

We hosted Bobak Champion's Amal-funded *Salaam O Salaam* project, which brought together Muslim break dancers for two weeks of workshops, discussions and networking.

We have continued to provide development support and advice to other organisations including Worcester Mela, Maya Productions *Routes to Roots* project, and Womenzone's Sufi Music Heritage project. We have also continued to support the work of Bradford Producing Hub, with our Creative Director Alex Croft serving as Interim Chair while BPH transitioned to a fully independent organisation. Alex also finished his term as Chair of Bradford Cultural Voice Forum.

“ We couldn't have wished for a more supportive, suitable, welcoming base to run the project. Kala Sangam were able to help facilitate sensitive conversations and critical feedback between artists, participants and invited audiences. As Bboys and Muslims, our experience is often that we are shunned or tolerated, at Kala Sangam our work and identities were enthusiastically celebrated. ”

– Bobak Champion,
Salaam O Salaam project.

Artist Support



More than 3000 people saw performances at Kala Sangam in 2023/24, maintaining an average audience of 60% capacity. We are extremely proud that our audience is one of the most diverse in the country.

45% of our audience are non-white British, triple the national average at arts events (15% according to the Audience Agency). 33% of our audience is Asian or Asian British. 35% of attendees identify as LGBTQIA+ (compared to 3% of the UK population according to census data).

12% of our audience is deaf or disabled and 17% identify as neurodiverse.

We have continued to connect with Bradford-based audiences, who make up 57% of our audience. According to Audience Agency reporting, 53% of the Bradford population live in areas with low levels of arts engagements, compared to 33% nationally.

We also continue to receive very positive feedback from audiences about their experiences at our events. When asked how likely they are to recommend us to family and friends, on a scale of 1-10 the average response is 9.5 and more than 95% of people rate us as good or very good for our welcome.

“ It is a real joy to have discovered Kala Sangam - one of the ongoing pleasures that makes my decision to live in Yorkshire so worthwhile. ”

– Audience Feedback

“ Kala Sangam always smashes it. ”

– Audience Feedback

Audiences





Education & Outreach

Schools

In 2023/2024, we delivered a total of 116 events and activities for schools, engaging more than 2400 children and young people from 19 primary and secondary schools across Bradford and beyond. This included a total of 15 schools with return engagement to Kala Sangam from previous years.

We delivered our Schools' Takeover for its third year, with more than 800 Key Stage 2 children from 12 Bradford schools taking part in a week's worth of art activities, from Dhol Drumming to Break Dancing.

In April, we delivered an Arts Day for more than 200 Key Stage 3 students at One in a Million Free School, providing a variety of workshops from Freestyle Disco to Rap.

This year, our Education offer has engaged 4 new schools, including Bhangra dance workshops for Shipley CofE Primary and Highfield Primary School. The Academy at St James visited Kala Sangam as part of their tour of Bradford, and Feversham Girls Academy's Nasheed Choir performed as part of our Arts Iftar at Cartwright Hall.

Finally, as part of our Artsmark partnerships, we gave students at Coop Academy Penny Oaks the use of the Ganges Theatre for their whole school end-of-year performance. As well as supporting Carlton Bolling on their Artsmark journey, we are working closely with their Arts Council to provide unique opportunities for their young people.

Outreach

More than 80 children and families joined us from Womenzone and NAFS Fitness Community Group for a craft workshop before *Dancing Elephant*. They used recycled milk cartons to create their own beautiful elephants.

Keeping up with the eco theme, before seeing *The Forest Dream*, families decorated trees made from recycled materials.

“A lovely family-friendly activity before the show. It was nice and relaxed, too, which was great. Thank you”
– Parent feedback

We saw new groups partnering with us this year, highlighting the richness of heritage and culture within our city. The Roma Stars exhibition, funded by the National Lottery Fund, was officially launched by Lord Mayor Councillor Gerry Barker - this saw more than fifty people attending from key public sector organisations and families from the Roma community. The exhibition's key focus was to raise aspirations within the Roma community.

Classes

We delivered a wide range of classes in partnership with other organisations, including Bhangra Dance and Dhol Drumming with Punjabi Roots Academy, Women's Only Yoga with Ella Tighe, and Bollywood Dance classes for adults with Zoobin Surty Dance Company.

We maintained support for Bradford Friendship Choir, Freedom Studio's Youth Theatre and Dance United Yorkshire's Youth and Women's companies. The majority of classes have continued at our temporary home, Bank House.



“Workshops were very engaging, fun, interactive and the children enjoyed them as well as the staff.”
– Teacher, Dixons Marchbank



St Peter's House

Commercial Hires

Despite uncertainty around when our home at St Peter's House would close to the public ahead of our major redevelopment, and what spaces we would have available at our temporary offices, 2023/24 was a busy year for commercial bookings.

