

Volcano, the latest addition to The Sage Gateshead's Regional Youth Ensembles family, is a steel band led by renowned pannist, Wendy Brown. Members are also given the opportunity to access international level tuition from guest tutors such as the experienced soloist, arranger and composer, Brent Holder, within the first-rate rehearsal environment of The Sage Gateshead. The group enjoys a high-energy rehearsal and performance schedule which requires them to commit numerous arrangements and new compositions to memory

Volcano has performed at The Sage Gateshead's annual Gateshead International Jazz Festival, at Steel Spring and also collaborated on an exciting piece with Jambone, the Sage Gateshead's regional youth jazz big band.

Their performance at the recent Gateshead International Jazz Festival is

proof that the pan culture in the North East is grooming a new wave of excellent young pannists.

Musical director, Wendy, led Volcano to captivate a huge audience with a 30 minute set on the enormous concourse area of The Sage Gateshead. They secured the busy lunchtime slot before the afternoon's three major

jazz concerts kicked off, and had audiences tapping their feet and swaying way up in the balconies. Performing Wendy's own compositions and complex arrangements of pop and soca classics infused with a jazzy edge, the group enjoyed hearty applause from the lively festival audience.

volcano

→ STEELBAND



About to enter its third year as an ensemble, Volcano has really benefited from the world class performance and rehearsal spaces of international arts education and performance venue, the Sage Gateshead. As one of six audition-based regional youth ensembles housed in the building (they range from a folk group through to a full size chamber orchestra), Volcano forms the energetic steel pan element of the comprehensive music education programme on offer by the organisation to young musicians in the region.

With hopes to create performance opportunities alongside other Northern steel bands, Volcano's first joint appearance was with the wonderful Sunshine Panners from Hayden Bridge. 2007/08 promises to be very exciting for Volcano with plans, amongst others, for residential workshops and a Hall One performance at The Sage Gateshead alongside some spectacular pannists. Practising as a member of Volcano undoubtedly improves both musical and performance skills as well as being a lot of fun. It is a wonderful

opportunity for members to meet and work alongside pannists from bands across the region and to stretch themselves. In these ways we hope that the existence of Volcano will ultimately benefit the grass roots steel bands that members are loyal to.

Wendy takes a challenging approach to the musical development of these young pannists, with strict focus on technical ability as well as general musicianship skills, and unlike several steelbands in the area asks players to focus on one instrument throughout the academic year. The group also benefits from the rich performance programme of the increasingly renowned venue with workshops led by visiting artists such as the Kodo drummers, and jazz drummer and percussionist Dylan Howe. Volcano is just one of the Sage Gateshead's six Regional Youth Ensembles, offering superb learning and performance opportunities for young instrumentalists and vocalists in a wide range of musical styles: Folkestra (folk band), Jambone (jazz big-band), Katabatic Winds (wind

orchestra), Quay Voices (chamber choir) and Young Sinfonia (classical orchestra).

With previous performances including a large scale collaborative youth gala concert, and their own concert in the funky club style venue at the Sage Gateshead, Volcano are now setting their sights higher and are leading up to their much anticipated performance in the building's 1700 capacity Hall One, which will be the culmination of the year's work and an intensive summer residential course.

Their appearance at the Pan Dango Summer Tyne festival in July 2008 was fantastic.

By: Ruth Currie, photos; Mark Savage

Visit the Sage Gateshead website for more information about the organisation and their activities. www.thesagegateshead.org