

Dance and Disability in Scotland

REPORT FOR the Scottish Arts Council

By Jo Verrent, ADA inc, 13 December 2007



access, disability and inclusion

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1. Executive summary

Disability dance work in Scotland includes disabled people at many levels. The Dance Department of the Scottish Arts Council is concerned to maintain a strategic approach to dance and disability with an emphasis on innovation and choreographic practice.

To support this, Jo Verrent of ADA inc undertook research to map and reflect on the recent developments, placing these in a UK/international context. The research was developed through a process that involved e-mail, telephone and face-to-face interviews with key parties, creation of an initial questions paper, and an open meeting for the sector attended by 20 dancers, dance workers and others involved in the field. The research is presented in its final form in this report with its included recommendations.

In some ways, disability and dance can be seen as a microcosm of dance itself. As dance is made of many genres and approaches, so is disability dance; as dancers struggle to gain visibility and understanding, so do disabled dancers. Dance is often seen as less important than other artforms; however disability dance does not appear to be seen as less important at the present time. Within Scotland, disability dance clearly has significance.

In the fields of performance, training, participation and the dance sector itself, it is possible to highlight areas of success and areas for future development. Success can be seen in the individuals and companies producing disability-related work, in the two Creative Scotland Awards focusing on disability dance, and in some of the innovative work being undertaken, for example, by Dance Base, Dance House and Pilrig Park School. Work needs to be done to make the transition from participation to vocation equally accessible for disabled dancers by opening up vocational training and creating stepping stones of experience for disabled dancers.

Many issues impact on the ability of disabled people to 'see' themselves as dancers, and there is a clear need to raise the profile of the work in order to inspire them, and the people around them, to raise their expectations. Other issues were raised and debated – the use of labels such as 'disability arts', 'community' and 'professional'; the involvement of non-disabled people, especially carers, within performances; and the need to change the perspectives of those outside disability dance.

The twelve recommendations ending this report may not be surprising, and many have been used before in other contexts, but there is no magic wand available to transform the sector, just hard work and determination.

In order to raise the profile of disability dance both inside and outside the sector, it is recommended that a mechanism be created to share information, practice, evaluations and reports in order to make progress visible to the dance sector as a whole (1), and that an initial advocacy resource be produced and widely disseminated to inspire and inform disabled people and others about the potential of disabled people's involvement in dance (2). Support is also recommended for a series of focused events highlighting a range of practice and the process behind the work to open up critical debate by offering contrast and reflection (3).

There is a need for long-term investment and so it is recommended that existing and planned disability dance activity be funded at levels that recognise and reward its strategic importance and make long-term planning possible (4). Investment needs to reach young disabled dancers, and so specific provision for them to develop their skills and provide

them with role models and contacts within the sector should be made (5), and the current practice of funding choreographic collaborations should be maintained and developed to seed innovative collaborations and new developments (6). Where possible, local artists should be involved, to in an apprenticeship/mentoring context if necessary, to build up the skills/experience base within the country.

In order to increase access to advice, guidance, support and training for mainstream dance agencies, providers and companies, it is recommended that relevant resources and the areas of expertise of individuals be recognised, logged and made available to others, and that each year a series of short seminars is supported for the sector (7). Scottish Dance Theatre (SDT) is interested in developing a placement for a disabled dancer and consultant within the company for 18 months over a three-year period and it is recommended that this principle be extended, through extending either the number of placements or the range of organisations who are directly involved (8).

Another recommendation is research into the audiences for disability dance and the current level of critical debate (9). It is also suggested that each company or individual involved be encouraged to formalise a circle of 'critical friends' to constructively critique and discuss the work, supply new contexts and opinions, and challenge the culture of critical silence that has developed around some parts of the sector (10).

The final two recommendations are around the need for advocacy, and call upon the Scottish Arts Council to publicly advocate for the involvement of disabled dancers within all levels of dance training of all genres (11) and for the involvement of dance within arts-based disability and health initiatives (12).

2. Introduction

Dance work in Scotland includes disabled people at many levels – in participatory activities, within training programmes, and through the showcasing of professional dance practice. The Dance Department of the Scottish Arts Council is concerned to maintain a strategic approach to dance and disability with an emphasis on innovation and choreographic practice. To support this, the Dance Department commissioned Jo Verrent to undertake some research to:

- map and reflect on the recent developments in the field of dance and disability in Scotland
- highlight the potential emerging from such work, and from the interest of others in the field
- explore the context for the work – nationally, internationally and in relation to recent developments within disability arts and within dance, looking at all levels including training provision, participatory practice, professional development and practice.

Jo Verrent has been working in the Disability Arts field for the past 15 years and has worked on access to performing arts training and professional opportunities with organisations such as Arts Council England, the Learning and Skills Council and the Department of Education and Skills. She is currently working with Trinity College, London on access issues, and with the Dance and Drama Awards on assessing equality and diversity impact measures at dance and drama training providers. She is a member of the access advisory panel for Northern Ballet Theatre.

This report is the final element of this intervention. It aims to support the Dance Department to pursue a clear, strategic direction in relation to the support and development of this field of work.

3. Methodology

In the summer of 2007, Jo Verrent was approached by the Dance Department of the Scottish Arts Council to undertake a short, targeted research project into dance and disability in Scotland. The Scottish Arts Council had funded a number of interventions in relation to dance and disability and wanted to maintain a strategic approach. The department was aware that there was significant growth in this area, but unsure how far its impact was reaching and what areas remained undeveloped.

The brief for the research asked for a short, external intervention to support the Dance Department, through the creation of a short report and recommendations, to pursue a clear, strategic direction in relation to the support and development of this field of work.

The initial research took the form of developing e-mail and telephone relationships with key parties and creating a short schedule of visits. As time was limited, it was not possible to visit all the organisations and individuals who were interested in the research. The following visits were conducted (see Appendix 7.1 for detailed information on each visit).

