



**Folk Education Network
Folk Education Development Day**

**Lancashire Conservation Studios, Preston, PR1 5LN
Monday 14 November 2022**

Theme: Regionality and Traditions

Review by Pauline Woods-Wilson

This full-day event for folk educators was the second to be held in-person since the Covid-19 pandemic and was at capacity attendance of 40 people. The event was arranged and smoothly managed by Kerry Fletcher (Folk Education Network Coordinator, EFDSS), and kindly hosted by David Brookhouse (Heritage Learning Manager, Cultural Services, Lancashire County Council).

The Keynote by David Brookhouse (<https://www.theculturehub.online/providers/heritage-learning-team>) told us of his success of the 'When Lancashire Sings' schools project in 2016 which inspired young people to create modern folk music through learning about their local heritage. Involved in the project were the Heritage Learning Team, local historians, Jennifer Reid and the Young'uns, and music producer Andy Bell. In all, they wrote 10 songs and gave a final concert performing their songs alongside The Young'uns at Preston Guild Hall in 2017. A book also entitled "When Lancashire Sings" is a very interesting read about the process the schools went through, with quotes from children and teachers, and there is also a CD of the songs. Copies are lodged with the VWML: <https://catalogue.efdss.org/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=82441> and <https://catalogue.efdss.org/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=82442>).

Mike Kenney (Project Co-ordinator for the Lancashire Turns and Tunes project) (<https://mikeykenney.co.uk/>) talked about his experiences wanting to play fiddle since the age of 5, growing up in Liverpool, and not feeling that he had the right 'Irish' heritage to play Irish music. He studies the music from the old county of Lancashire and is keen to learn the 'weird stuff' that nobody knows. Manuscripts from the North often get overlooked – people tend to learn the 'standard' tunes so that they can join in at sessions. Kerry invited Mike to finish off with a short tune session for others to play along with, and then teach a tune from Lancashire that nobody knew, to show how he approaches teaching.

Nicola Beazley (traditional fiddle player, teacher and workshop leader, and former Musical Director of Lancashire Youth Folk Group) (<https://www.nicolabeazley.com/>) was next up to tell us about the set-up and running of the Lancashire Youth Folk Ensemble founded in 2019 and run by Lancashire Music Hub (<https://www.lancashiremusichub.co.uk/site/make-music/lancashire-youth-folk-group/>). Lancashire is made up of some very different areas - cities, which tend to be more culturally diverse, and rural areas that are less so. There are many different communities that are involved in their own cultural music-making but drawing them together represents a challenge when offering a musical education. Folk music education can offer a well-rounded, creative and

open approach to music making: the lack of standardisation, focus on aural learning/transmission, and no 'right way' of playing/technique can help give young people confidence in their own creative voice.

After lunch and a networking opportunity, EFDSS kicked us off with an update from Sarah Jones, Programme Manager of the National Youth Folk Ensemble (<https://www.efdss.org/learning/young-people/national-youth-folk-ensemble>) who have been delving into manuscripts, creating new arrangements, and performing - and are looking for a new artistic director from next year. Charlotte Turner (Education Manager, EFDSS) highlighted their termly ceilidhs, their partnership with One Dance UK on the U.Dance programme (<https://www.onedanceuk.org/programme/u-dance/>), the Young Folk Club (run by young people, for young people, aged 14-21) (<https://www.efdss.org/learning/young-people/41-learn-with-us/10232-the-young-folk-club>) and the London Youth Folk Ensemble (<https://www.efdss.org/learning/young-people/london-youth-folk-ensemble>). All great youth initiatives.

Esther Ferry-Kennington (Creative Development Director of Horse + Bamboo Performing Arts Theatre, and Executive Producer Lancashire Encounter Festival) (<http://www.horseandbamboo.org/about/our-people/>) gave us a heartfelt account of her efforts to deliver a cultural programme in Bacup, one of the best-preserved mill towns, and found herself in confrontation with the Britannia Coconut Dancers, the last remaining blackface folk dance group in England, and their supporters. She decided to "stay with the trouble" and stand her ground, but it wasn't an easy ride.

Abhinandana Kodanda (Artistic Director of Abhi Dance Academy and Director of Performances for Preston City Mela) (www.prestoncitymela.co.uk) gave us a fascinating insight into the challenges faced by South Asian Arts in the North West, and how perseverance paid off. Some of the challenges were: low recognition of the art forms, and little access locally to high quality performances to be appreciated. The Preston City Mela's strategy included using creativity to promote community cohesion; breaking down cultural differences; creating space for cultural exchange; connecting with people from all walks of life; and delivering a culturally relevant, fun and engaging experience of art, music and food. Partnering and collaboration has certainly been key to their success. And there have been many successes - such as having a finalist from Preston in the BBC Young Dancer South Asian Category; international artists coming to Preston to perform and run workshops; and performance opportunities across the region - Lancaster, Bradford, Ilkley, Morecambe, Blackpool as well as Preston itself.

Jennifer Reid (singer of Broadside Ballads, researcher, presenter, educator, performer and provocateur) (<https://www.jenniferballads.com/>) sang with gusto, transporting us in our minds - starting with Victorian Manchester broadside ballads and comparing them with songs of Bangladeshi factory workers - work songs, weaving songs and time-of-day songs. Then we all joined in a rousing rendition of "Way down to Pomona".

Maria Malone (Co-Founder and Executive Director of Movema Dance Company) (<https://mariamalone.com/about/>) (<https://movema.co.uk/>) told us about Movema who aim to celebrate diversity through dance, creating safe spaces for different communities to come together and learn about each other through high-quality arts experiences, and have 30 freelance artists around the North West, plus Bristol. They don't just teach the dance to children - they also introduce the music, history, geography, and food. In terms of morris dancing, they won a mini grant from EFDSS to work with Boss Morris to introduce morris into their repertoire.

Sheetal Maru (Associate Artist with Movema Dance Company) (<https://movema.co.uk/>) then showed us the video summary of a dance project called Shakti (a Sanskrit word meaning 'energy'): <https://youtu.be/vrFg020aRao> (4 mins). Here, 27 community performers from Liverpool, some of them never having danced before, collaborated with professional artists in the North West and together they explored dance movement from India including folk, classical and contemporary dance. The performance was created in just 16 hours spread over 8 weeks, and the final performance was to an audience of 400 people.

Maria Malone and Sheetal finished the day with getting us all onto our feet to join in some stick dances – no, not morris, but a Brazilian Maculele dance and an Indian Dandiya Raas dance, both with short sticks and a lot of improvisation!

David Brookhouse closed the event, with the happy thought “It’s not grim up North, we grin up North.”

Finally, this event has shown me that collaborations in dance, song and music can be made pretty much anywhere, and between pretty much any styles. Those who love morris dancing will almost certainly love trying out other forms of dance. We should do more of these collaborations, not only to help bring morris to a wider and more diverse audience, as well as morris people learning about and appreciating non-morris dance styles. Who knows where it might lead us.

Pauline Woods-Wilson (<https://www.morrisfed.org.uk/about/committee/>) has been the President of The Morris Federation since 2020. She has been morris dancing for over 40 years, starting as a student at Manchester University, and has danced with a number of different teams up and down the length and breadth of England. She has performed many styles over the years - Cotswold, North West, Border, and Rapper. She has been the dance teacher for Downes Morris and Windsor Morris, and currently helping with a new student morris team at Lancaster University, called Red Rose Morris. president@morrisfed.org.uk, www.morrisfed.org.uk,