

And then there were 12.....the journey of a graduate dance company in the North West



Edge Hill
University

Karen Jaundrill-Scott and Debbie Milner

* Activity in the North West

- * Twelve Degrees North Graduate Company was created in response to a number of consultancy reports
- * ACE consultancy encourages graduates to remain in the North West region (Siddall,2008)
- * Narrative on HE Provision and hybrid diversity(Hall,2008) and in Mapping Dance (Burns,2007) advocated an entrepreneurial approach in preparation for graduate employment
- * Practice as research journey support by Arts Council England

* Research themes

- * Impact of an Arts Council initiative launched in the North West with a partnership of Universities, Regional Dance Agencies, Venues and Creatives alongside twelve graduates
- * Themes of employability, self motivation and the implications for teaching and learning Dance in HE are explored



*Timeline

- * Mapping Dance(2007) Susanne Burns, Palatine Conference
- * Arts Council meeting in response and the North West Higher Education Dance Consortium is created-NWHEDC
- * Edge Hill University became the lead consultant, timely to undertake research in a time of revalidation to reflect upon Teaching and Learning
- * Towards a Graduate Company Report and Conference July 2009
- * Steering group culture of collaborative working
- * GFA successful, February 2012-project launched

* How do they apply the applied?

- * In the consultancy Jo Rhodes (2008) from Arcane Dance, observed that graduates recognise the value of applied practice within their degree programmes but the reality of the real world experience was considerably different
- * How far can we measure our effectiveness in channelling this critical understanding? How we shape graduates to become employable and to what extent we can influence the process
- * What part do motivational tactics play and is this the essential ingredient to success ?



* Questions to consider

- * How do we as HE educators within a partnership, continue to create a learning environment that is consistent in supporting emerging dance professionals?
- * In the Mapping Dance Report (Burns, 2007) observes that the profession is picking up the gaps in initial training. 'The HE sector must rise to the challenge and take the lead on the needs of portfolio dancers for a broader skills base'

Project Vision 12° North :

- * establish a regional one year pilot graduate dance company programme which responds to the **needs** of both emerging dance professionals and dance providers
- * build vital graduate performance and creative skills whilst equipping them with **industry knowledge and acumen** that develops innovative thinkers and entrepreneurs
- * develop opportunities to encourage graduates from the region's higher education institutes, **to stay in the region** and develop their employability skills
- * work in partnership with the North West dance sector
- * devise a training programme to include: CHOREOGRAPHY; PERFORMANCE; BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS; TEACHING & LEARNING
- * improve employment prospects through regional networking and mentorship/job shadowing

* Forward 12 Degrees

Artistic Mission

'To produce a programme of dance which is vibrant, dynamic, diverse, experimental and evocative of emerging trends in the international dance scene'

- * Recruit 12 talented individuals
- * Engage three emerging choreographers who produce high quality work that is diverse and innovative
- * Create a high profile tour in the North West to include venues such as the Lowry, Blackpool Grand, Nuffield, Live at Lica and incorporate sited work at Mintfest alongside universities and schools performance/workshop packages

Applications

190 expressions of interest-50 North West based graduates were auditioned

* Narrative

- * Audition
- * Standard of technique
- * Creativity in workshops
- * Interview Presentations
- * Preparedness
- * **Piñatas and Coke!**
- * Multi-disciplinary university based programmes
- * Conservatoire programmes
- * Knowledge of regional dance infrastructure
- * Self perception

* And then there were 12



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- * 12 NW Dancers selected
- * Edge Hill(3) -2 males
- * LIPA(1)
- * York St John (1) (NSCD PG year)
- * NSCD (2)
- * Laban(2)- 1 male
- * Chester/UCLAN MA(1)
- * Bedford(1)
- * JMU(1)

* And then there were 12-Devising-Working with
Choreographers



* Working with Choreographers

- * Triple Bill- Alessandra Seutin, Gary Clarke and Antonia Grove
- * There was a dichotomy in ensuring provision of a realistic professional experience and training scheme nurturing **young graduates**
- * **Up and coming professionals no longer Students**
- * Direct and un restrained feedback
- * Expectation about commitment levels and working behaviours
- * Role choices and artistry
- * Twelve voices
- * Premiere, stamina, technical skills and motivation

* Business & Entrepreneurial skills: Teaching & Learning

- * Intensive T and L training and mentoring before delivery of workshops in schools
- * Business and mentoring weekend
- * Internships
- * Company roles
- * VALUE

* Impact

- * In existence at Edge Hill level 6
- * Modules in applied practice/Collaborative company
- * Graduate/Employment skills Sessions- Interview technique, CV writing, SWOT analysis, Auditions - in both applied and performance roles
- * Working alongside North West agencies, companies
- * Revisited key concepts
- * Articulation of the undergraduate experience
- * Greater self-reflection/awareness of self-perception
- * Consideration of CPD
- * Ensuring diversification- theatre skills
- * Timing of Activities

* Impact - Graduate Company research at EHU

* Offer/access to supporting fitness training.

* Fitness testing

* Developing greater awareness of body maintenance and injury prevention.



* When in the degree? At what point does it become the student's/adult's responsibility.

* Increased Technical rigor. Greater grounding and understanding of the application of techniques.



* In HE rather than conservatoires limited contact time for technique-offering extra sessions for a cost?

* Is this the student's responsibility?

* Benefits of intensive work with outside artists intensive projects-variety of choreographic tasks, increase stamina professionalism, self-perception, technique and performance.

* Company projects/touring outside the institution.



* VALUE

*Still for marks and assessment-Student mind set.

* More opportunities to apply their technique. Time to play, create, fail , learn without consequence.



* Incubation Companies, Edge FWD,3RDedge

* Behaviours & Attitudes

- * Hierarchy in the training provision.
- * The focus and priority was devising, performing and touring. These elements were highly valued.
- * Less attention given to teaching and learning/business activities which are equally vital to gain work
- * Individuals aware of the gaps in their technical/creative ability
- * Undergraduate experience in T and L and business activities may have been considered to be sufficient
- * We need to harness Value of deficit elements
- * The very best technical dancers/actors and singers may not be able to enjoy a sustainable career unless they are able to adapt and adopt a proactive approach to their careers' (Burns)

* HE Considerations



* All things to all dancers

* Can we be?

Embraced the reports

- * Improved curriculum content, 'hybrid diversity' (Hall)
- * Developed equal partnerships with arts organisations
- * Created a dialogue between academics and practitioners
- * Work based practice
- * Delivered on employability

'If enterprise is about the 'how', the behaviours and attitudes as much as the skills, then is it more about the way in which we teach than the content of what we teach? (Burns)

* 'Through more effective comprehension of motivated behaviour as it affects performance outcomes, university dance programmes could modify and enhance their training environments so as to produce better quality dancers'. (O' Donoghue and Jones, 2007)

Could a way forward be in examining how we harness this value?



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Susanne Burns

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Susanne Burns

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Susanne Burns

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