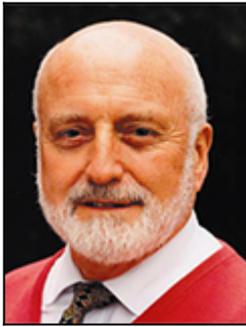


## The Project



The Black-E (formerly The Blackie) began with the commitment to combine a contemporary arts centre with a community centre. When - having taken over the former Great George Street Congregational Church in October 1967 with the support of Peter (now Sir Peter) Moores - the team of artists led by Wendy and Bill Harpe began their cultural adventures with long term aims and with an 'open door' policy. And what might have seemed almost fortuitous at the time of the public launch in May 1968 can now be seen as essential ingredients in determining the character of the U.K.'s first community arts project, and in creating a centre where all the arts (performing and making, experimental and

traditional) might engage with all the people who chose to come through the doors (young and old, disadvantaged and privileged).

The choice of a home and base in one of the finest 19th Century buildings in the city, together with a commitment to both preservation and renovation, provided a re-affirmation of the natural links between the past, the present, and the future. The proximity of the building to Britain's oldest established African-Caribbean community - and to Europe's oldest Chinatown - meant that cultural diversity would be celebrated as a natural phenomenon. The siting of the building adjoining a residential neighbourhood and yet close to the city centre meant that both residents of the city and visitors to the city would find it accessible - and that it would be natural for playgroups and community enterprises to take place alongside dance recitals and exhibitions. The fact that the founders were artists shaped an organisation where creating works became as natural as presenting and promoting works. And the balance of the staffing, with women taking a leading role from the earliest years, has meant that the organisation has evolved a natural commitment to women and the arts.

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