- Claire Cunningham, independent dance artist, co-founder of Waterbaby
- Janet Dick, Outreach Coordinator, Dance Base
- Claire Mitchell, Dance Manager, Indepen-Dance
- Ellen Muir, Deputy Head, Pilrig Park School, Edinburgh
- Maggie Singleton, Arts Development Officer, Glasgow
- Janet Smith, Artistic Director, Amanda Chinn, General Manager, Dawn Hartley, Education Manager, Scottish Dance Theatre
- Janice Parker, independent dance artist, producer and collaborator with traveller dance
- Yvonne Young, Dance Development Officer, YDance
- Michael Popper and Michael King (independent dance artists)

E-mail correspondence was also pursued with those who could not be met. For information on those involved, see appendices.

From this initial research, in mid-October 2007 Jo produced a short questions paper outlining her findings so far and posing questions for the sector. An open session was then held on 8 November in Glasgow so that those directly involved in the field could have the opportunity to feed in to the emerging debates. This session was attended by:

- Janet Dick, Outreach Coordinator, Dance Base
- Jo Thomson, pARTners Dance Artist in Residence, Dance Base
- Karen Wood, Creative Director, Dance House
- Janet Smith, Artistic Director, Scottish Dance Theatre
- Dawn Hartley, Education Manager, Scottish Dance Theatre
- Ellen Muir, Deputy Head, Pilrig Park School
- Alan Greig, Artistic Director, X Factor
- Suzy Cunningham, freelancer
- Susan Hay, Dance Officer, Scottish Arts Council
- Karen Anderson, Artistic Director, Indepen-Dance
- Claire Mitchell, Dance Manager, Indepen-Dance
- Alan Faulds, dancer
- Stuart Macintosh, support worker for Alan Faulds
- Maggie Maxwell, Equalities Officer, Scottish Arts Council
- Ailsa-Mary Gold, Associate Director Education, Scottish Ballet

- Kirsty White, Arts Development Officer for Social Inclusion, Culture and Sport Glasgow
- Nasat Ahmed, Scottish Youth Theatre
- Robert Softley, Agent for Change, Birds of Paradise
- Linda Payne, freelance practitioner and co-founder of Waterbaby
- Claire Cunningham, freelance dance artist and co-founder of Waterbaby

Jo Verrent facilitated the session and two sign-language interpreters were also present. Apologies were received from: Cindy Sughrue, Executive Producer, Scottish Ballet; Amanda Chinn, General Manager, Scottish Dance Theatre; Lesley Craigie, freelance practitioner; Sheila McCubbin, Education Services, Dance House; Professor Maggie Kinloch, Head of Drama, RSAMD; Ruth Kent, City Moves; Michael Popper, Scottish Dance Theatre; Morag Deyes, Dance Base.

4. Findings

At the open meeting to discuss this research, one of the attendees described disability and dance as being a microcosm of dance itself. As dance is made of many genres and approaches, so is disability dance; as dancers struggle to gain visibility and understanding, so do disabled dancers. Dance is often seen as less important than other artforms; however disability dance does not appear to be seen as less important within Scotland at the present time.

The need for this research itself, and the numbers of those interested in it, are evidence that for both funders and practitioners disability dance has significance.

The first part of the research was to briefly map and reflect upon recent activity. This has been done in three sections:

- performance
- training
- participation.

Each section is followed by reflections on the current situation, referencing the relevant UK and international context where appropriate.

4.1 Performance activity

4.1.1 *Disability-specific companies*

There are a small number of disability-specific companies working in Scotland:

Indepen-Dance¹
traveller
Waterbaby²
Irky Pirky

Indepen-Dance, formed in 1996, offers dance classes and performance opportunities to learning-disabled dancers and their carers, following a model established by Wolfgang Stange (Amici Dance Theatre, London). Currently a number of weekly classes are offered, including one linked to the generation of work for public performances, and training courses enable dancers and members to benefit from other influences. Their rehearsal model is usually a two-week intensive residency before the opening of a new work, which may then have a small number of performances, and cast sizes can vary widely. The company has begun to explore the potential of members of the performance group in relation to choreography through Choreographic Labs, and the recent formation of the Indepen-Dance Youth Group aims to ensure that new dancers refresh the company's work. The company's international reputation is growing, and a number of European partnerships have been formed enabling its members to travel and receive different stimuli. The company's long-term vision is to run a centre of excellence for disability dance in Scotland. In the shorter term, it aims to develop a disability dance festival in 2009 profiling its own work and some of its European collaborators.

¹ See Appendix 7.1 for interview notes.

² See Appendix 7.1 for interview notes.

traveller is an initiative that works on a project-by-project basis supported by Artlink Edinburgh and the Lothians. The group of learning disabled dancers work in collaboration with dance artist Janice Parker, and it was explorations with traveller dancers that formed the basis of Janice's Creative Scotland Award and its publication *Take a Look at What is Actually There*. Recently they have created site-specific dance films with the National Museums of Scotland, a solo work choreographed by Cesc Gelabert in collaboration with one of the performers, and a new dance film with X Factor – a dancer from traveller is currently performing with X Factor in their new work. Traveller places an emphasis on experimental practice, aiming to break new ground and create new perspectives for people with learning disabilities in dance. Traveller encourages development on an individual basis and develops initiatives with national and international partners.

Waterbaby is a relatively new company, a collaboration between Linda Payne and Claire Cunningham, which aims to develop into the first inclusive dance company in Scotland. The pair created a schools tour, funded by Glasgow City Council, linking performance and workshop activities, and Linda is currently forming a junior dance company in association with Ashcraig School, Glasgow. Their first work premiered at City Moves in Aberdeen in September 2004, and their second piece premiered at Tel Aviv Opera House, Israel in 2005.

Irky Pirky is a mixed-ability dance company for East Ayrshire formed in 2003, led by Karen Wood (Creative Director of Dance House, Glasgow). The group of approximately 20 dancers, including dancers with learning disabilities and physical disabilities, meets on a weekly basis in Kilmarnock.