We maintained strong relationships with Bradford Council, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and the local NHS Trust, who are all regular bookers. We also supported ongoing weekly bookings from Voiceability and Bradford Friendship Choir. We hosted staff training sessions for MIND in Bradford and a number of courses with Back2Work.

Sustainability

We are continuing to work towards making Kala Sangam a more sustainable and planet-friendly organisation.

We have worked closely with SAIL (Sustainable Arts In Leeds) to ensure that we are able to monitor the environmental impact of our capital project. Sustainability was embedded in our thinking when clearing out the building before moving. This included:

- Donating furniture, technical equipment and stationery to local arts organisations, charities and voluntary groups.
- Working with a specialist clearance company to ensure that as much waste as possible was certified as having been fully recycled.

SAIL will continue to work alongside our construction partner throughout the build.

“ I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt appreciation for the outstanding level of service and support we have received during our sessions. Your dedication and professionalism have truly set a standard for excellence. ”

– Room Booker

Our Temporary Home

Kala Sangam at Bank House

With building work due to start at St Peter's House in early spring, in January 2024 we moved in to temporary offices at 41 Bank Street in the centre of Bradford. Our tenants, Dance United Yorkshire and Freedom Studios, have moved with us.

Our new offices have a beautiful studio space for artists, along with a selection of rooms available for commercial hires and bookings ranging from small meetings to conferences with up to 100 people.

We have already welcomed bookers including Bradford Council, Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and Bradford Producing Hub. Voiceability and Bradford Friendship Choir have continued their weekly bookings with us, and Back2Work are continuing to run their programmes here.

Kala Sangam on Tour

Starting in January, our On Tour programme of performance has taken us to Keighley Creative, New College Bradford and Cartwright Hall. It has been a great learning experience for staff as we look ahead to reopening as Bradford Arts Centre. We will be presenting performances at many more venues across the district in 2024.

“ It was an honour to be here and made me feel very at home ”

– Audience Feedback



Our People 2022/23

Our Board:

Jasbir Athwal DL	Chair
Sufyan Dogra	Trustee
Amrit Gata-Aura	Trustee
Caroline Harrison	Treasurer
Sameena Hussain	Trustee
Jenny Jowle	Trustee
Marie O'Reilly	Vice Chair
Manjit Virdee	Trustee (resigned Nov 2023)
Rashmi Sudhir	Trustee
James Wilson	Trustee

The Board has appointed Jez Arrow (KS Head of Finance) as Company Secretary

Our Staff:

Jez Arrow	Head of Finance
Fay Beesley	Education & Outreach Officer
Sidra Bi	Bookkeeper
Bradley Cook-Pattison	Technical Assistant
Alex Corwin	Programme & Marketing Manager
Alex Croft	Creative Director
David Dearlove	Facilities Assistant & Caretaker
Phillip Henegan	Facilities Assistant
Nighat Hussain	Marketing Officer (until Jan 2024)
Mohammed Iftikar	Facilities Manager
Mo Khan	Facilities Assistant
Haider Mahboob	Facilities Assistant
Steve O'Connell	Head of Commercial
Amer Sarai	Head of Community Engagement
Dave Searle	Theatre Technician (freelance)
Jess Swift	Marketing Officer (since March 2024)

Our Patrons:

David Lascelles Earl of Harewood
Lord Patel of Bradford OBE

Honourary Lifetime President:

Dr Geetha Upadhyaya OBE

Over the year, staff have taken part in Mental Health First Aid training, Fibromyalgia Awareness training and training on how to be Learning Disabled friendly.

Fay and Amer completed the National Arts Fundraising School and Nighat attended the Arts Marketing Association annual conference.

“ The Kala Sangam team are really lovely, friendly folks who clearly care about celebrating all the cultures in our community ”
- Audience Feedback

Staff Highlights

Amer Sarai

– Head of Community Engagement

This year I really enjoyed *Elvis Died of Burgers* by BLINK Dance Theatre, it was funny and highly engaging with just six performers, with wonderful characters. My first 'relaxed' performance, where anything goes (within reason!), ensuring the audience could engage with and genuinely enjoy the show, holding inclusivity at its centre. With sad elements highlighting prominent issues around food consumption, it brought this to light in a comical but informative way.

Mohammed Iftikar – Facilities Manager

The Open Arts Iftar at Cartwright Hall was particularly special. The whole team has really embraced our annual Iftars, and it is great that the non-Muslims fast along with us for the day. The museum was a beautiful setting and the whole event had a real sense of community.

