

**FST Dance Forum
May 2016, Findhorn**

Chaired by: Tommy Small – Shaper Caper

In attendance: Liz Aggiss, Chrissie Ardill, Stephanie Koutny, Anna Krzystek, Skye Reynolds, Kim Simpson - All or Nothing, Vince Virr, Diane A. Smith - Bodysurf Scotland, Liz Egan - Bodysurf Scotland, Karl Jay-Lewin - Bodysurf Scotland, Ellen Shaw - Bodysurf Scotland, Ruth Kent - Citymoves Dance Agency, Anita Clark - Creative Scotland, Christine Devaney - Curious Seed, Jenny Langlands - Dance Base, Louise Marshall - Eden Court, Eszter Marsalko, Emma Jane Beatt - Federation of Scottish Theatre, Agnieszka Swida - Federation of Scottish Theatre, Karen Anderson - Indepen-dance, Laura Cameron Lewis, Emyr Bell - NEAT - North East Arts Touring Ltd, Katie Armstrong - plan B, Aisla Cullen - plan B, Glen McArtney - plan B, Frank McConnell - plan B, Joanne Pirrie - plan B, Kirsty Pollock - plan B, Anne Marie McCloskey - Scottish Dance Theatre, Duncan MacInnes – SEALL, Yolanda Aguilar - Shaper/Caper, Tommy Small - Shaper/Caper, Saffy Setohy - The Work Room, Tim Nunn – Tramway, Peter Vallance - Universal Hall Arts Centre, Heather Fulton - Woodend Barn

1. Creative Scotland update by Anita Clark:

There will be some change while CS are waiting for a new Head of Dance at CS but there is a good dance team there and Anita encouraged the dance forum attendees to contact them with any questions.

Funding you can apply for through Open Project Funding includes funding for a range of project work. If unsure about what to do with the application, contact Emma at CS and she'll be able to help. E.g. Workshop ideas through to the full production.

Few things supported through Open Project funding:

- RISE Festival
- Perth Dance Festival
- Universal Hall, their programme for the whole year.
- Company Chordelia – Nijinsky's Last Jump
- Perth Dance Festival which has an element of screen dance involved
- White and Givan – Breath
- Chrissie Ardill – research for new work.

Tanzmesse in Dusseldorf:

Opportunities for Scottish Artists to develop international markets. Opportunity to take about 10 people to the festival. Deadline: 16 May, open to producers, artists etc. who have some international experience.

2. Karl Jay-Lewin on RISE Festival:

The history of RISE – there have been some changes over the years, depending on where the funding would come from. This year, there is a focus work in the theatre space again (previously, there were shows in the woods, on the Inverness ice rink, in community halls).

Choices about programming:

When thinking about the programme, KJL was thinking about a variety of work that complemented each other. Quite an international focus in the past. Last year, there were a lot of Scottish shows. It's an intuitive process, it's about work that engages, is quite bold and is contemporary. This year there are quite a lot of British companies and they focused on work for the theatre this year.

Karl described the artistic policy as one that:

- Knows its edges
- Is challenging as well as entertaining
- Is contemporary
- Bold in its vision

3. In conversation with Liz Aggiss:

Liz talked about her career, having started by accident after being advised to study drama instead of English. After doing formal training in New York, she returned to the UK when she had parallel careers: in academia - teaching and as a dancer.

Her work is rooted in the performance created by her first company, The Wild Wigglers, who performed in unconventional places: pubs and clubs, railway bridges and arches, never theatre. They got used to performing dance in extremely small spaces, which is probably why this is the kind of work she makes right now: small spaces, hardly any technical requirements.

Created in 1986, a piece called Grotesque Dancer became her signature piece. After that she started exploring the movement, having a reason to create work.

After she made her first film, she went on to do films for the BBC, Channel 4. The screen world was interesting, she then got asked to become an ambassador for screen dance. She was sent to film critical debate during dance workshops etc.

The English Channel was made when she was 60 and toured for two years. *Slap and Tickle* is a continuation of this work.

Q: What is the reason for your work?

LA: Several things interest me: recovering bodies from libraries, I'm interested in personal history of dance, I'm interested in lost dance. Personal and archive history. *Survival Tactics* was about how you can take a performance lecture and make it entertaining. *The English Channel* was about recovering bodies and mortality.

