



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Nottingham's South Asian Mela Festival Returns

This September, Nottingham Mela Network presents their annual celebration of South Asian arts and culture - Nottingham Mela 2016.

Nottingham continues its important legacy as the first national Mela which launched in 1988, in a weekend of spectacular performances, authentic cuisine, active games and family friendly workshops.

New Art Exchange producer and Mela co-producer, Sooree Pillay, explains the significance of the weekend:

*I am proud to play a part in the programming of this year's Mela 2016. With a blend of traditional and contemporary, our aim is to provide an opportunity for artists from diverse disciplines to share their immense talents with audiences over the course of the weekend. We aim to offer a chance for all to relax and delight in the beauty and spirit of this vibrant South Asian festival.*

Friday evening launches the Mela Weekender at Nottingham Playhouse, with a truly magical performance by the experimental dancer Kali Chandrasegaram accompanied by tabla artist Mendi, framed by the backdrop of Anish Kapoor's majestic Sky Mirror.

On Saturday, Mela celebrations continue at New Art Exchange - an innovative art gallery specialising in culturally diverse arts. The day begins with a morning recital by Violinist Achuthan Sripathmanathan and later Nottingham-based Waqas Choudhary performs the South Asian Bansuri flute. Families can take part in workshops all day, including shadow puppets and storytelling. In addition there will be yoga, film screenings, and a feast of delicious food.

Headlining Saturday evening is an exciting theatre performance, *Tongue Tied & Twisted*, where modern-day South Asian tales are interpreted into English for all cultures to enjoy. Live storytelling is fusing with a unique blend of Urban Hip Hop and Classical South Asian sounds. This production by Black Country Touring with Peter Chand comes straight from Southbank's Alchemy Festival.

Sunday's festival takes place in the landscaped grounds of Nottingham Castle, as they open their gates for free to celebrate the national Heritage Open Days. Throughout the day visitors can expect an array of live music, dance performances, sports and games, family fun, food and craft stalls, as well as tuk-tuk rides around the park.

Nottingham Castle's art gallery is transformed by a raag performed by Surmeet and Upneet Singh – these symbolic melodies are composed to represent changing seasons and times of the day. Harjinder Matharu, guru of tabla and a regular on the Mela circuit, leads a procession of dhol drummers into the grounds, and Austrian-born Bernhard Schimpelsberger uses the rhythms of tabla in an innovative percussion performance. Music performers include award-winning singer-songwriter Navin Kundra, the exciting Afro-Caribbean-Bengali dub fusion sounds of Sooth Sayers', led by Idris Rahman and Nottingham's own World Grooves, fusing Indian classical jazz and dub.

Mela presents the best in South Asian dance in a variety of styles. Manushi Dance Company perform the graceful Indian classical dance of kathak, celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and Shakti Dance present energetic bollywood and bhangra styles. Performances are presented by the pioneering dance company, Akademi, who are dedicated to raising the profile of South Asian dance in the UK, and Nottingham's own experimental dance organisation, Dance4 show new work choreographed by renowned kathak dancer, Nilima Devi MBE.

There is something for everybody to enjoy in Mela 2016. This innovative festival is a dynamic fusion between the global and local, established and emerging artists, allowing visitors to truly experience the diversity and beauty of South Asian culture.

Nottingham Mela 2016 is delivered by Nottingham Mela Network, collaboration between New Art Exchange and Nottingham Asian Arts Council.

### Event Details

Friday 9 September: Nottingham Playhouse

Saturday 10 September: New Art Exchange

Sunday 11 September 2016: Nottingham Castle Grounds

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### Editor Notes

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact Marketing and Communications Officer at New Art Exchange:

Laura-Jade Vaughan, LauraJade@nae.org.uk or call 0115 924 8630.

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### About New Art Exchange (Executive Producer and Artistic Director)

New Art Exchange is a contemporary art gallery committed to stimulating new perspectives on the value of diversity within art and society. A stunning, RIBA award winning building, New Art Exchange is the largest space in the UK dedicated to culturally diverse contemporary visual arts, and is rooted in the community with a strong history of working with minority communities. NAE presents major international exhibitions, launching the British Art Show in 2010, and every season presenting work from the highest quality, world-renowned artists. NAE partners locally, nationally and internationally, connecting audiences and artists from all over the world with new and innovative collaborations and opportunities.

### About Nottingham Asian Arts Council (Co-Producer and Programmer)

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.

Supported by Arts Council England

