



**FRUITFUL RELATIONSHIP:** Edward Cumberbatch, lead tenor with the Lydians, centre, is all smiles after receiving the PALM award from Martin Daly SC chairman of The PALM Foundation and Jennifer Joseph director, of The PALM Foundation on Saturday at Jubilee Hall, Bishop Anstey High School, Port of Spain. As a member of the Lydians, Cumberbatch has performed lead roles in many works including five operas in Trinidad and one in Jamaica and Germany. He joined the Lydians in 1987 when Pat Bishop was musical director. —Photo: ISHMAEL SALANDY

## Preserving Pat Bishop's legacy

**By Deborah John**

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Excellent performances from the Lydians and accompanists set the tone throughout the evening during the launch of The PALM Foundation, the Pat Bishop Foundation for Art, Literature and Music on Saturday.

But there was none more magnificent than the finale provided by the Lydians performing the "Hallelujah Chorus", to the accompaniment of the Malick drummers and tassa drummers. There were also performances from Desperadoes steelband, with whom Bishop loved to work. This was fitting as the Lydians choir was founded by Bishop and now in turn, the PALM Foundation has been founded to preserve, promote and sustain the legacy of Pat Bishop. Bishop

who excelled in art and music and who during her extensive and varied career contributed to the cause of many projects in these spheres collapsed and died August 20, 2011 while attending a meeting of the High Level Expert Panel to Guide the Implementation of Arts, Cultural and Entrepreneurial Projects and Patriotism Projects.

The launch which took place at Jubilee Hall, Bishop Anstey High School, Port of Spain, heard from a number of speakers during the evening among them chairman of the Foundation, Martin Daly SC; Professor Trevor Monroe, executive director of the Jamaican NGO National Integrity Action and Visiting Honorary Professor at the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute, UWI, Mona, Gillian Bishop (sister of Pat and Lydians member), Valerie Taylor and Alyssa Rostant. They all spoke of the vast contribution Pat Bishop had made to the many steelbands, choirs and artistic projects in Trinidad and Tobago. They spoke of the depth and scope of this work and her famous exhortation at all times to in fact "Do The Work".

The PALM Foundation comprises several honorary members, some of whom were in the audience, including Monroe. The inaugural PALM Foundation Award was also conferred on tenor Edward Cumberbatch who is the Lydians foremost soloist.

Daly said he was honoured to be invited to be a part of a group the objectives of which were so well aligned with his own view of the role of arts and culture in "our fractured society". Daly who writes a weekly column in the Sunday Express, once again made the point that art and culture had the potential to heal societies.

Daly said, "The broad statement of the objective of the PALM Foundation is on the cover of your programme. It is: "Preserving, promoting and sustaining the legacy of Pat Bishop in Art, Literature and Music". I also invite your attention to one of the more specific objectives set out on page two of your programme that refers to the encouragement of self-realisation and self-awareness through the medium of art and culture.

Daly said he could never have imagined that when he knew the Bishops as a youth growing up in Woodford Street, Newtown, Port of Spain, it would have one day culminated in him being asked to be chairman of the Pat Bishop Foundation, but it was a call he welcomed.

"For many years I have repeatedly put the case for funding the performing arts in the context of a policy that recognises that participation in the arts can change the lives of young people by diluting the dysfunctional conditions under which they live, by raising their self-esteem and awakening ambition.

"As you have heard the honourees among this audience, each honoured by virtue of "a long and fruitful creative and intellectual relationship with Pat Bishop", are Pat's group of trees located in a desert as an oasis to provide sustenance as we go forward with Pat's work."

"We look forward to your being available to the PALM foundation as a resource of accomplishment and experience upon which we can call.

