

Social Programme



Social Programme Co-ordinator **Marek Ignatowicz** takes a look at some cultural events arranged for teachers as part of the social programme.

The NILE social programme is designed with several things in mind. It must obviously be an enjoyable way for teachers to relax after class, and see the key aspects of the region in a quick and easy manner without having to spend a lot of their own valuable time planning the trips. It should provide an opportunity to meet people from other countries, so that teachers can learn more about other cultures and use English as a common language. But to some degree it should also provide teachers with a way of exploring British culture. In this regard the social programme is very often related to the students' courses, and extends their learning in a relaxed and enjoyable manner.

We are very lucky in Norwich to be able to use the wide range of facilities at the University of East Anglia. In addition to this, we have benefited from their well-known literary festivals, which in the past have included readings from authors with world-class reputations, such as Arthur Miller and Martin Amis. Social programme visits to the UEA literary festival evenings in 2009 included the September reading by Carol Ann Duffy, who was appointed Poet Laureate earlier in the year. One group who saw Duffy had come to study British literature, so this provided a perfect opportunity to combine the social programme with their course, and the group studied some of her poetry in the classroom.

Norwich's four theatres also provided teachers with a wide range of performances this year, including traditional drama, pantomime, stand-up comedy, musicals and ballet. Recently the social programme has taken teachers to see productions of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *I am a Camera*, and *The Pitman Painters*. These were woven into the groups' academic timetables by trainers setting tasks for them to do either before or after they had seen the plays. For instance, they may be given a summary of the plot of the play beforehand, to help them understand what is going on, or they may be asked to write a response to what they have seen.



The ideal social programme would include unusual events that teachers would not be able to do in their own countries, or even if they came to Norwich as ordinary tourists. Larger groups mean that we are able to put on special events, and hire performers for special events. Over the past year storytelling evenings and ceilidhs have been a regular feature of the NILE social programme calendar. The storytellers provide recordings of their stories and songs, which are useful teaching materials for our trainers, and indeed teachers very often take them back to their home countries to incorporate them into their own lessons. As well as being a fun, boisterous evening, at least one of our trainers has based classes around the ceilidhs, giving the students a preview of what to expect, and teaching them some of the dances in the classroom.

Planning has already started for the 2010 social programme, and I am hoping to increase the links between the social programme and the students' timetables where appropriate. A wide range of productions, including plays by Harold Pinter, George Bernard Shaw and Terence Rattigan, are coming to Norwich and in 2010 the Spring literary festival will see the poets Don Patterson and Simon Armitage, and the novelists Jim Crace and Esther Freud reading at the university.

With a strong social programme full of enjoyable and culturally informative events, teachers on NILE's courses have a lot to look forward to next year.