4.1.2 Mainstream dance companies working in the field

There are a small number of mainstream dance companies engaged in performance work with disabled dancers, including:

- **Scottish Dance Theatre** employed four international disabled dancers to join the company for a piece choreographed by Adam Benjamin, founder of CandoCo, called *Angel of Incidence*. Both the company as a whole and individuals from within the process wish to develop further work utilising disabled dancers in the future.³
- **X Factor**, led by Alan Greig, has collaborated with traveller and also with students from Pilrig Park School on a number of projects and retains a strong interest in this field of work.

4.1.3 Venues and promoters

There are a number of venues and promoters interested in promoting or showing the work of disabled dancers. Much of what is shown is imported from the rest of the UK and abroad.⁴ The work is often not directly promoted as 'disability dance', with the lead on this being taken from the position of the company or artist involved.

4.1.4 Individuals

There are a number of individuals seeding performance work involved in this field of work, including the following:

³ See Appendix 7.1 for interview notes.

⁴ Although only a few promoters (such as Tramway and Dance Base) were directly contacted within this research, the interviewees anecdotally mentioned seeing specific disability-related product at a range of venues and events.

- **Janice Parker** was granted a Creative Scotland Award to explore further her work with learning-disabled dancers, which culminated in the publication *Take a Look at What is Actually There*. She is currently working with traveller dance; Artlink Edinburgh and the Lothians; Royston Maldoom in Germany and Austria on inclusive intergeneration work; and training and mentoring professional dance artists in her practice. Janice has a pARTners residency from the Scottish Arts Council to develop performance in collaboration with people with complex learning disabilities in their home environments.⁵
- **Michael Popper** is currently working with disabled dancer Michael King on a development project based on the fandango, having met at SDT on the *Angels of Incidence* programme.⁶

4.1.5 Planned developments

Indepen-Dance has developed a number of medium and long-term aims, including a festival in 2009 and the creation of a physical centre of excellence for inclusive dance. Initial plans for the festival involve highlighting the work of both Indepen-Dance and a number of their European partners, some of whom work from the same model. The idea of a festival to highlight dance and disability interests many parties, and therefore the format and aim of such an event may change in relation to the needs and desires of those involved.

Scottish Dance Theatre is keen to develop its work in this area further and is considering having a series of three six-month residencies for Caroline Bowditch, using her training, consultancy and performance skills to support both internal and external changes within the company and the sector as a whole.

There are a number of short pieces in development: Michael Popper's fandango piece may take the form of a dance film or may evolve into a performance duet; following on from Janice Parker's research, a solo dance for one of traveller's learning-disabled dancers may emerge, choreographed by Cesc Gelabert; Claire Cunningham's Creative Scotland Award research is culminating in a short performance piece.

4.1.6 Reflections on performance activity

There is a limited range of disability-specific dance companies in Scotland at present, only two of which have a public profile (Indepen-Dance and traveller).

The focus of both of these is on work with learning-disabled dancers. Of all the disability dance sectors, learning-disability dance raises most often questions of aesthetics as a learning-disabled dancer may not conform to the typical image of 'a dancer' and their movement range and approach to the work may be different. Learning-disability dance is, even then, not 'all the same'. Indepen-Dance and traveller have different performance bases: Indepen-Dance works from an inclusive model which involves carers training with and dancing with dancers, developed from the inspiration of Wolfgang Stange (Amici); traveller's dancers may work with non-disabled dancers, or alone, and they may also have carers and non-disabled participants new to dance as performers. The presence of carers on stage has both its fans and its critics, some liking the supportive nature of the work and others finding the presence of untrained dancers on stage distracting. This model of creation and performance is often found within Europe, although is less seen in England (with the exception of Amici). Disability Art purists find the involvement of non-disabled

⁵ See Appendix 7.1 for interview notes.

⁶ See Appendix 7.1 for interview notes.

people on stage patronising, feeling that it can be read by audiences as negating the talents and skills of learning-disabled dancers, giving the impression that they can only dance when accompanied by non-learning-disabled dancers.

There are no impairment-specific options for dancers with sensory impairments (deaf dancers or visually impaired dancers), although activity has happened in relation to both of these sectors at Dance House and elsewhere. Dance House undertook an initiative incorporating sign language training for staff and sign dance classes in 2003 as part of their activities in the Year of Disabled People. In England there are two companies specialising in sign dance, one in Liverpool (Common Ground Sign Dance Theatre) and the other in Buckinghamshire (Sign Dance Collective). Equally, there is no current reported dance activity specifically with visually impaired people. In England there is only one company specialising in contact improvisation with visually impaired people – Touchdown Dance from Manchester. In September 2007, 10 professional dancers from Dance House worked with Touchdown Dance on skills acquisition and choreographic development and performed their piece *Closer*. Priya Shrikumar from Dance Ihayami has worked with visually impaired children and created a dance film piece, and dance work has also occurred at Donaldson's School for the Deaf.

Dance with mental health activity is less prevalent in the UK as a whole as a performance option, although dance therapy is still common. One of the Artful exemplar projects focused on dance (Dance Base); none of the art therapy trials in Scotland undertaken in 2003–05 focused on dance or movement.⁷

For dancers with physical impairments the options in Scotland were very limited prior to the SDT piece. It is therefore not surprising that no disabled Scottish dancers were located for this work, as dancers were required who were working at a professional performance level. Although CandoCo has a strong performance profile in Scotland, and has undertaken a number of residencies, there has not yet been the sustained input over time that would enable the creation of such a company in Scotland (StopGAP, an English company, took 10 years in development to reach its current level of national and international touring). The only known professional dancer with a physical impairment is Claire Cunningham, who has come to dance through work in music and has not accessed formal dance training. The interest Claire's work is generating, and the fact that she was awarded a Creative Scotland Award, bode well for the future, as this indicates an interest in talented disabled performers, although there are few identified routes for disabled people interested in dance to reach this level of practice (see Training, 4.2 below). In general, across all impairments and artforms, the situation in Scotland seems to indicate that there are a small number of practising disabled performers (referred to as the 'cream of the crips'), but few disabled people emerging to follow them.

The number of dance companies concerned specifically with disabled dancers seems small, although in comparison with England it is broadly proportionate. There are approximately 20 disability-related companies working at a range of levels within England,⁸

⁷ As reported in *Arts, Creativity and Mental Health Initiative: report on the findings of four arts therapies trial services 2003–2005* (written by Cathy Wilson, Consultant to the Mental Health Foundation, and Isabella Goldie, Head of Scotland for the Mental Health Foundation).

