



# ROMANI CULTURAL & ARTS COMPANY

## **BEYOND STEREOTYPES: UNDERSTANDING THE 'ROMA'**

The Romani Cultural & Arts Company are pleased to welcome delegates on **Wednesday 20th July 2016 at Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff** to a stimulating training session focused on practical steps to working with Roma communities.



# General Information

The Romani Cultural Arts Co. is the leading Romani and Traveller community-based organisation in Wales, traditionally using the arts and culture as a vehicle for advocacy and empowerment, amongst the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) communities and Showpeople. RCAC is also supporting individuals to become “Community Champions”, as actors and agents of change in their own communities, making a difference for themselves and the wider society. RCAC is managed by a Board (voluntary management committee) made up of representatives from the GRT communities, meaning that community members have a role as decision-makers and are part of the process of shaping the advocacy and rights agenda that RCAC promotes. The Company believes it is essential that the GRT communities be at the forefront of social progress and positive developments in social inclusion, in the struggle or the recognition of GRT rights and promoting inter-cultural understanding. Within Wales and increasingly across the UK, our advice and expertise is sought by local governments, policy-makers, decision-takers and local or national institutions. We are asked to evaluate the effectiveness of their policies and strategies or to support them in consultation to ensure the voice of the GRT communities they serve, is heard. We lead on advocacy for these vulnerable communities, influencing the policy and strategy agendas in the context of a devolved Welsh Government and increasingly internationally across the UK and we deliver quality training for those who work with Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showpeople communities and who wish to improve their reach and their impact. Recently we have been able to:

- Influence the Welsh Government through a robust consultation process in relation to the drafting and implementation of a new Scrap Metal Act (UK) and Horses Act (Wales) that is likely to have a profound effect upon the GRT community;
- Support an EU project, led by Dr Andrew Ryder (Corvinus University, Budapest), to survey Welsh Gypsy, Roma and Traveller views on the current Welsh National Roma Integration Strategy, 2014 to 2020, for the EU;
- We have used funding to train individual GRT community members as key advocates who can influence developments affecting GRT communities in Wales – our “Community Champions” programme. These people have taken the lead in a variety of initiatives and advocacy activities at local and national levels;
- RCAC has managed funds from a local donor to research the NEETS (Not In Education, Employment or Training) phenomenon in relation to the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in Wales. We have commissioned a trained researcher to work alongside our Community Champions to examine the questions of early leaving (‘drop out’) from school and the significant differences in educational attainment, between the majority community and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller children and young adults.

Our organisation was founded in September 2009, initially using small grants to develop work with GRT children aged 3-16, in the area of South East Wales, where we began working on Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites and with housed Roma families. We have gradually built up our position as a leader in “best practise” with our community-centred approach to arts and advocacy workshops for GRT children and young people.

The Romani Cultural and Arts Company is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee (No. 0700566) and a registered charity (No.1138150)

### **Why is the work of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company needed?**

The work of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company is intended to challenge the prevailing, negative stereotypes and myths relating to Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showpeople living in Wales and to promote knowledge and reliable data about GRT communities in wider society, as part of developing evidence-based practice and inclusive services and provision that meets the needs of the GRT communities and recognises the contributions and positive benefits brought by Romani and Traveller people to Welsh society. Challenging racism and discrimination in order to build a better, more diverse and representative society based on social justice, equity and inclusion will bring improvements for all, as more egalitarian societies that demonstrate tolerance and appreciate diversity have shown (see Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, 2009). The RCAC also works to achieve a greater sense of self-worth among members of communities, who have largely internalised the racism and discrimination that they experience on a daily basis.

Racism is widely recognised as anti-social, at least in most cases. However, there is plenty of evidence, in the everyday lives of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showpeople and in academic text, that racism against these people is still perceived as socially acceptable. The following quotes explain why and what affect this has:

- Nearly 9 out of every 10 children and young people from a Gypsy background have suffered racial abuse and nearly two thirds have also been bullied or physically attacked...

*This is who we are, – Children's Society, 2007*

- Go to most museums, libraries and schools and nothing about their history and culture is kept or taught. The result is a widespread ignorance about who they are, which sometimes turns to hatred, fear and misunderstanding. In schools, children learn more about the Romans, Vikings or even fairies than they do about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures and what they have contributed to this world. As a result they are misunderstood, feared and loathed...

*GRTHM – [www.grthm.co.uk](http://www.grthm.co.uk)*

- The two groups identified as the most threatening – asylum seekers and Travellers – were the only groups with whom most interviewees had had no contact...