Jenny Jowle – Board Member

I particularly love coming to see the family-friendly and children's shows with my own family. This year's highlight was RiRi's Dance Academy's *Dancing Elephant*. The auditorium was bursting with people of all ages and the atmosphere was full of excitement and anticipation. I enjoy shows that offer my children a new experience and inspiration and this show certainly did that with its dance, music, storytelling and costumes.

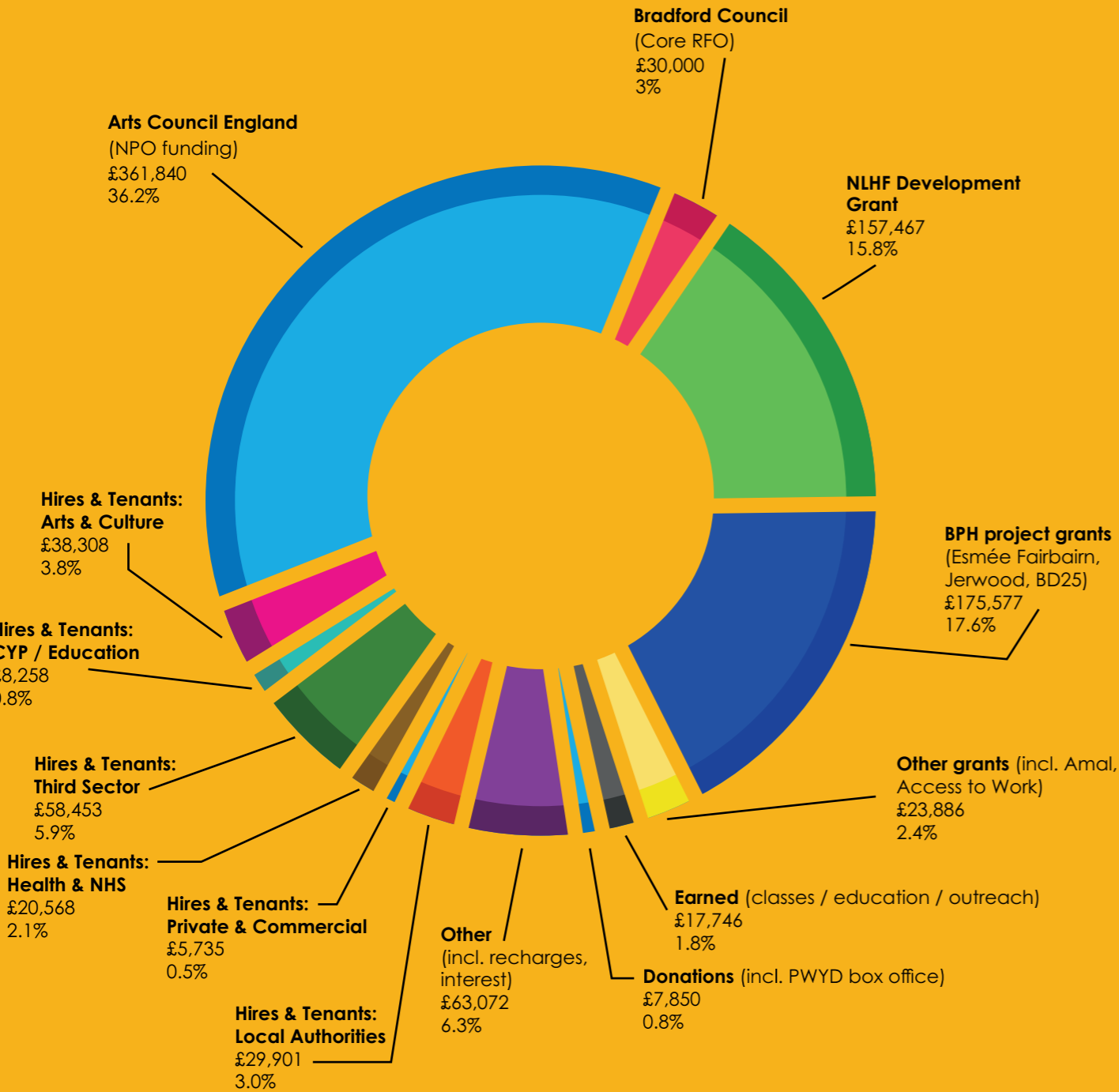
Steve O'Connell – Head of Commercial

I really enjoyed our Anniversary event, *Maitri*. It was a great blend of celebrating our history whilst also looking forward to the future. It was particularly special to see people like Vijay Venkat and Rashmi Sudhir, who have such long connections with Kala Sangam, performing on our stage again.