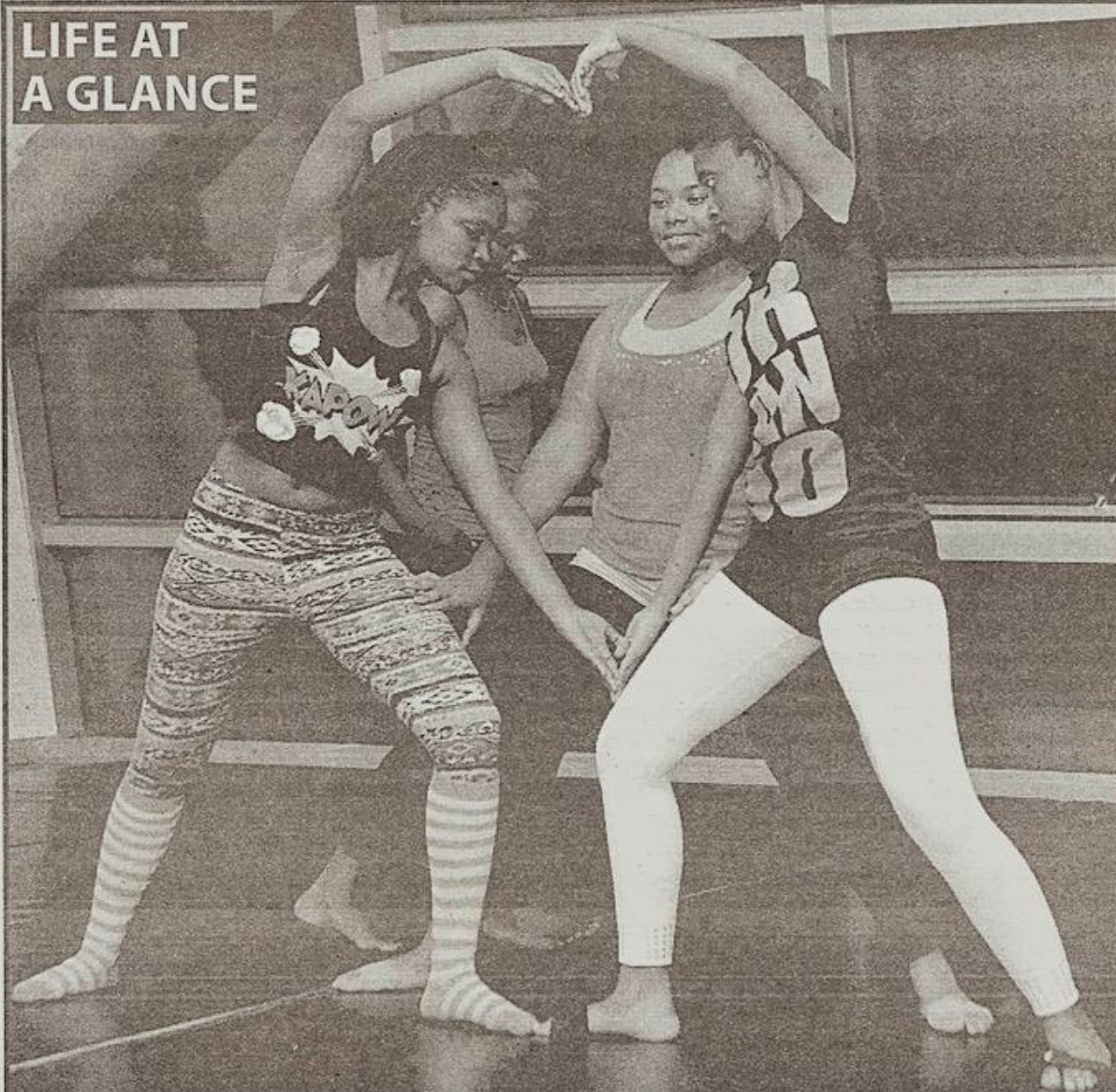
"All of you already know the healing value of art and culture. I cannot even paint a door let alone do a painting but I have learnt of the healing value by my time spent in the panyards and ramleelas and theatres of dance.

"Many groups in our society do this work. It is done here, in the region and further abroad. Our guest speaker, Professor Trevor Munroe will know of the work in his native Jamaica of Sheila Graham who draws youths from across gang and garrison lines to participate in producing their own music videos. I met Sheila at the Lloyd Best Convois some years ago.

"I witnessed earlier this year a group of seventy youngsters, put forward by Vision on Mission, divided into three groups, each group to be directed by a dancer, choreographer from the Battery Dance Company of New York. At the end of one week each group put on its own dance

performance before an audience at the Little Carib Theatre. The youngsters not only formed bonds with each other but with the three teachers whom they did not want to leave Trinidad. “The PALM Foundation will join in doing this healing work. We do not believe that we will do it better than anyone else but we will try to follow Pat Bishop’s constant exhortation “to do the work”. Where necessary we will make alliances with other groups in the field and we want to work with all to set the agenda for funding of the arts. May I say again that you distinguished persons comprising our audience today will be our guiding resource of expertise and experience,”Daly said.

## LIFE AT A GLANCE



**TALENTED:** Children rehearse during a dance workshop hosted by the United States Embassy, Vision on Mission and the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) at the National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA), Port of Spain, on Friday evening for a show at the Little Carib Theatre yesterday. The workshop was coordinated by the Battery Dance Company of Manhattan, New York, USA. —*Photo: AYANNA KINSALE*

## WHAT'S ON

# NY dance company hosts workshops for youths

THE US Embassy in collaboration with the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), Vision on a Mission and the Battery Dance Company of New York City is hosting Dance workshops for at-risk youths at the UTT campus, National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA), Frederick Street, Port-of-Spain. The workshops began on Monday January 20 and will end today.