*Understanding Prejudice, Stonewall, 2004*

The Welsh Assembly Government's own report on the accommodation needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people (Niner, 2006) spoke of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people having 'distinct demographic and economic characteristics' and being one of the most socially excluded groups in Britain. It also spoke of the extent to which that social exclusion was reinforced by their experiences of discrimination.

- They noted the tendency of the settled community to stereotype and lump all Gypsy-Travellers together, and felt that Gypsy-Travellers are the population group against whom it is still 'acceptable' to make racist remarks...

*Accommodation Needs of Gypsy-Travellers in Wales, Niner, 2006*

The Romani Cultural and Arts Company is a response to these experiences of racism.

### **Who should attend this training?**

The training would be of benefit to anyone interested in understanding better who the 'Roma' are, their current and past experiences and understand better the Romani identities and cultural practices. Thus, any professional who interact European 'Roma' is encouraged to attend this seminar. This could be particularly useful for those who work in Planning, Housing and Accommodation, Equality, Health, Education, Social Services and the Early Years.

### **Why should you attend this training?**

It will assist you to:

- Be more culturally aware and informed about the 'Roma' issues
- Help you engage more effectively with the Roma populations in your area
- Be understanding and informed about their identities and cultures
- Help eliminate some misconceptions about the Roma, increase your awareness and engagement with them.

### **Aims**

To increase appreciation about the cultural diversity and dimensions of Romani identities and to generate trust and understanding between Roma communities and local authority service providers.

### **Learning Objectives**

- A. Get a better understanding who the 'Roma' are
- B. Provide an insight about their diversity
- C. Shed light into the main needs, issues and reasons for Romani migrations
- D. Discuss their 'role' and place in the societies they occupy
- E. Provide a glimpse and a snapshot of their cultural practices
- F. Encourage a thinking about the future of the 'Roma' in Europe

## Outcomes

By the end the session participants will have:

- A. Increased their knowledge of often used terms such as ‘Roma’ and ‘Romani’ and about their meanings
- B. Be able to identify and understand better the cultural heritage and practices of ‘Roma’ in Europe
- C. Be able to challenge some of the stagnant and predominant beliefs surrounding the ‘Roma’
- D. Increased their knowledge about the diversity of ‘Roma,’ their identities and cultural practices
- E. Have benefited from a training run by ‘insiders’ and been exposed to their stories and perspectives
- F. Become more informed and aware about their past and contemporary histories, place, challenges and circumstances

There will only be 50 places available so please book early to avoid disappointment. The cost for the day (to include light refreshments, lunch & VAT) is £130.00 per delegate, if you book before the Friday 8th July and £145.00 if you book between 8th July and 15th July. Places will only be secured with a confirmed payment.

The venue will be in Cardiff, South Wales at **CHAPTER Market Road, Canton Cardiff, Wales UK CF5 1QE** on **Wednesday 20th July 2016**.

The day will **start at 10:00 and finish at 16:30**, with refreshments included for the workshop participants.

Please email for a booking form or copy, paste and email the attached booking form (p8) to:

**[isaacblake@romaniarts.co.uk](mailto:isaacblake@romaniarts.co.uk)**

Isaac Blake, Director  
 The Romani Cultural and Arts Company  
 Temple Court  
 13a Cathedral Road  
 Cardiff  
 CF11 9HA

Tel: 02920 786 439

Skype: romaniarts

Visit our website at: [www.romaniarts.co.uk](http://www.romaniarts.co.uk)

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# Agenda

Throughout the day there will be opportunities for open discussion and questions. The day is designed to be interactive and delegates are encouraged to participate in an open dialogue about the issues in question.

9:30 Registration

10:00 Welcome and introductions

- Who are the Roma? What is meant by 'Roma'?
- Migrations - where do we start from?
- Current situation and issues
- Ethnicity, identities and communities: dimensions of Romani identities
- Myths and realities: the role of mass media and literature

**There will be a brief 15 minute break at 11:00 after this session**

11:15 The power of the story-telling and who does the 'speaking'?

