

John Mayer comes to Hillingdon thanks to National Lottery

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Violinist John Mayer performs

The life and legacy of the ground-breaking Anglo-Indian composer is to be explored by community groups in Hillingdon with the help of a £69,300 National Lottery grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Born in Calcutta in 1930, John Mayer trained in Western and Indian classical music and won a scholarship to study at the Royal Academy. He performed as a violinist with both the London and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, calling himself the “first black face in symphony orchestra”, according to the Guardian.

From the early 1950s Mayer pioneered a new style of composition, merging Western and Hindustani traditions and laying the groundwork for fusion music. In the mid-1960s with Jamaican-born saxophonist, Joe Harriott, he set up 'Indo-Jazz Fusions', mixing Indian and jazz rhythms to create provocative and influential compositions that still inspire musicians today, predating more well-known fusion pieces by The Beatles and Ravi Shankar.

Arts and education charity, Pandit Ram Sahai Sangeet Viyalaya (PRSSV) will digitise music and items from Mayer's personal and family collections for an online archive. Supported by Hillingdon's Music Hub and Museums Service, the National Lottery funded project will create a new touring exhibition, and a learning and events programme across west London for people to learn about Mayer's life and work.

Mayer's son, musician Jonathan Mayer, will lead workshops at local schools, which feature Mayer's music on their syllabus, as well as sessions for the public. Project volunteers will record the experiences of people who worked with Mayer, carry out research at institutions like the British Library and EMI record company, and produce a publication about Mayer to be distributed to local libraries and schools, as well as kept for posterity at the British Library.

Jonathan Mayer, son of John Mayer, said: "'Our household in West London was always full of music. As I grew older and started studying music I became aware of my Dad's input to British music which all started in the 1950s. He has contributed to classical, jazz and pop genres which can be heard in many works so I feel honoured to be able to share my father's work with the community of Hillingdon and beyond."

Dr Frances Shepherd, PRSSV Director, said: "This project will enable us to document and share the relatively unknown story of John Mayer – a trailblazer, whose influence continues to shape today's music."

Stuart Hopley, Head of HLF London, said: "Mayer was an innovative force in British music, whose synthesis of Indian and Western musical techniques still inspires us today. It's great that National Lottery players' money can support this project to share his legacy."

He added: "We're keen to talk to other heritage projects in Hillingdon about how we can support them to explore different aspects of the borough's rich history."

Interested organisations can contact [the London team](#).

Further information

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