I never enter the studio before I've done a lot of research. A lot of reading, collecting information and visual information (books, film), then trying to see as much work as possible, across artistic practice, not just my own artform. I spend a lot of time at exhibitions. After that, I write the scripts and accumulate material. I spend a lot of time observing the world, at cafes. Being at the studio for no apparent reason isn't research.

Q: Have you always known that you were going to do film and dance and performance?

LA: I knew that I couldn't stay still. It gave me the freedom to be an intuitive artist. It was important to find people and tutors who had great gravitas and understanding of creative principles. I was interested in finding the language that was right for my body. I was trying to find out what were my abilities rather than trying to develop things that weren't right for me.

Q: A lot of audiences don't care much about 'contemporary' dance. I don't know how to sell contemporary dance.

LA: Last night I performed at Woodend Barn, I was thrilled to be there. It was perfect demographic for me because normally it's young people but last night it was an audience of 50+, middle class, very nice ladies. Post-show discussion was really interesting. All the women wanted to discuss visibility and empowerment. I don't know why they came to see the show, it's a result of Woodend Barn's audience development, because the copy was good, the photo was appealing. As an artist I'm over trying to persuade people to come over, I only go where they want me.

4. TEAM SCOTLAND discussion

The whole group then split into 3 groups to look at the following questions from the agenda.

1. How can the Scottish dance sector support one another?
2. What is the role of the larger institutions?
3. How should the sector relate to and what support does it need from umbrella bodies such as FST and One Dance UK?

Group 1: How can the sector support each other more?

What's our vision of the Scottish Dance sector?

There are a lot of different parties involved: independent artists, funders, bigger companies. There are a lot of clusters.

Some of the comments made:

- I see Scottish Dance sector as bold artists, a confident sector.
- In Scotland we have access to each other. There is less of a hierarchy than in London. Events like RISE bring people together.
- There is the central thing that is dance sector, it's the core.

Q: How can dance sector support itself?

A: We should identify who we are. We should do more things like this [forum]- sitting together and listening to each other. We don't have to force people to be included (comment on Scottish Ballet not being represented).

A suggestion was made that we should have a FB page for dance professionals and generally some kind of online networking presence would be good.

We could also look at ideas like peer mentoring.

Group 2: What is the role of the larger institutions?

Rural touring – larger organisations – who are we looking at? It depends on where you are. It's about perspective.

Tramway is supporting people through associate dance programme. What's the exchange, what's the model of growth and support. We could share positive experiences.

Festival Theatre Engagement Arts programme – offers studio space and free tickets – is that something that other organisations could do?

FAQ: same questions get asked over and over – could we look at it, so that the conversations can go deeper?

Tourbook – sharing of resources – this is something that we all could do.

Could we also link to some of the services that Cultural Enterprise Office offers?

Group 3: How do we use umbrella organisations like One Dance UK and FST better? How can they represent dance?

One of the attendees made a comment that they were a bit confused about Dance UK and they felt a bit disconnected from it. Perhaps it would be worth for One Dance UK to come to Scotland, perhaps they could talk at the dance forum? The rest of the attendees agreed that there is a need for more information and clarity about what One Dance UK do.

Team Scotland and whatever it is it should be done in the response to what is happening in the sector.

Some of the ideas included:

- Scottish artists are interested in collaboration, perhaps FST could help with it.
- FST could be a connector in the sector. Sharing diaries and information. Sharing resources.
- FST could potentially investigate sharing resources at the technical forum.
- We could look into having a Best Practice Dance group

Some comments and thoughts on what the next steps should be:

- There have been a lot of attempts to share information. But unless we populate it, it doesn't work.
- Where do we share information? E.g. when looking for studio space. Also, when it comes to knowing the rates etc.
- A Dance Monkeys page on Facebook was set up to provide a platform for information sharing.
- Scotnits was also discussed as a useful resource for looking for set, rehearsal venues etc.
- FAQ documents could be useful tools. Emma explained that FST are going to do this for the PRS/PPL session next week.
- The new Tour book was discussed in brief and how that could be a great resource and useful tool
- The Emporium Market Day model was also discussed as being a very good vehicle and whether we could come together more often to have 1:1 meetings
- All of the above needs commitment from the sector.
- Copywriting for dance was also discussed and whether there was a training opportunity that FST could look into.

The next Dance Forum will be held in the autumn 2016.