

Inspiring Internationalists Scheme

Arts Council England, North East

Visit Report

by **Paul Zetter**

ensemble creative training and development,
Vietnam

www.ensemblecreative.org



*Please pass on my thanks to Paul Zetter - I thought his work was amazing and truly life changing.
The documentary was an amazing balance between demonstrating the aims
of his projects and the dancers lives. It was a treat!*

Michelle Hobby

How much is a flight to Vietnam?

Student, UNN

December 2007

1 Introduction

The purpose of the Inspiring Internationalists(II) scheme is to connect the North East with international artists and practitioners to stimulate two-way dialogue, new initiatives and learning and bring new energy and perspectives on the arts to the NE. Paul Zetter was identified by Tony Harrington of The Forge, the host for this visit, as someone who could bring unique perspectives on community arts, creativity and international collaboration to a range of people and organisations in the North East.

Paul's work with **ensemble creative training and development** first came to the attention of Tony Harrington at The Forge in its previous incarnation as the development arm of theatre company the David Glass Ensemble. During their pioneering work in numerous developing and developed countries mainly with vulnerable children, David Glass developed a creative methodology that has since been documented in a manual (see link below). Used as the central methodology in the Lost Child projects, the methodology remains the key foundation of ensemble creative training and development's approach.

2 Visit summary and statistics

Organisations visited 11

The Forge	Culture Lab/Connecting Principle,
Arts Council England, North East	Newcastle University
Baltic	University of Northumbria
The Lit and Phil	Seven Stories
Dance City	Northern Print
Cassop Primary School	New Writing North

People met and presented to

115 from age 7 upwards

Visit content

As well as meetings I also presented sideshows and documentary films of our work in Vietnam including:

- 1 Together Higher (documentary, 43 minutes)
- 2 Who Does Hanoi Belong To? (documentary, 12 minutes)
- 3 10 years in Hanoi (photo slideshow with music, film and Q&A)
- 4 Vietnam Arts in Development Capacity Building Programme – presentation and slideshow

There was one evening social event with invited friends and members of the NE arts community

Documents distributed

The following documents were distributed and are available on-line as downloads

- 1 We Create - Arts in development in Vietnam
- 2 My Greens and your Yellows – Exhibition programme

Downloads <http://www.ensemblecreative.org/capacitybuilding.html>

3 Creative Practice – A guide to creativity in development.

Available for preview at http://www.vbnk.org/books/creative_practice.htm

Please contact Paul Zetter directly for copies.

3 Visit reports

Baltic	
Emma Thomas	Discussion: The nature of contemporary art in Vietnam, possibilities of VN/NE collaborations, visits from Vietnam (VN) contemporary artists, artist exchange visits, arts spaces in SE Asia and how they compare to those in NE
	Future dialogue: Emma is considering VN as a potential place for research bursary looking into arts spaces and international collaboration

The Forge	
Tony Harrington Denise Alexander Fiona Melvin	Discussion: The emergence of enabling organisations like The Forge and ensemble and their role in the arts. Forge projects over the last 5 years, current collaborations and the mechanism by which we continue collaboration in the future.
	Future dialogue: The Forge and ensemble have created a formal partnership from this II visit with the objective of actively seeking inspiring and innovative NE/VN and SE Asia creative collaborations. This partnership will be publicised by a web page on our respective websites. Tony Harrington will be visiting Vietnam in January 2008 and Paul Zetter will be returning to NE in summer 2008

Cassop Primary School	
Jane Arnfield Jill Jackson teacher Jim Mc Manners headmaster	Activity: Joining a workshop with Jane Arnfield and pupils as they devise a soundscape installation about their links with China. Presentation and activities with pupils about Vietnam, its sights, sounds and culture
	Future dialogue: ensemble and The Forge are actively investigating the possibility of a tripartite school link between the NE, South Africa and Vietnam.

Are people in Vietnam friendly like they are in Turkey?
Pupil, Cassop Primary

Dance City	
Penny Rae	<p>Discussion: The possibility of Vietnam deaf contemporary Dance Company, Together Higher* doing a community dance residency at Dance City in 2008.</p> <p>*Paul Zetter helped set up the company and has been fundraiser and sometime producer for them since 2002. His documentary film about them, Together Higher, has been screened in 6 countries</p>
	<p>Future dialogue: Penny, Paul and Tony are now in dialogue about the visit, have already produced costings and are investigating possible partners and visit formats.</p>

The Lit and Phil	
Public Event	<p>Presentation: <u>10 years in Hanoi</u> with slideshow, music and short film. This public talk focused on both my professional and personal life in Hanoi</p>
	<p>Questions and Answers: These focused on the barriers and drivers of doing community arts in Vietnam and how socio/cultural/political factors influence the nature and form of projects.</p>