⁸ Adam Benjamin and Dancers, London; CandoCo Dance Company, London; StopGAP Dance Company, Farnham; Anjali, Banbury; Blue Eyed Soul, Shrewsbury; High Spin Dance Theatre, Brighton; Amici Dance Company, London; Green Candle Dance Company, London; Salamanda Tandem, Nottingham; Eye Contact, Nottingham;

and given that England is approximately ten times the size of Scotland, this means that Scotland currently has twice as many as England per head of population. However, the greater size of England means that a greater diversity of companies is represented, including those who specialise in work by disabled dancers only, those who have inclusive companies of disabled and non-disabled dancers, those who work only with learning-disabled dancers, deaf dancers or visually impaired dancers, and so on.

As for location, all four companies are within a narrow geographical range: Glasgow, Edinburgh and East Ayrshire. For disabled people looking for performance opportunities, this is limiting. It also seems to match some of the limitations present within the spread of dance within Scotland. Although some companies and projects specifically target communities further afield, the vast majority of work appears to concentrate on this axis (in line with the heaviest population density in Scotland).

The involvement of mainstream dance practitioners and companies (X Factor, SDT) with dancers with physical and learning disabilities is unknown in England, although integrated casts for contemporary performance work are more common in Europe and beyond. In particular, the decision by SDT to take on four disabled dancers for a mainstream tour has not been taken by any other contemporary dance company in the UK. In many ways, the unique nature of this activity could have been more strongly highlighted, enabling the piece to function not only as a piece of dance, but equally as a beacon to disabled aspirant performers. One can argue that this is not the role of SDT, and that they should only have to be concerned with creating art. However, as an attendee at the dance and disability meeting stated, in this work, the art is political.

Many companies involving disabled performers use established and, usually, non-disabled choreographers. As Celeste Dandeker OBE, artistic director and co-founder of CandoCo stated: 'This way of working is fundamental to CandoCo's artistic approach because from the outset we have had a policy of inviting professional choreographers whose work we admire – our focus being dance – not disability. It has encouraged choreographers to think about disability not as a limitation but as a springboard to a whole new palette of dance and movement.'⁹

Promoters seem willing to show work including disabled dancers, although there are still access issues within some venues to address (Claire Cunningham was to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2007, but the venue offered was not accessible). It is assumed that developing work in less centrally located areas may also raise questions around access.

Research into audiences for disability arts work, carried out by Audiences London, has led to fewer English companies using terms like 'disability work' or 'Disability Arts' or even mentioning disability within marketing materials. Their research found that audiences on seeing such labels automatically made negative assumptions about quality, tone and professionalism. Opinion in Scotland appears mixed, with strong arguments expressed both for dropping such labels and for creating a quality brand around the term Disability Arts. Audiences for such work in Scotland have not currently been researched – either in relation to motivation to attend or in relation to people's responses to work. There is a

FrontLinedance, Stoke-on-Trent; Corali Dance Company, London; Dance FX, Cheshire; Common Ground Sign Dance Theatre, Liverpool; Sign Dance Collective, Buckinghamshire; Touchdown Dance, Manchester; Company Volume (new company started by ex-Anjali tutor Susan Norwood); Uhhuh Dance company, Wales; Magpie Dance, Kent; Mouse on the Move, North-west England.

⁹ *Animated*, spring 2007.

strong appeal in linking pieces together simply because the performers are disabled, although this may not be the most sophisticated approach to programming work. For a conference or event focusing on discussion and debate, this may be necessary; for a standard 'evening out' it may not be. Certainly the feeling expressed by most disabled dancers contacted as part of this research indicates that they would rather be programmed within the mainstream than in a separatist context.

Gaining critical opinion in relation to the work was described as hard, with the exception of Mary Brennan from *The Herald*, who has provided a thoughtful and honest critique of many pieces. There is a particular danger with some elements of work in this field, such as work by learning-disabled dancers, that it will gain a sympathy response, rather than a genuine critique. Opening up constructive critical dialogues with a range of voices acting as 'critical friends' may be required to develop performance work further.

Festivals are often seen as a way of celebrating and establishing a profile for a genre of work, although they also run the risk of cementing opinion if narrowly programmed. Care should be taken to ensure that the planned Indepen-Dance festival is clearly marketed as promoting one particular approach for this work and not simply as a festival of dance and disability. The focus of the event needs to be pinpointed: for example, is it to widen audience appeal / educate audiences; is it an opportunity for the specific companies involved to share practice and work collaboratively; is it about celebrating a number of approaches to this work?

4.2 Training

4.2.1 Training provision

Training, in most forms, is beyond the direct remit of the Scottish Arts Council. However, the Scottish Arts Council understands that it has an advocacy role to play in this regard.

No formal training provision aimed specifically at disabled dancers was found, apart from that offered by the companies mentioned above (4.1).

As reported in the questions paper, access to formal dance training in general is an issue in Scotland. To progress to full-time vocational study, most students have undertaken considerable advanced training in previous years. The *Audit of Specialist and Advanced Dance Training Provision to Under 16s in Scotland (2003)*¹⁰ audited private dance schools, secondary schools, further education colleges and other specialist dance training providers (such as companies and organisations) and found many issues associated with the lack of advanced training for dance in general, and also that many of those who do gain such advanced training then go on to continue that training in England and not in Scotland. The study states: 'Furthermore, and although not a particular area of our study, the Scottish Arts Council would need to consider access to advanced training for those from ethnic minority and young people with special needs or a disability. We have not sampled current students to determine the current levels but would speculate that these groups are under represented.'

A number of courses and schemes provide talented dancers with routes into vocational dance training, most notably the Scottish Ballet's associate scheme and YDance's Project Y youth company. Although disabled people have been involved in work by both

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companies, few disabled people have progressed to be involved at this level to date. This year, one of the dancers in Project Y was a disabled dancer with limited mobility.

