

Case study: The Sage Gateshead

The Sage Gateshead is a performance and educational venue innovating in its approach and development of audiences through community outreach and a host of programs targeting different age ranges and artistic interests; through its ongoing professional development program, it takes into account the changing nature of the musician's career.

On their own website¹ the Sage Gateshead gives the following description of its activities:

The Sage Gateshead is a new home for music, bringing about a widespread and long-term enrichment of music in the North of England. Its inclusive approach enables all its performance, learning and participation programmes to be constantly inspired and supported by each other.

Performance

The local, national and international concert programme runs all year round. It incorporates all kinds of music including acoustic, indie, country, world, folk, jazz, electronic, dance and classical music. It is primarily a live music venue. They bring performers to the region who have not previously appeared in the Northeast and offer a new and well equipped additional venue to performers already established in the region.

Learning and Participation

The Sage Gateshead is pioneering a fresh approach to musical discovery that enables everyone to become involved in, stimulated and excited by music - no matter what their age or ability. Its eight strategic programmes are: Early Years, Work with Schools, Vocal and Instrumental Learning, Practitioner Development, Community Music, Further and Higher Education, Resources, and Music in the Workplace.

Landmark building

The Sage Gateshead is a stunning £70 million home for live music consisting of two performance spaces of acoustic excellence, Northern Rock Foundation Hall for rehearsal and performance, a twenty-five room Music Education Centre, ExploreMusic (a music information resource centre in the Joan and Margaret Halbert Space), The Barbour Room (a sunny entertainment room), plus studios, bars, a café and a brasserie. You can visit the building free - up to 16 hours a day, 364 days a year. The spectacular concourse has river views of the Tyne and Gateshead Millennium Bridges, BALTIC and the Newcastle Gateshead Quays.

The following statements were made in an interview with Katherine Zeserson, *Learning and Participation Director, The Sage Gateshead*

Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL)

The Sage Gateshead is a partner with 6 universities in the North East CETL. Their approach is multi genre and The Sage Gateshead helps to build relationships between the training providers and the professional music organisation.

¹ www.thesagegateshead.org

Folk Music at The Sage Gateshead

Alistair Anderson, one of the co-founders of Folkworks, which is now based there, has written the first ever Folk and Traditional Music Degree Programme. Folkworks has launched this four year programme which leads to a bachelor of Music degree, developed in association with the International Centre for Music Studies at the University of Newcastle.

Performance

There are many 'real world' performance projects taking place at any given time at The Sage Gateshead with the involvement of musicians from the orchestra of The Sage Gateshead, Northern Sinfonia (which employs 37 players); a team of musicians employed by The Sage Gateshead Learning and Participation programme (55 part time employees); a further pool of musicians who are engaged on a freelance basis (c.15-20 orchestral players and c.30-40 other musicians); visiting professional performers and trainees/apprentices.

The 55 musicians are employed because they are really good at what they do. Their age range is broad – early 20s to 50s, with a cultural mix that is reflective of the North East region.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The Sage Gateshead has an explicit commitment to ongoing CPD. All employed musicians are paid to have CPD time which is written into their contracts. For the freelance artists with whom they work regularly, all contracts include directed professional development which is relevant to the project on which they are working. All musicians have a manager whom they meet regularly to track their CPD, to discuss their needs and the manager also has a pastoral dimension to their roles.

They encourage peer development networks (squads) of musicians in folk (folk force), steel pan (steel pan squad), voices (singing squad), percussion, instrumental teaching, and DJing and music technology. There is a budget for these networks to be set up, the management team facilitates the squads, but they are self-directed.

This enables a sharing of expertise and also opens up new market places for the musicians.

In response to dialogue with the musicians, The Sage Gateshead has set up training programmes for musicians in leadership and management.

Strategic leadership includes the application of artistic leadership and developing skills in other areas such as advocacy and authority.

The Project Management course includes budgeting, legal responsibilities such as Criminal Records Bureau checks (a procedure for vetting people who want to work with children and vulnerable adults), evaluation etc.

The Northern Sinfonia players don't generally access the training described above, but on an individual basis they have been accessing training opportunities, following a skills audit which looked at needs and opportunities.

All employed musicians have access to the staff administration team for example, anyone can book an hour of time with Anthony Sargent, General Director.

Traineeships

The Sage Gateshead runs a six month, part time Community Music Traineeship programme. Recruitment of trainees takes place in November and May, to start in February and July. Trainees receive one to one mentoring, participate in group training sessions, and have a wealth of opportunities to develop practical work alongside experienced project leaders.

Apprenticeships

The Music Leaders Apprenticeship programme is a one year, half-time opportunity for trainees wanting to further develop skills towards a career as a practitioner. Apprentices receive one to one mentoring, participate in group training sessions, initiate and lead community music projects and work as supporting musicians in a wide range of settings.

Co-Musica

The Sage Gateshead also runs the Youth Music Action Zone² (YMAZ), Co-Musica, which is one of 22 YMAZs around the country. Co-Musica's regional youth programme includes opportunities to get involved in steel pans, percussion, singing of all sorts, folk and rock bands, DJing, music production, world music styles, developing performance and instrumental skills and more.

Weekend School

The Sage Gateshead is carrying out a longitudinal study following 7/8 year olds through to 15 years old. 90 students are being tracked and they have been identified through music services, the Local Education Authority and through musicians who teach.

Interview held by Fiona Harvey

² www.youthmusic.org.uk