The workshops fall under the Company's award winning Dancing to Connect initiative which engages youth in creativity and team-building through the art form of modern dance. Participants will work with the company's teaching artists (who are also world-class performers) in a creative, performance-based project. The aim of the programme is to improve self-confidence, team-building skills and tolerance for others while tapping into participants' creativity. The programme has been implemented in over 40 countries throughout the world and is the first of its kind here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Participants in the programme were selected from several children's homes and other non-governmental organisations and will showcase their skills at a gala performance tomorrow at the Little Carib Theatre, Corner White and



ROBIN CANTRELL

Roberts streets, Woodbrook at 6 pm. The facilitators of the workshops are Robin Cantrell, Sean Scantlebury and Mira Cook.

Cantrell, a dancer/teaching artist/choreographer is a native of St Paul, Minnesota, and has been a member of Battery Dance Company since 2008. She previously danced with City Ballet of San Diego, Ballet Deviare, and Rioult. Cantrell has performed, taught and presented her own choreography with BDC in more than 25 countries on five continents. She also directs Indelible, her own performing arts company and co-leads "The Duet-Project". She holds a BFA in ballet performance and a degree in anthropology from the University of Utah.

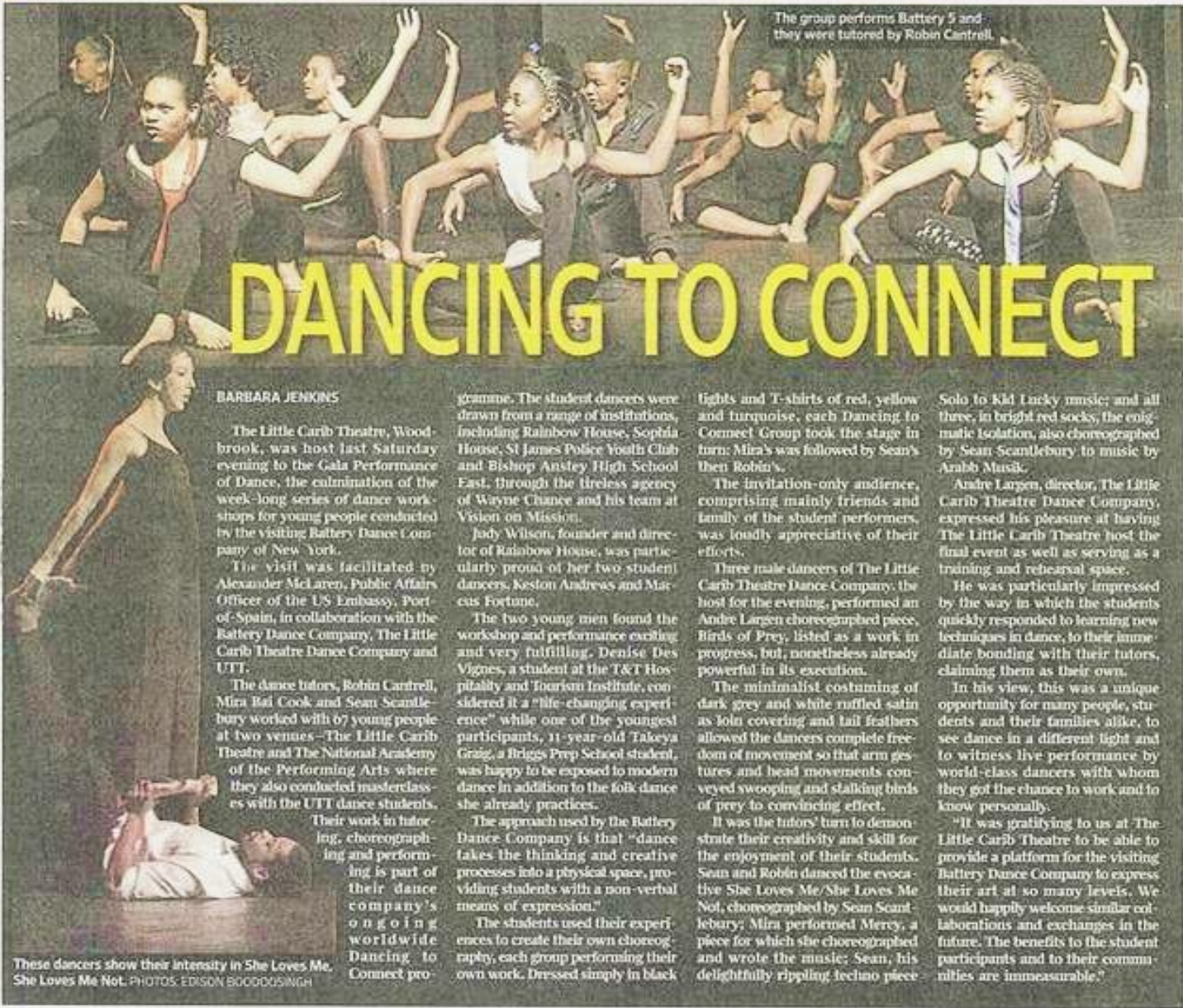
Originally from Barbados, Scantlebury has been a member of Battery Dance Company since 2003. He is a performer and teacher who is equally adept within the