No formalised training was found that supports non-disabled people to develop and explore inclusive or integrated practice, although a number of individuals offer this, including Linda Payne of Waterbaby, who is also a freelance specialist in inclusive dance working both with groups and to train up others in accessible practices, for example, YDance's dance tutors.

4.2.2 Reflections on training

As reported in the questions paper, which is presented as an appendix to this report, if a disabled person wants to move beyond recreational provision, in order to consider dance vocationally, there are two routes available – via mainstream dance training or via specialist provision for disabled dancers. By tracing the training routes for a small number of disabled dancers performing in the UK in 2004, research in England¹¹ showed that most wanted to progress through mainstream training but had found more success through disability-related opportunities, particularly through association with specific companies, because of the barriers they experienced in accessing mainstream provision.

There appears to be a clear divide between those who feel that a specific skill set is needed to include disabled dancers within mainstream training, and those who feel that it is a matter of confidence on the part of the teacher and of extending the principles of differentiation and adaptation which should already be present in any training. The majority of those attending the open meeting felt that disabled and non-disabled dancers could be trained together, providing the quality of teaching was good. Good teachers should be used to differentiating and ensuring that each person is being challenged at their own level.

Although some success has been reported in England, it is still confined to a small number of educational institutions. For example, the dance team at Coventry University¹² has developed experience and expertise in teaching and learning methodology in this field by working closely with disabled dance students on their course,¹³ and by training learning support assistants to work with them.¹⁴ For those with some impairments – such as asthma, dyslexia and anorexia – access to provision can be simple.¹⁵ For those with physical and sensory impairments, adjustments can appear harder to make (although in practice this is not always the case).

Some renowned disabled dancers have only been able to access training on community courses. For example, David Toole, an international dance performer, trained at Laban,

¹¹ Research for DADA (Dance and Drama Awards), ADA inc for DFES, 2003.

¹² They held a conference to share this practice in March 2007 at an event called 'Dance and Disability: Strategies for Inclusion in HE and Beyond'. This was being followed up by a further event on 21 November 2007 called 'Moving Matters: Supporting Disabled Dance Students in HE' (for more information on the event, see www.palatine.heacademy.ac.uk).

¹³ For example, Lorna Marsh, who became the first wheelchair-using student to get a full degree in dance at Coventry University, in 2006.

¹⁴ A dance learning support worker is someone with a level of dance practice who works with the individual and the tutor concerned to adapt the teaching when barriers are met.

¹⁵ This is not to imply that all those with hidden impairments have access needs that are easy for organisations to meet. In some cases, those with hidden impairments may have a complex set of access needs, which require the accessibility of the training provider and the training situation to be considered.

gaining a professional diploma in community dance, but was not able to gain access to other programmes at the time he wished to train.

In England, a concerted effort and a significant level of resources over five years have seen the numbers of disabled people involved in the DADA scheme¹⁶ increase more than fourfold, although levels are still under half the most conservative estimate of disabled people within the population.¹⁷ For dance, these awards are available for training only in ballet and musical theatre. (There are no longer any contemporary dance providers offering Dance and Drama Awards.)

Given the lack of disabled people in formal dance training, there is considerable potential in developing some of the 'stepping stone' routes into training and in ensuring that talented disabled people emerging from pre-vocational courses and provision have somewhere to develop their skills in a more formal context, before entering formal training.

In England, CandoCo is the company most known for developing disabled performers in this way. Until 2004, the company was able to offer only short training interventions, but in that year the company launched the CandoCo Foundation Course in Dance for disabled students, accredited by the Open College Network at levels 2 and 3. The course was designed to prepare students for advanced training and employment in the dance world through providing intensive exposure to technique, performance and movement. The course was unique in its provision of fully inclusive dance training to students with physical, sensory and learning disabilities. It is not running during the academic year 2007–08, as funding from the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) has been redirected into Widening Participation projects to be run by Dance and Drama Award schools. One of these Widening Participation projects will be Accessing Dance and Performance Training (ADAPT) run by Urdang Academy in collaboration with CandoCo. The aim of ADAPT is to introduce young disabled people to contemporary dance and musical theatre, and to give those who show particular potential and commitment the opportunity to take part in further workshops where their skills and confidence will be developed. The project will lead to a performance opportunity and a place for participants on the Urdang Academy Summer School, which will be made accessible through support from CandoCo staff.

CandoCo have also run an inclusive summer school as a key element of their programming for many years. The most recent International Summer Lab was in partnership with Gloucestershire Dance and Dance South West. The Lab offered 45 disabled and non-disabled dance artists from across the world the opportunity to spend a week under the mentorship of the company in a five-day explorative residency at the National Star College in Gloucestershire.

There are a number of other established disability dance companies and organisations that have developed this residency model in England, such as the deaf dance residency run by Green Candle Dance Company, London.

¹⁶ The Dance and Drama Awards scheme provides bursaries for talented students to attend training at vocational dance and drama schools.

¹⁷ The Centre for Education Development Appraisal and Research (CEDAR) found that the self-reporting statistics on disability were very low (1.5%), and that dyslexia was the only stated impairment in the questionnaire survey reports for the second-year students from the 2000 cohort (sample taken in 2002). Statistics from providers in 2005–06 show that, overall, 7.8% of the dance students claimed a long-term illness or disability.

For learning-disabled dancers, the traditional approach to training has been through developments solely within companies, as little formal dance training has been considered accessible, and for many years technique classes were not felt to be appropriate. Recently this position has been challenged and, for example, StopGAP Dance Company has a learning-disabled dancer, Chris Pavia, who is reaching very high levels of competence with technique. Birmingham Royal Ballet runs an education/outreach project called FreeFall Dance, which involves a number of dancers with severe learning disabilities, who, again, are developing considerable strengths in some aspects of ballet technique.

In some companies that focus on learning-disabled dancers, such as Indepen-Dance, the need to continually encourage new younger dancers to move forward has long been established. Anjali, for example, has five young Anjali classes in different locations, which feed a number of open classes and a youth dance company. Individuals can therefore serve a long 'apprenticeship' and gain performance and technical skills before being invited into the main performance company.

