

ART ASIA VOX POPS

Edit 1

Mrs **Subada Sumara**.

OK, thank you, and what area do you live in?

I live in the Newtown area, Southampton. Nicholas, yes (laughs)

So, you've been to Art Asia things before?

I have seen various, like the, the culture shows and you know, etc. yes.

What's the sort of feeling you've got at Art Asia shows?

I think it's lovely, you know all colourful, and singing, dancing. You know, it's all part of our culture really and it's, I think it's tremendous, yes.

Great, so how long ago did you start hearing about Art Asia?

I think it must be about five years ago, probably the most, yes, yes.

What's your favourite thing you've seen?

I love the singing, you know, it's part of our Asian culture isn't it. Singing, dancing so it's lovely to see women in the floral outfits and colourful ... yes it's, I think it's lovely, especially the music shows, you know.

Fingers crossed for tonight then as well (laughs).

That's right, yes I hope so (laughs).

1 minute

OK, so if you could just tell me your name?

Richard Pasada.

And what sort of area do you live in?

Bitterne, Midanbury.

Right, and do you mind me asking roughly your age? (laughs).

(Laughs).

To the nearest 10 years (laughs).

About 55. Below 60.

(Laughs).

I'm 57.

Brilliant, OK.

Yes.

So, what's your sort of earliest memory of Art Asia? How long have you known about it?

Around about five years ago. I've been in the country for 15 years so, yes for the past five years.

And what do you remember seeing?

The show on the ... is it the Common, or the, oh I can't remember the word, the ...

The Mela?

Yes that's right, and Hoglands Park, that's the other thing, right, yes.

And what does it make you think of when you think of the Mela?

Well it was the food and the presentation, you know. Basically it is, well I didn't spend the whole evening, maybe two hours, yes.

So, has that been kind of the highlight of your Art Asia? (Laughs).

Yes that's right, the highlight right and after that I start getting regular, what's the name, leaflet, through the door, through the post and you know, been keeping in touch with it all the time and now I'm doing Bollywood dancing.

(Laughs) *Brilliant.*

(Laughs). Yes.

And so if somebody asked you to sum up what is Art Asia, what would you tell them?

It's original to the Indian community I think, yes and more or less that's it really. Providing some, you know, experience for the young people as well because I've seen in the booklet, you know, you can do classes here and now and again.

Brilliant.

Yes.

OK, thank you.

That's it.

2 minutes and 57 seconds

If you could tell me your name please?

Erica Smith.

And your age?

Oh, 32 (laughs).

Thanks Erica. Could you tell me a little bit about what Art Asia means to you?

Um, Art Asia means quite a lot to me actually. I think it means ... well it's not just about what it means, it's what it is. It's, to me it's like a, a bottle of Bordeaux that was born in 1981, that's full-bodied and once you've had a few sips it makes you go all warm inside and that's how I feel when I work with Art Asia, when I attend all their events. It makes me feel good, it makes me feel funky and I really appreciate the work that it does. Same with wine.

Thank you Erica. Could you pick out a highlight of, an Art Asia highlight for you?

I think obviously I always look to recent things that I've attended but I would say that the last Mela festival was a definite highlight. I think it was probably dancing with Vinod to the Bollywood brass band in the VIP tent. That was a real classic because no-one else in the VIP tent was dancing apart from us two and (laughs) I just ... Vinod makes me laugh every time I see him, so I, it just, I enjoyed it immensely.

Fantastic, and if I asked you to give me Art Asia in three words, could you?

Yes. Creative, cultural, compassionate.

Erica Smith, you've been wonderful, thank you.

(Laughs).

5 minutes and 2 seconds

If I could once again ask you your name.

My name is **Rafal Takul**, I am from Portsmouth.

Thank you. Could I ask you how Art Asia has affected your life?

Well Art Asia generally I was more interested in pursuing the music side of it, for myself as well as for my children so it's mainly to ... for them to find the roots of their belongings in early days, when they were about seven, eight years old. I've got a couple of boys, one named Dilesh Takul, another one is Sumi Takul.

And do you feel they managed that through Art Asia?