Total Income

£998,661



Financial Overview

Core Funders

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Supported using public funding by

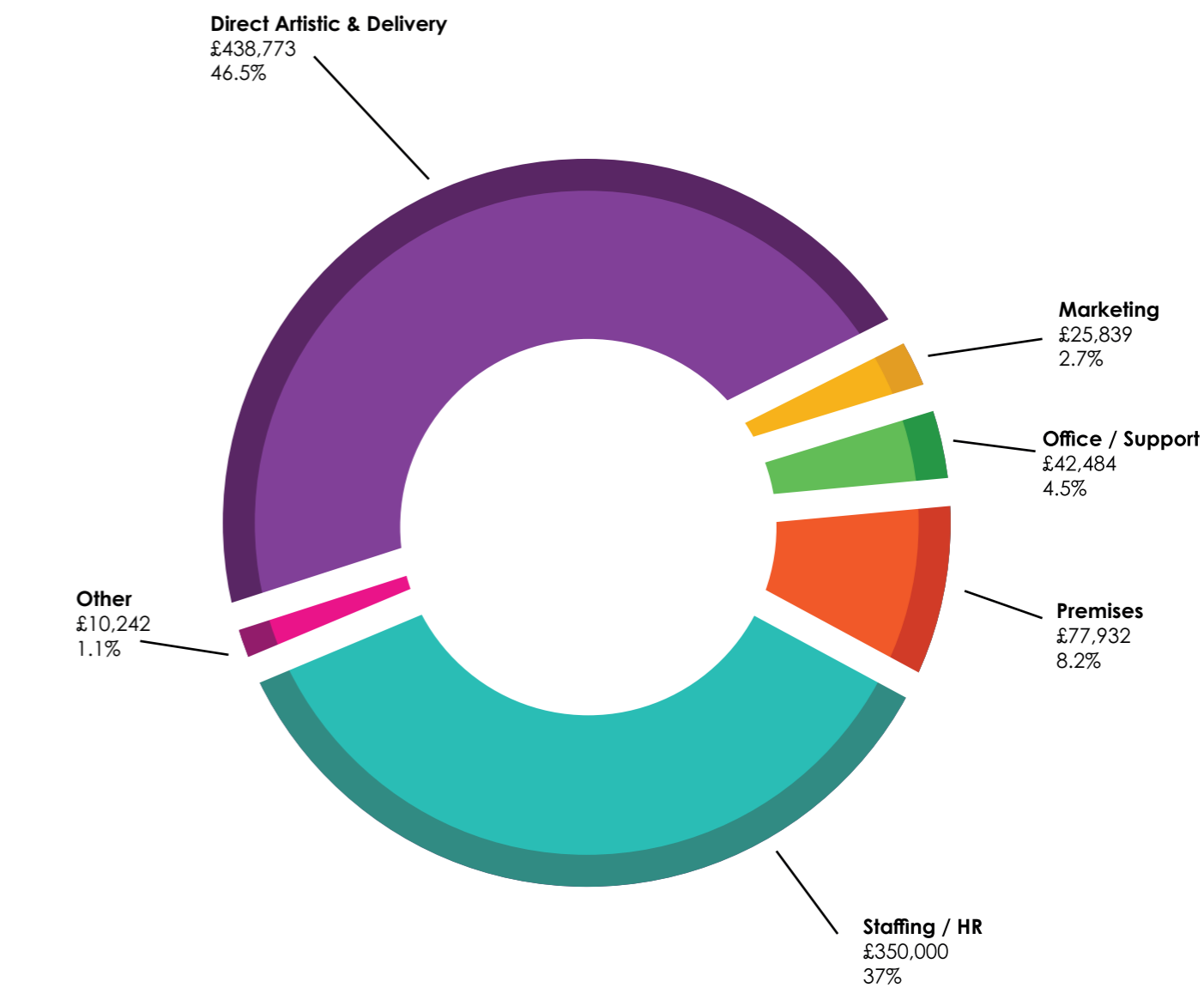
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

City of BRADFORD
METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Total Expenditure

£945,270

Excludes Capital Building Depreciation of £55,964



Capital Project Funders

Supported using public funding by

Funded by UK Government

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Made possible with Heritage Fund

LEVELLING UP

City of BRADFORD
METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Garfield Weston FOUNDATION

Supported by

Supporter of


Kala Sangam
Temporary Offices:

Bank House
41 Bank Street
Bradford
BD1 1RD

Registered Office:

St Peter's House
Forster Square
Bradford
BD1 4TY

For more information:
www.kalasangam.org
01274 303340
info@kalasangam.org

 **@Kala_Sangam**
 **/kala.sangam**
 **@kalasangam_arts_centre**
 **/thekalasangam**