



## **Recording performance advice sheet: Getting started**

People become interested in recording live performance for many different reasons. Sometimes it is because they have a particular interest in a specific company. It may be based locally to them or perhaps they have a friend or relative who is a member. Or, they may become interested in a specific arts sector such as contemporary dance or carnival.

Whatever the reason, recording live performance can become a highly engaging interest. It combines the technical and aesthetic skills of filming with the knowledge that you are helping to record an important aspect of UK culture for posterity. Plus there is the opportunity to study performers close up. Perhaps you will film the first stage appearance of a future star or the first success of a new choreographer. Most performance groups are interested in recording their work but usually lack the time, resources and expertise to do so. Filming performance takes time and tenacity. However it is possible for the committed amateur to achieve high quality and eminently watchable recordings. Thinking through the following three questions will help to get your work established on strong foundations.

### **1. What do you want to record?**

Define in a couple of sentences what you want to record and, as important, what you do not want to cover.

Live performance is a huge sector and it is best to focus on a specific area which matches your own interests, location, available equipment and available help. It is far better to make a few high quality recordings than lots of inferior work which will be of no long term interest to anybody else. Let's say you have a friend who has set up a new dance group. How many times might you be able to film them over the next year? Where will they be performing and which venues can you get to? Do you want to follow their development over time or are you more interested in recording how an individual work develops? Once you have established these basic points you can begin to plan out a recording schedule.

### **2. What is the ultimate purpose of your recordings?**

Try and think forward say two years and imagine what you hope to have achieved. Who will have seen your recordings and why?

Your answers will shape how you realise your recordings. Often the driver will be a personal interest and there is no intention to seek a wider audience. In this case the range and focus of recordings will be driven by your personal expectations.

However, you may have broader ambitions from the start. Perhaps you want to promote a particular group or art to a wider audience. If so, who is likely to be your eventual audience? Is it local schools and community groups or is your work aimed at a handful of academic specialists? Many people are interested in recording the changing character of their local area. Performance is an excellent way to show the diversity of cultures in contemporary Britain. In this case where will your recordings end up? Are you intending from the start to give them to a community project, museum or record office?

### **3. Who can give you advice and help?**

Think through the people you know who might be able to help. You may be surprised at your range of contacts. Talk your ideas through with them. Try and discuss your ideas with people who have done recordings in the past. Practical experience in this field is invaluable

There is not the space here to address the technical side of recording. If you want to learn about film making there are courses at many large adult education centres which should provide the guidance to get started. There are also numerous introductory books, magazines and a huge variety of specialist sites on the internet.