In England there has also been considerable work to provide support to dance practitioners who want to train to develop an inclusive approach, for example:

- Hampshire Dance runs Dance Caper-Bility every two years, a training course for people interested in dance with disabled people, designed for participants with a wide range of experience and ability, accredited by the University of Winchester.
- East London Dance has developed 'People Moving: towards an integrated learning culture for dance', which can be offered as a day or half-day introduction, aimed at introducing dance teachers to the key considerations involved in working in inclusive settings. It focuses on introducing concepts of integrated and inclusive teaching of dance to students with physical disabilities and how to deconstruct technique and apply it in such a way that all students would benefit.

4.3 Participation activity

4.3.1 Barriers to participation

The practice in the organisations studied in this research project seems strong in relation to participation, although the quality of those experiences has not been assessed. All dance agencies contacted in the course of this research (Dance House, Dance Base¹⁸ and Citymoves) offer specific classes and programmes for disabled people to participate in dance, and provide access as appropriate to enable disabled people to attend mainstream classes. Equally, the responses from the local authority contacts involved in the research (Glasgow) indicate that disabled people are involved in any and all generic dance projects run, and that some disability-specific initiatives also take place. Some mainstream companies also reported a commitment to inclusion within their education work (SDT and Scottish Ballet, for example). One school in particular, Pilrig Park,¹⁹ provides performance-based grounding for the whole curriculum for all of its disabled students (although this is seen as the exception rather than the rule). YDance, as the key youth dance provider for Scotland, includes work with special schools and with disabled students in its portfolio, although it does not have any other strands focusing specifically on disability.

However, the impact from these projects seems limited to recreational participation. Few examples were cited of disabled young people carrying forward their newly kindled

¹⁸ See Appendix 7.1 for interview notes.

¹⁹ See Appendix 7.1 for interview notes.

enthusiasm and translating that into a realised demand for training. This may not be the fault of the providers, but an indication of the real impact of barriers in society that combine to prevent disabled people from pursuing their interests.

At Dance Base, for example, provision is available to support disabled people in mainstream dance classes – training and support for tutors, budgets for access equipment, personal support for planning training/classes – but success has been limited.

What kind of barriers might people meet? Resistance to the idea of disabled people wanting to work in the arts is one of the most impenetrable barriers still in place. This attitude is still reported in parents and other family members and among school and care staff. It can be linked to notions of class, to the financial instability of a career in the profession, to the lack of role models in the field, and to lack of knowledge about access and options.

Even if someone wants to attend class to take their interest further, and a provider opens the door and provides access to the class, barriers still exist that may make the situation unworkable. These include lack of access to transport (which includes a lack of knowledge about or support for access to transport options), financial limitations, and lack of understanding of the culture of dance provision and the appropriate behaviours. Ellen Muir, Deputy Head at Pilrig Park, refers not just to the access needs of the individual, but also to the attitude of the family. Often it is the whole family that needs to have its expectations raised and its concept of what is possible opened up.

Within schools there are often barriers to dismantle too. There is some evidence that in mainstream schools disabled children may inadvertently miss out on dance activity through being 'selected out' by teaching staff, as dance is seen as being less relevant.

There has been no reported use of dance-specific support workers within Scotland – using people with an understanding and knowledge of dance to specifically support the direct involvement of a disabled person within a class.

4.3.2 Reflections on participation

Disabled people experience all the same barriers to dance as non-disabled people face, and also some different ones; therefore engaging disabled people in dance is not easy. Access and participation are influenced by class and poverty, and given that the annual cost of bringing up a disabled child is three times greater than that for a non-disabled child, and that an estimated 55% of families with disabled children are living in poverty or on the margins of poverty,²⁰ on financial grounds alone dance can be prohibitive. Add to that the lack of role models in dance, the image dance has of being elitist, issues in accessing information, in getting to opportunities and events, and in working with others – and the lack of disabled people engaged in dance becomes more understandable.

Working with disabled people in dance was referred to at the open meeting as providing 'new and exciting results', as being 'inspirational', and as producing innovation, so the need to open up opportunities is for the benefit of both sides, not solely to provide equality of access. What appears to be required is a change in perspective. As one of those who attended the open meeting phrased it: 'Don't try and fit "normal" mould – subvert the mould.' The aesthetic norms of dance need to be challenged, but to do this more disabled people have to be engaged, and participatory activities are the starting point for this.

²⁰ *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office, June 2004.

Many disabled dancers come to dance late in life, often at the age at which a non-disabled dancer is thinking about retiring. Although their increased maturity is often welcomed, the question still remains, how could they have been engaged earlier (although a number have acquired impairments and may not have been disabled when they were younger). How does a young disabled person get to 'see' himself or herself as someone who has a future in dance? There is a need to increase the engagement with all those people supporting or working with young disabled people to raise their expectations in relation to the arts in general and dance in particular, to enable information to cascade down to individuals themselves.

Access is still a major issue, and the perception of what 'access' is needs to be widened. In particular, training for dance support workers should be explored.

The vast majority of those who participate in dance do it for the benefits of participation, not as a route to training or performance. Disabled people are no different, and should not be pushed into further developments that are not what they themselves would wish. However, as many disabled people may not see performance as a possible destination for themselves in this field, there is a responsibility on all providers to ensure that all the possible catalysts for inspiration are used to open up that view. Equally, not all those who would like to 'be a dancer' have the raw talent or ability. This is not meant as a rejection of those who do not conform to the typical image of the dancer – dance is not about what limbs you have or how you learn; this is about performability, stage presence or stage awareness. Just because a person is disabled is not in itself a good enough reason to justify their involvement in dance training or performance.

5. Issues arising

At the discussion meeting, a number of issues were raised which also impact on the situation:

- labelling
- raising the profile
- the involvement of non-disabled people
- changing perspectives.