A quietly inspiring presentation
Audience member, Lit & Phil

Seven Stories	
Carie Fluker-Hunt	<p>Discussion: The format and function of 7 Stories, the need in Vietnam for high quality children's reading books and the 360° approach to parenting/reading education.</p>
	<p>Future dialogue: We will investigate the possibilities of re-using 7 Stories exhibitions for Vietnam and using 7 Stories as a point of contact for several VN organisations considering child reading/book projects.</p>

Northern Print	
Anna Wilkinson	<p>Discussion: The nature, form and function of new Northern Print space</p>
	<p>Future dialogue: Connecting NP to UK print artist working in Vietnam</p>

New Writing North	
Anna Summerford	Discussion: New writing in the North, role of organisation, recent Russian writing collaboration as stimulus for UK/VN possibilities.

Connecting Principle, Culture Lab, University of Newcastle	
Wolfgang Weilderer	Presentation: The Vietnam Arts in Development Capacity building programme 2004-07, as an innovative example of working across different professions and disciplines in community arts within a different operating environment to UK. We shared practice, exercises and views on the challenges and value of creating synergies across the professions in the arts and creativity
	Future dialogue: Paul Zetter is now a member of Connecting Principle research group and future dialogue about the new phase of the Vietnam arts in development programme is expected.

I have a 1000 questions I want to ask you, Paul
Wolfgang Weilderer

University of Northumbria	
Matt Hargrave	Film and discussion: Screening of together Higher documentary to stimulate dialogue and new perspectives on community arts, dance and what it means to be an artist for Theatre and drama students. a very stimulating Q&A followed in which the students explored the nature of community arts in Vietnam and what it means to be a disabled artist
	Future dialogue: The students raised the possibility of setting up short internships in Vietnam to provide hand-on experience of community arts with their tutor. Future screenings of the documentary are also planned. Ensemble has offered itself as a resource and contact point for the students interested in engaging with Vietnam.

Arts Council England	
Staff event	Discussion: Vietnam context of arts and community arts, the Inspiring Internationalists schemes, the visits in the NE and their impact on organisational development thinking, the new partnership between ensemble and The Forge. The David Glass Ensemble creative methodology framework and Lost Child projects.
	Future Dialogue : To further develop the creative and community links between South East Asia and the North East of England.

4 Other meetings

Jane Arnfield (Actor/Director) – to discuss the possibilities of her being involved in a new documentary focusing on the long term impact of the Lost Child performance projects in Vietnam in the 1990s on a group of deaf and blind people. Jane co-facilitated these projects. To further explore Paul's role as mentor for The Gymnast a new theatre piece made in Cambodia and the UK.

Bettina Ebert (painting restoration student) – to connect Bettina with the Australian painting restorer who restored the Little Thuy painting in Vietnam to exchange techniques and knowledge of Vietnamese paintings.

5 Reflections

My participation in this Inspiring Internationalists visit has been of great value at many different levels from professional to personal. Both myself and my host, The Forge feel that the objectives of the II scheme have been met and in often exceeded where meetings have led to concrete future action (Dance City, ensemble/Forge Partnership) and new thinking on creative possibilities for future collaboration (UNN, Connecting Principle, Cassop).

It seems there is great interest and enthusiasm for international collaboration and partnership in the NE, and Vietnam, in its current position as an emerging economy with new cultural flexibility, is ready to enter into innovative, creative partnerships in the arts.

One of the more subtle benefits of the II visit was the time we had to focus on the role of enabling organisations like The Forge and ensemble in the future development of high quality, relevant, innovative community arts in today's society both in the East and West. In this respect the II scheme has had huge organisational development benefits and helped us define our role more clearly. We have now decided to formalise our partnership which will be a multi-faceted one with a focus on doing work with high quality community participation, and developing a creative framework for community engagement.

6 Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Arts Council England for choosing me to participate in the II scheme and Tony Harrington, Director, The Forge, for arranging the visit and ensuring we met with a wide range of inspiring people and organisations. As with all well planned visits the conversations Tony and I had in between meetings were both inspiring and stimulating and have helped us both develop new perspectives on our work, function and organisational vision. Thanks also to NE-based community arts practitioner, Jane Arnfield, for providing moral support and insight along the way. Thank you to all the people we met during the visit, for their time, generosity of spirit and enthusiasm for connecting beyond the usual boundaries. Finally I would like to thank David Glass for providing the inspired, resilient creative framework and vision by which all our work is still driven.

Paul Zetter, Hanoi, December 2007