I think Dilesh came for about seven years. I used to bring them here every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, literally spending the whole weekend, initially going to Vinod's house and from then we used to go to schools, various schools [inaudible] so we used to carry all the drum kits and the harmonium and the keyboard and the ... all of the associated things and we used to go to school, we practiced for two hours, then go on to another school and so on and so forth so it was quite interesting start, yes.

Wonderful, and could you think of a highlight of Art Asia, for you? A personal highlight?

Well, my highlight for Art Asia is when Art Asia came to perform in Portsmouth. They had ... they prepared the group dancers in Southampton and they took them to Portsmouth and it was the very, very first appearance of Art Asia in Portsmouth. Having said this, Art Asia was always at my heart because I was more interested in promoting arts, Asian arts and in fact I spent so much time that I was ... I became a Chairman for a couple of years in Art Asia in early days so when the budget was about ... I think the first budget was about £40.00 we got from the Council.

Fantastic. So to sum up, if somebody asked you what's Art Asia, how would you just sum it up?

I think Art Asia, the way I sum it up is, it is a fantastic organisation which encompasses all the community and I would like to say very, very heartfelt words for Vinod Vesai who, as far as I know, has given up his own career as a Chemical Engineer, right, to be in Art Asia and when we met first time, outside the church hall next to the Hindu temple now, because we didn't have temple then, and we were meeting in the temple, he was outside sitting on the steps and he says, "We are trying to form some sort of Art Asia organisation in Portsmouth, what do you think?" and I said, "I'll be the first one to bring myself and my children" and I think we were the founder members, with Vinod, in Art Asia when it started and we went from places to places as I said before and in sometimes there was one place where there was water dripping from one side and we are practicing on the other side, and oddly, members of Art Asia like Gerry Singh, I can't really forget his face and my own son used to play keyboard and he learnt it very well but to the, more or less to professional standard, who is now qualified as a doctor in anaesthetics but he still has got interest. Unfortunately he cannot make it today because he is working in anaesthetics on duty tonight.

Brilliant.

So I think Art Asia will go a long way and I would like to see Art Asia promoting this one. Only one, I wouldn't say criticism but only one thing is, if Art Asia is getting support from surrounding places like Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth, I think that would be good but Portsmouth has always supported Art Asia and there are quite a few people from Portsmouth who have got very fond memories of Art Asia and I wish Art Asia very, very success in their next coming years, not 25 years, 100 years.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

9 minutes and 43 seconds

If I could ask you your name?

Esquita.

And what sort of area do you live in?

Newtown.

OK, and if you could tell me your age? (laughs).

Yes, it's 33.

Fantastic, so could you tell me kind of what Art Asia means to you in your life now?

Well I've had a very longstanding relationship with Art Asia, it's very special to me. When I first arrived from India at the tender age of 10, back in 1984 (laughs) I was involved in Art Asia because in India I was really interested in art and music and it was great when we came to England that I was able to sort of continue with that and pursue my love and passion for the arts, so I started with singing actually, I was really into singing and I sort of started the singing classes with Vinod and I remember we did start in a little room in Mount Pleasant and we used to have classes at the Deanery School as well, in the Deanery huts, which are no longer there sadly but yes, I sort of continued to be part of Art Asia. I sort of performed on stage when I was young. Young, I say young (laughs), when I was younger (laughs). When I was at school we did singing, also dancing. I was really in to dance and no, it was great to have the opportunity to learn classical dance through Art Asia as well and I've done many performances. One of the most memorable ones is the one I ... when we celebrated 50 years of independence of India at the Guildhall, that was a huge event and that was back in 1997. That's where we did a performance and various other venues like the Gantry and schools and other places in Hampshire as well.

So what does it, given that kind of background that you have, what does it mean to you to be involved on the Board with Art Asia now?

It's great because I've sort of seen it grow since the age of 10, when there was just that one room, and now, you know, we're looking to move into this huge arts complex right in the city centre of Southampton and where I've been involved in Art Asia through sort of attending classes, also being a volunteer, I also did some paid work with Art Asia about, almost 10 years ago, as an administrator, and then getting the opportunity to actually get involved with the decision making, being a Board member and I think just, you know, as a person I've developed with Art Asia and I've had the opportunity, you know having been away to university and then coming back and sort of taking part in something that is of real interest to me, it's been really great for my own personal development as well, as well as you know, being able to contribute something to that, you know, that I have such a passion for.