11:45 'Representation' vs. 'Non-representation', continuity vs. perseverance and the Roma

**12:30 Lunch - including networking time and action planning following the morning sessions**

13:30 Working with Roma - case studies and small group work

**There will be a brief 15 minute break during this session at 15:00**

15.15 Feedback from the group discussions

- Developing Action Plans for practice
- Exploring final questions

16.30 Close (approximate time)

# Trainers

## **Dr Aleksandar G. Marinov**

Dr Aleksandar G. Marinov is a recent graduate from Swansea University where he studied the effects and consequences of the contemporary mobilities of Roma from Bulgaria. Born and raised in a Romani family in Sofia, he has always been passionate about the issues surrounding their realities. He has studied Political Science (BA) and International Relations (MA) and worked for think tanks such as the Institute for Regional and International Studies (Sofia), done research for the Centre for Research in Theories and Practices that Observe Inequalities in the University of Barcelona (Barcelona) and have done an internship with the European Centre for Minority Issues in Flensburg (Germany). Aleksandar is also interested in community organising and been a supporter of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company since he first arrived in Wales in 2011. He is thus eager to share his knowledge and experience both as an insider and as a researcher due to his vested interest in Romani empowerment and inclusion.

## **Isaac Blake - Director - Romani Cultural & Arts Company, Cardiff**

Born a Romani Gypsy, Isaac Blake is a professional choreographer and Artistic Director of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company, which is currently funded by the BBC Children in Need, Big Lottery, Cardiff City Council and Newport City Council. In 2000 he received a scholarship to attend a 3 year undergraduate Dance Theatre Course at Laban in London. While at LABAN, Isaac worked with numerous artists and companies including Adventures in Motions Pictures (AMP), DV8 and Rambert. Since graduating from LABAN, Isaac has furthered his studies in New York and has choreographed performances at the Wales Millennium Centre and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Utilising the skills as an Artistic Director Isaac Blake has raised the necessary funds to take arts development onto both Gypsy / Traveller sites and gadjo (non-Gypsy) communities across Wales. This project is close to his heart knowing how artistically barren these sites can be. But using arts Isaac has found a way to engage with children and young people.

## **Artur Conka**

Artur Conka is a photography graduate from the University of Derby. One of the few Roma to have documented his community from behind the lens Artur's photography and film making has focused on the plight of the Roma Gypsies and Travellers in Europe. He feels that it is important to give the Roma; so long without influence or consideration by those in power, a voice. Artur came to Britain in 1998 as an 8-year-old migrant. Originally from one of the poorest Roma communities in Slovakia, Artur returned years later to record how life had changed for its inhabitants during its decline. The result was his first documentary film 'Lunik IX'. Artur's work has appeared in various international publications including Huffington Post, The Independent, Vice Magazine, Foto8 Magazine, Vas.Cas.Sk, Creative Boom, Lab Kultur TV Magazine, Derby Evening Telegraph. Artur will produce a new body of work for GM2 continuing his original and innovative approach to filmmaking and photography.

**Beyond stereotypes: Understanding the 'Roma'**  
**Wednesday 20th July 2016**

at CHAPTER Market Road, Canton Cardiff, Wales UK CF5 1QE

Application Form

Please complete **one** form per person. (complete in BLOCK CAPITALS – thank you)

Name: .....

Position: .....

Address (for **all** correspondence to be sent): .....

..... Post Code: .....

Telephone: ..... mobile: .....

Email address: .....

Service/Organisation: .....

I would like to attend the RCAC training day: The cost is £\_\_\_\_\_ (please see below for cancellation charges) - please enclose a cheque to the value of: £\_\_\_\_\_ made payable to the **Romani Cultural and Arts Company**. Or contact us about BACS transfer. If you require an invoice, please indicate here: YES/NO. State who and where you wish the invoice to be sent to if different from your above address.

Requests for invoice need to be emailed to [isaacblake@romaniarts.co.uk](mailto:isaacblake@romaniarts.co.uk).

***A place is not secure until payment has been received***

Dietary requirements: Vegetarian/Vegan, other, please state: .....

*Please return the form with payment, **no later than 18th July 2016** to: Isaac Blake the Romani Cultural and Arts Company, Temple Court, 13a Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9HA. email:*

[\*\*\*isaacblake@romaniarts.co.uk\*\*\*](mailto:isaacblake@romaniarts.co.uk)

*Once payment has been received confirmation of place and further details will be sent to you direct.*

Cancellation charges / no show:

In the unfortunate event that you would need to cancel your place at the conference, RCAC would make every effort to re-sell your place, but in the event of RCAC being unsuccessful in reselling the following cancellation charges would apply:

Cancellation between 4 - 6 weeks prior to Training day	50%
Cancellation between 2 – 4 weeks prior to Training day	75%
Cancellation between 8 days and 2 weeks prior to Training day	100%
No show on the day of the conference, regardless of reason	100%

**The charges apply to the total amount paid for the conference.**

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