

THE FOURTH AGE, ARTFULLY
funded by Harrow Council and delivered by Srishti Yuva Culture

Who are we?

Srishti Yuva Culture, founded in 2006 by Nina Rajarani MBE (registered as a charity in 2009), specialises in the South Indian classical dance style Bharatanatyam and its associated musical form, Karnatic music. The aims of the group are to promote healthy recreation, equality and diversity through the provision of facilities for South Asian dance and music education, and to increase public access to performances of South Asian dance and music across the UK.

What is our project's aim?

Although as a society today we may have moved forward towards being more caring and inclusive, we still don't fully cater for the needs of people with disabilities. We know also that society marginalises older people, therefore to be an older person with a disability is a double disadvantage. This project is devised to use Indian classical dance and music to enhance the quality of life for older people suffering from disabilities, especially learning disabilities.

This project is distinctly devised for those in the category of what is known as the Fourth Age. Third Age is used to denote an older person who remains physically and mentally fit and in full possession of all their capacities. Fourth Age suggests someone who has begun to experience significant limitation to these capacities. Beyond the fact that both terms are applied to older people, they cease to be chronological. So, for instance, someone aged 90 in excellent health would be in their Third Age while another person could be 60, suffering dementia and mobility problems and be in their Fourth Age. This is a project aimed at working artfully with those who are in their Fourth Age.

What does our project do?

There is proof that the deterioration of physical health is faster in people with learning disabilities; dance and movement have obvious benefits to physical health. Our workshops aim to develop coordination, balance and motor skills; improve muscular strength and flexibility, lessen joint and muscle pain; enhance cardiac functioning.

There is ongoing research into the relationship between singing and the area of the brain concerned with speech; many learning disabilities that affect speech, as well as aging conditions such as dementia, are helped through singing. Singing can also lift/prevent depression as well as help express emotions. Our workshops incorporate singing activities along these lines.

We deliver 10 weekly sessions with each participating group, endeavouring also to work with participants on a one to one basis as communication can sometimes be challenging.

To ensure that through this project we are tackling disadvantage and giving equal opportunity to those older people who have learning disabilities, we target people from at least 50 of years, sometimes even younger.

To promote equality of opportunity and to increase our number of beneficiaries, we offer the workshops across all groups and ethnicities. For the same reasons we offer our work additionally to people who have disabilities arising from old age, but not necessarily learning disabilities that are typically prevalent from birth.

The workshops are lead by professional dance and music tutors, supported by volunteers. Our volunteers are all active performers too and provide the groups and care homes performances for enjoyment and access that they would otherwise not have.

This project started in Summer 2012 and continues through to the end of March 2013.