I know the feeling (laughs).

Yes (laughs).

So to sum up, can you think of, I don't know if it's possible but can you think of one main highlight? I know you mentioned the Guildhall event.

Yes, all ... I mean recently I'd say the Mela's been one of the main highlights of Art Asia's achievement and success. There's been so many other, you know concerts where we've invited international artists, well world-renowned artists really, to Southampton, for example Zapher Hussain and Shikama Sharma and you know, Bunker Judas, Jugjeet Singh, Guzzell singers. Also Honarada Podwell, you know she's well known in the Bollywood circuit playback singing and just, you know from the smallest karaoke to the biggest event like the Mela and all the other events that we support and promote, I think everything Art Asia does is a highlight to be honest, I can't really

pinpoint to say “Oh yes”, I mean every year you know, as we said we have our highlights but I think we maximise on the sort of potential that we can offer in terms of cultural diversity to the City and to the South region.

Thank you, thank you very much.

OK, great.

13 minutes and 45 seconds

End of Edit 1

Can I ask you your name?

I'm Christine, Christine **Walmesley**.

And what sort of area do you live in?

I live in Southampton, in Highfield.

Fantastic. What we're sort of asking people is what does Art Asia mean to you in your life at the moment?

Well I first encountered Art Asia when I arrived at work, on my first day I think, and I was told that I would be the Link Officer for Art Asia and then I had to find out first of all what Link Officer meant and then secondly what Art Asia meant, so my first encounter with Art Asia then was it meant work, you know the organisation meant work and I had to go out and find out what it actually was and this involved going to meetings in obscure little offices in out of the way places in central Southampton and then I finally got, slowly got to know the people involved. I got to know Vinod first and then I got to sort of understand who the Board were and who these people from other funding organisations were who came along to meetings like Jill Levick from Hampshire County Council and Jo Day from Southern Arts and Southern Arts sort of, you know, put quite a lot of ... well actually they didn't put that much money in at first at all really but nevertheless these organisations invested money so they too had an interest in what Art Asia did and it sort of grew to a group of people who would gather together every now and again to talk about Art Asia and listen to what Art Asia staff had to say about the organisation and the meetings did tend to go on a bit, so it meant work, it meant meetings but then the best thing was it meant great concerts where you could see lots of people really enjoying themselves and that was really what Art Asia has always come to mean. Really great music, lovely projects, an opportunity to see lots of different people enjoying themselves and really getting a lot out of what the organisation has to offer.

So, as a Link Officer, do you have a Link Officer highlight? (laughs).

(Laughs) That's an interesting question, let's see. Well, I suppose the day that (clears throat) Art Asia found out that they had been offered three quarters of a million pounds towards the capital project, that was pretty exciting. Finding out that the Arts Council had increased their level of grant to Art Asia, that was, that was really good, that's always encouraging. Days when, particular events, I think going to see Jagit Singh at the Mayflower and seeing the theatre so full of people, so intent on the concert and really, really enjoying it but in a way it wasn't just enjoyment, it was kind of ... it wasn't exactly spiritual but it was an experience that was bigger than the usual Art Asia concert, that was very moving. So, inevitably, to do with Art Asia's successes and to do with the actual quality of events that Art Asia's put on, the Mela of course, but I think those early concerts when, you know the concert hall or the theatre would be full of people just absolutely with what was happening on stage, those have always been really inspiring.

Thank you very much.

3 minutes and 30 seconds

If you could give me your name?

My name is **Ramesh Ramell**.

And what sort of area do you live in?

I live in Portchester.

OK, and could you tell me roughly your age?

I, well I'm 61, yes.

So, if you could just tell me, you know, what does Art Asia mean to you?

Art Asia means quite a lot to me because initially Vinod heard me singing in the temple once and he approached me and that was the initial stage when Vinod was starting Art Asia and then I joined him and we used to practice in his house, in a small room in a flat and the determination of the man is out of this world. He has done so much for, in fact I wouldn't hesitate to say Vinod is Art Asia. Art Asia is created by him and his determination and hard work, that has made Art Asia.

That's wonderful, thank you very much.

Thank you.