SEAN SCANTLEBURY

styles of modern, ballet and hip-hop. He trained at the New York Public School for Dance and has danced with Eliot Feld's Ballet Tech and has led BDC's Dancing to Connect™ workshops for youth for seven years in more than 40 countries on five continents.

Cook joined Battery Dance Company in 2010. The Texas native studied and performed with Ballet Austin and the Austin Dance Ensemble. She went on to join City Ballet of San Diego and has performed and toured with Liss Fain Dance. Cook has led Dancing to Connect workshops in more than 20 countries. She is co-director of the international dance-film project, Trans-Continental Dance Collaborative and co-leads "The Duet Project". Cook is also a singer/composer and has performed her work in New York City and has released solo albums, "Signs" and "Broken Bones".



The group performs Battery 5 and they were tutored by Robin Cantrell.

# DANCING TO CONNECT

BARBARA JENKINS

The Little Carib Theatre, Woodbrook, was host last Saturday evening to the Gala Performance of Dances, the culmination of the week-long series of dance workshops for young people conducted by the visiting Battery Dance Company of New York.

The visit was facilitated by Alexander McLaren, Public Affairs Officer of the US Embassy, Port-of-Spain, in collaboration with the Battery Dance Company, The Little Carib Theatre Dance Company and UTT.

The dance tutors, Robin Cantrell, Mira Bai Cook and Sean Scantlebury worked with 67 young people at two venues – The Little Carib Theatre and The National Academy of the Performing Arts where they also conducted masterclasses with the UTT dance students.

Their work in tutoring, choreographing and performing is part of their dance company's ongoing worldwide Dancing to Connect programme.

The student dancers were drawn from a range of institutions, including Rainbow House, Sophia House, St James Police Youth Club and Bishop Anstley High School East, through the tireless agency of Wayne Chance and his team at Vision on Mission.

Judy Wilson, founder and director of Rainbow House, was particularly proud of her two student dancers, Keston Andrews and Marcus Fortune.

The two young men found the workshop and performance exciting and very fulfilling. Denise Des Vignes, a student at the T&T Hospitality and Tourism Institute, considered it a "life-changing experience" while one of the youngest participants, 11-year-old Takeya Graig, a Briggs Prep School student, was happy to be exposed to modern dance in addition to the folk dance she already practices.

The approach used by the Battery Dance Company is that "dance takes the thinking and creative processes into a physical space, providing students with a non-verbal means of expression."

The students used their experiences to create their own choreography, each group performing their own work. Dressed simply in black

lights and T-shirts of red, yellow and turquoise, each Dancing to Connect Group took the stage in turn: Mira's was followed by Sean's then Robin's.

The invitation-only audience, comprising mainly friends and family of the student performers, was loudly appreciative of their efforts.

Three male dancers of The Little Carib Theatre Dance Company, the host for the evening, performed an Andee Larsen choreographed piece, *Birds of Prey*, listed as a work in progress, but, nonetheless already powerful in its execution.

The minimalist costuming of dark grey and white ruffled satin as loin covering and tail feathers allowed the dancers complete freedom of movement so that arm gestures and head movements conveyed swooping and stalking birds of prey to convincing effect.

It was the tutors' turn to demonstrate their creativity and skill for the enjoyment of their students. Sean and Robin danced the evocative *She Loves Me/She Loves Me Not*, choreographed by Sean Scantlebury; Mira performed *Mercy*, a piece for which she choreographed and wrote the music; Sean, his delightfully rippling techno piece

*Solo to Kid Lucky* music; and all three, in bright red socks, the enigmatic *Isolation*, also choreographed by Sean Scantlebury to music by Arabi Musik.

Andee Larsen, director, The Little Carib Theatre Dance Company, expressed his pleasure at having The Little Carib Theatre host the final event as well as serving as a training and rehearsal space.