5.1 Labelling

This has already been touched upon in relation to the label 'disability arts', but other labels were equally contentious, such as 'professional' and 'community', which were seen as creating unnecessary divides between work, although they were felt by others to provide an important context to understanding work. Some disabled artists struggle to be seen as 'professional' if they are not paid for what they do (owing to issues with benefits, for example). Equity has recently removed its earnings criteria to enable learning-disabled actors to gain Equity cards, even if they are on benefits (and therefore not 'earning'), and so this situation may change.

5.2 Raising the profile

One response to the questions paper was, 'This shows there is a lot going on – but who is paying attention to the good work?' Within the arts, the profile of dance is low. Within dance, the profile of disability dance is low. Within the general population, the profile of disability dance is non-existent, unless there is a family relationship to someone directly involved in the scene. The profile of dance and disability work needs to be raised – in the dance sector and the arts as a whole, but also more widely, in the disability field and in the general population.

There are a number of ways this can be achieved and a number of models to draw upon. For example, from 2002 to 2006, the Foundation for Community Dance ran an initiative in England called Potential, which aimed to increase awareness of and access to high-quality professional development opportunities, coordinate networking, develop online information resources, and above all else to make a positive contribution to the perceptions and profile of disabled people dancing. A regular e-mail bulletin formed part of this process and was an effective way of raising the profile and degree of information exchange within the sector.

Some of those attending the open meeting felt that disability dance is seen in Scotland as 'other', that the national psyche pushes the perspective that 'we can't do that here'. Raising the profile of the end-results of work will not enable this to shift; the journey that people have taken, and the process of making work, need to be made visible too in order to recognise how it happens and develops.

5.3 The involvement of non-disabled people

The Disability Arts movement in the UK 20 years ago seemed to be calling for the removal of any non-disabled people engaged in Disability Arts work. There was a sense that disabled people would not be able to make it on their own terms until they were given control and autonomy. This position has softened, and non-disabled people are now welcomed into the movement, to work with, inspire and create alongside non-disabled people, although issues of power, balance and control are still common.

There is still a large political divide between different approaches to the work, in particular in relation to the role of carers and support staff. One camp calls for increased professionalisation of support, wanting trained dance support staff to offer a service informed primarily by dance knowledge rather than a care background. The other camp sees the involvement of those who are already in care positions supporting a disabled person as essential to the mix, and wants to emphasise the shared journey that both parties make.

Providing the differences between the approaches are understood, there is no reason why both should not exist. It should not be a competition between the two models.

5.4 Changing perspectives

At the open meeting there was a call for the tables to be turned. Currently, the involvement in the field is seen as the exception, with mainstream companies asked questions such as 'Have you ever thought about working with disabled people?' Underpinning this question is an assumption that they have not. By inverting this and other questions, the assumption could shift to one that assumed involvement. Simply by rephrasing the way in which disability dance is talked about, the process can become normalised and those less involved can become seen as the exception rather than the rule.

6. Recommendations

In the questions paper 20 questions were raised. The following recommendations are aimed at supporting the issues raised in that paper as well as in this report (see Appendix 7.2 for questions paper). They may not be surprising, and many have been used before in other contexts (for other artforms, or in England or other locations, for example), but there is no magic wand available to transform the sector, just hard work and determination.

At the open meeting, Janet Smith described her experience of becoming involved in disability dance in terms of crossing over a bridge – when you are on the first side, you don't realise what is possible, and the other side looks frightening. The bridge looks difficult to navigate, if indeed you are aware of it at all; why should you cross? Janet reflected that what she did not realise was how easy it is to cross over. And once you are over on the other side, you can't remember why you thought it was so hard.

The aim of these recommendations is to ensure that more people know about the bridge and are encouraged to cross.

The following recommendations for development have been developed to respond to those questions and the others arising from this research. They fall into five categories:

- Raising the profile
- Investing for long-term development
- Increasing access to advice, guidance, support and training
- Building bridges, sharing practice
- Advocacy

6.1 Raising the profile

There is a need to raise the profile both inside and outside the sector.

Recommendation 1

A mechanism should be created that enables those involved in work to share information, practice, evaluations and reports in order to make progress visible to the dance sector as a whole. At its most basic, this could be the formation of an e-mail group, where everyone circulates their own information to a determined number of others. At a more established level this could be an annual publication, a series of newsletters or a web resource.

Recommendation 2

An initial advocacy resource should be produced and widely disseminated that can serve to inspire and inform disabled people and others about the potential of disabled people's involvement in dance, and to capitalise on progress made to date. This could, for example, include interviews with key individuals in the field (disabled and non-disabled), show examples of work, map out the range of work and different approaches available, and so on. The usage and dissemination of such a resource are just as important as its creation. This would need to be a quality resource, ideally DVD or web-based in order to enable demonstration footage to be shown.

Recommendation 3

Support for a series of events such as seminars, conferences and festivals planned within the sector should be encouraged, providing they have both focus and clarity. One single event is unlikely to serve all the purposes required. There is a need to ensure that at such events a range of practice is seen/explored to avoid work being stereotyped. Festival

events ideally need to highlight the process behind the work (through media involvement or the provision of additional context events around performances) and may be used to open up critical debate by offering contrast and reflection. Rather than a number of one-off events being supported on an ad hoc basis, a progressive series of annual small events that leads to a larger intervention would be recommended.

Taken together, these three recommendations would serve to form an informal disability dance communications network and infrastructure. The creation of anything more formal, such as a disability dance agency, would serve to further entrench a ghetto mentality (more in the minds of those not involved, than those who are), and would not be useful. However, to achieve optimum benefit from the above, they would need to form a coordinated campaign, ideally administered by one agency or organisation.

6.2 Investing for long-term development

This work takes time. For those in receipt of project-by-project funding it is hard to make long-term plans for development. There are some key organisations and individuals undertaking work in Scotland who have had, but still need, significant investment in order to develop their work, for example, Claire Cunningham, Janice Parker/traveller, Janet Smith/SDT's disability work, and Indepen-Dance. Furthermore, there are few young disabled dancers coming through to create the next generation of work, or stepping stones between the levels of experience.