4 minutes and 46 seconds

OK can I ask you your name please?

Yes you can, my name is Nasreen Anwal.

And how old are you?

I'm 52 years old.

And where do you live?

I live in Shirley in Southampton.

OK and can you tell me how long you've known about Art Asia for?

I'm fairly new to Southampton. I first found out about Art Asia through the website and a colleague of mine about two years ago, so although it's fairly new I feel as though I know Art Asia very well.

And what do you think has been a highlight for you in Art Asia's history?

I think the highlight for me personally, not to have, sort of being fairly new to Art Asia, has been the celebrations and the quality of the programming has been very interesting so in terms of history, I think Art Asia has moved forward quite a lot and I think the media coverage has been very good, so for me the highlight has been some of the key events that have been put on by Art Asia in celebrating the 25 years it's been going, so fantastic.

OK great, well thank you very much.

You're welcome, thank you.

6 minutes and 13 seconds

Hello.

Hi.

What is your name?

Bethany.

How old are you Bethany?

27. Bethany Norman.

Norman. Thank you. Where do you live?

Do you want the whole address?

No, just which area do you live in?

Oh, in Southampton ...

Where?

... in the Bannister Park area.

Thank you, yes. What does Art Asia mean to you?

Actually not much at all, I've never heard of it, I've only been in the country about a year so I've never heard of it.

OK, where have you come from?

From Australia.

Oh right, OK, so how did you get to hear about Art Asia then?

Well, this is the first time I've heard of it, yes, so just coming here to the theatre.

Right, and how did you get to hear about it?

You mean the performance?

The performance.

Oh right, my boyfriend works at the university and he picked up a brochure and, yes I thought I sounded interesting so I said, "Let's go" and here we are (laughs).

Right. Can you think of a way in which Art Asia has, would have an effect on you? Has it had any effect on you, the fact that you're with Art Asia or you know about Art Asia?

You mean, you mean Art Asia as a group or as an idea?

As an organisation, as an idea.

No, no probably doesn't have that much effect on me I guess, so it's not my cultural background so I guess.

It's totally new to you?

Yes, yes.

What do you think about the show? Have you been watching the show?

Yes we've been watching the show and it's been really good, yes I really like it. It's really interesting. We wanted to come because my boyfriend's just recently been to India and we thought it would be an interesting sort of historical perspective on India to come and find out a bit more about it.

Any particular aspect of the show that you are enjoying so far?

I really liked the puppets. The dog and the monkey and the little girl, that was really amazing the way they did that. The dog, the way it moved was really life-like, it was really well done.

Was it what you expected?

No, I didn't expect that there would be that sort of thing in it, so it's been really fantastic, yes and the scene changes are really good and yes, it's really, it's very smooth, it's really nicely done.

Would you come back and watch another Art Asia show?

Yes I think, yes I think we would. Well I know I'd like to (laughs).

Well thank you very much for taking the time out to talk to us ...

That's alright.

... and enjoy the rest of the show.

Thank you very much.

Thank you.

8 minutes and 47 seconds

What is your name?

My name? **Deepree Chopra**.

And how old are you?

I'm 75 years in June.

And which area do you live in?

I'm living at the moment in Ocean Village, Southampton.

OK and what is your earliest memory of Art Asia?

Well I know Art Asia right from the beginning, from the day it started because we were good friends with Vinod. In the early stage, used to have few children around, you come and learn music and it was Vinod's effort who attracted them and they all enjoyed it very well and particularly I remember one occasion in April 1983 when we organised the first concert, music concert with the [inaudible] and that was one of the first success stories and more like everybody in the family, everybody, old friends and all around, they help quite a lot at that occasion and I still remember and it makes me laugh sometimes, end of the day we only received about 15 or 17 pounds all together which more like have no value nowadays but it was a lot of money at the time.

And can you think of a way in which Art Asia has had an effect on your life?

Well naturally all music is a part of the life. It was a team of Art Asia and also all wish of the friends as well that he should prosper and just make certain institutions where children can learn the music or they can learn the old culture, they can learn all about Indian culture, Indian dance, Indian music and all that sort of thing and I think so, after so many years it is possible now.

Great, well thanks very much for speaking to me today.

11 minutes and 16 seconds

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Chris Litton