He was particularly impressed by the way in which the students quickly responded to learning new techniques in dance, to their immediate bonding with their tutors, claiming them as their own.

In his view, this was a unique opportunity for many people, students and their families alike, to see dance in a different light and to witness live performance by world-class dancers with whom they got the chance to work and to know personally.

"It was gratifying to us at The Little Carib Theatre to be able to provide a platform for the visiting Battery Dance Company to express their art at so many levels. We would happily welcome similar collaborations and exchanges in the future. The benefits to the student participants and to their communities are immeasurable."

These dancers show their intensity in *She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not*. PHOTOS: EDISON BOODOSINGH

# DANCING TO CONNECT

**M**any citizens are asking where is the hope for the future? This is a response about hope and redressing the crime environment.

First, some background: I have repeatedly put the case for funding the performing arts in the context of a policy that recognises that participation in the arts can change the lives of young people by diluting the dysfunctional conditions under which they live, by raising their self-esteem, awakening ambition and thereby ultimately reaping a peace dividend.

I have described some of the work being done. For example I have referred to the birdsong and Skiffle music schools and to the Jamaican Area Youth Development Programme and the work of Sheila Graham.

Youths in volatile urban communities discover through the arts aptitudes that they did not know they had. Through performing together, bonds are created even across garrison or gang zones. Through the challenge to be creative they learn to deal with issues such as identity crisis and self-worth. The Jamaican programme, as I understand it, has had its participants produce their own videos of song and theatre. Every year birdsong's summer camp graduates put on their concert.

Some time ago, while expressing my belief that this performing arts approach is a crime-reducing agent, I was guided to some published work about Adverse Childhood Experiences and

**MARTIN DALY**

*Those not saved are doing us harm or falling prey to predators.*



Prevention Psychiatry.

Prevention Psychiatry focuses on interventions in communities against exposure to child abuse, substance abuse, bullying, domestic violence and teenage pregnancy. These interventions are thought to prevent or delay the onset of mental disorder.

On the physical health side, one study in the *American Journal of Medicine* in 1998 concluded: "We found a strong graded relationship between the breadth of exposure to abuse or household dysfunction during childhood and multiple risk factors for several leading causes of death in adults".

It is well established that many (but certainly not all) young victims of abuse and severe household dysfunction, particularly those lacking affection, express their anger in criminal and anti-social behaviour before they become subject to health consequences in adulthood, if of course they do not die by the gun or knife much sooner.

I have just witnessed again the positive influence of the performing arts. It took place a week ago at The Little Carib Theatre where I saw first hand the output of a programme designed to reach out to youth at risk.

The Battery Dance Com-

pany of New York City has a programme called Dancing to Connect. It is an initiative engaging youth in creativity and team building through the art form of modern dance. The programme has been implemented in 40 countries. Teenagers, most of whom have never danced before, work under the direction of the Battery's world class dancers.

Here in Trinidad, within one week of such an interaction, 70 youngsters divided into three groups, one for each Battery Dance Company member put on their own dance performance on the Little Carib stage.

This came about through the good offices of the US Embassy who selected Vision on Mission to recruit the participants in the programme. UTT and Little Carib provided theatre space and technical and organisational assistance.

It would take many more words than the space allotted for this column to describe the joy and exhilaration of the participants, most of whom do not come from prosperous circumstances, and their scintillating performances. Two formerly homeless young men from Rainbow Rescue were among the participants.

At the top of the list are

the bonds the youngsters made with each other, the affection exchanged with Robin, Mira and Sean, the Battery dancers and the obvious self-satisfaction that flowed from this. Each participant was awarded a certificate and responded to an individual questionnaire about their experience.

At the Little Carib we are working towards re-establishing a dance company not simply because that should be a legacy of Beryl Mc Burnie. Long term it is a vehicle capable of social intervention but we have little or no funds. Our next fundraiser is a lunchtime theatre event on the Wednesday before Carnival. Stay tuned and buy our tickets.

I cannot breach confidence about the individual circumstances of the youngsters who chat freely with us, but we are aware of how hard many of them have worked against anger derived from bad circumstances not of their own making.

Sadly these potentially very accomplished children represent the ones saved by the steelband movement, cultural and sporting groups, dedicated individual mentors and the NGOs of which Vision on Mission came up trumps on this occasion. Those not saved are doing us harm or falling prey to predators.

When I thanked Mira for what they had done for Trinidad her reply was: "They have so much ability."

No top down, politically controlled or nepotistic creative arts state enterprise is required to find and nurture that ability. That is the business of communities. Give them the funding on openly published specified terms.