Recommendation 4

There should be sufficient investment in existing and planned disability dance activity to ensure long-term development. This investment should not be without debate and scrutiny, as it is essential that quality underpins both process and product. Funding should enable organisations and individuals to create and produce work but also to document and debate it widely in order to maximise the potential of the investment and impact. The current distinctions between project funding, flexible funding and foundation organisations are clear, but the strategic importance of this work needs to be recognised and rewarded.

Recommendation 5

There should be investment in young disabled dancers. Currently there is little progression for disabled young people with an interest in dance. The creation of an inclusive summer school, for example, specifically to develop their skills and provide them with role models and contacts within the sector is therefore recommended. This could build from a series of weekend activities if the current numbers of known disabled young dancers are small, but should become an annual feature for at least three to five years in order to yield results. Costs would be high to ensure access, but such an opportunity would also give an environment in which to trial other elements, such as the provision of dance support workers and so on.

Recommendation 6

Funding should continue for choreographic collaborations, either between companies or between individuals. Investment should be considered in a creative producer to seed innovative collaborations and new developments. This kind of work takes time to produce results and so, if a large-scale collaboration is to take place, for example, in 2012, then smaller-scale developmental projects need to begin now in order to ensure that work can be generated of a suitable scale and quality. The range of work should be broad, ensuring that Scotland is exposed to the widest range of styles and approaches. Where possible, local artists should be involved, in an apprenticeship/mentoring context if necessary, to build up the skills and experience base within the country.

6.3 Increasing access to advice, guidance, support and training

Mainstream dance agencies, providers and companies need support – in recognising their legal responsibilities, in locating best practice, in understanding the different approaches and options open to them. This may include the need to access Disability Equality Training, skill-specific INSET and other training, consultation and specialist advice, and to access information from within the wider disability arts sector. Some of this may be circumnavigated by sharing practice within the disability dance sector itself. Other needs may be met by utilising materials already in existence; however, the unique nature of the work means that people will need specific information quickly and coherently.

Recommendation 7

In Recommendation 1 it was noted that there is a need to ensure that relevant publications, guidance, footage and the areas of expertise of individuals are recognised, logged and made available to others. Following on from that, it is recommended that a series of two or three short seminars a year is supported for the sector (forming part of the series for Recommendation 3). where key individuals from within the sector are asked to lead discussions on key issues, such as sharing practice around specific impairment issues or the concept of adapting technique, in order to promote best practice and avoid the need for those involved in the sector to 'reinvent the wheel'. Relevant parties from other organisations or sectors should be invited to spread the learning. Materials from such days should help to form the body of knowledge for Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 8

SDT is interested in developing a placement for a disabled dancer and consultant within the company for 18 months over a three-year period. Such a development will have wide-ranging consequences for the practices of SDT and Dundee Rep, but could have wider impact if extended, either through extending the number of placements or the range of organisations that are directly involved. There are key agencies that could have a more significant role to play in the development of the disability dance sector in Scotland, such as YDance, who would be well placed to become involved in such an initiative. To be of most impact, this needs to link to organisations that do not have a significant history or experience in this work.

6.4 Building bridges, sharing practice

The bridges that need to be built or maintained are many, between individuals and companies, between the disability sector and the mainstream, between critics and the work, and between much of the work and wider audiences. The recommendations above should all serve to develop such bridges, and the following are suggested to enhance them and tackle some of the issues not yet covered.

Recommendation 9

A piece of research should be commissioned into the audiences for disability dance and the current level of critical debate. Who comes to see it, why and for what reasons? What encourages audiences, what turns them off? What are the barriers critics experience – quality, a different aesthetic, not having the language to describe what they see, sensitivity around impairment? This may be linked to other audience development initiatives undertaken by the disability arts sector as a whole, or be a stand-alone piece of work.

Recommendation 10

Each company or individual involved should be encouraged to develop a circle of 'critical friends' from both inside and outside the disability and dance sectors. Most people have an informal circle that they use to inform their own perspective. This recommendation is about formalising that practice and providing support for these individuals to come together after new pieces have been developed and shown, to constructively critique and discuss the work, supply new contexts and opinions, and challenge the culture of critical silence that has developed around some parts of the sector.

6.5 Advocacy

In order to develop the sector, mainstream dance training needs to open its doors to disabled dancers with all kinds of impairments – visible and hidden. All of the above are aimed at strengthening the sector itself, but will be short-lived if the dancers themselves (who wish to) do not gain access to the training they need at the level they require. Not all dancers go through three or more years of formal training, but many do. Legally, there is no reason why disabled dancers should not be able to access such provision. The Scottish Arts Council does not fund dance training and so is limited in the direct actions it can take in this regard. However, by ensuring that the initiatives it does take are well developed and publicised, and opened up to those involved in training, it can push for action.

Recommendation 11

That Scottish Arts Council should publicly advocate for the involvement of disabled dancers within all levels of dance training of all genres.

Recommendation 12

The Scottish Arts Council should publicly advocate for the involvement of dance within arts-based disability and health initiatives.

Appendix 7.1: Notes from interviews

Ellen Muir, Deputy Head, Pilrig Park School, Edinburgh

Pilrig Park School has 80 pupils, the majority of whom access many elements of their curriculum through a Theatre Arts Module. For example, they learn elements of mathematics by creating scale models for set designs, and dealing with budgets and receipts for props and costumes, and so on. The June performance, held each year at the Festival Theatre, is dance based and, as a result, the students study a great deal of dance – dance appreciation, performance and choreography.

Within each year group, a few exceptional and naturally talented dancers emerge. They may be striking because of their performance presence, or their originality of movement, or their ability to convey emotion to an audience. Last year, Alan Greig of X Factor Dance choreographed two such dancers in a duet.

Ellen Muir's concern is what happens to these dancers after they finish schooling at Pilrig Park aged 18 – how can they progress in the field of dance and continue their training and development?

Pilrig Park is a special school; all the students attending have educational support needs of some sort. Some may have Downs Syndrome, some may be autistic, and some may have social or emotional behavioural issues. Many students do not 'look' disabled and, when dancing, this is not an obvious feature of what they do (in one performance, where they wore masks, audience members remarked on their surprise on realising that the performers had impairments).

Some of the barriers for dancers from Pilrig Park are obvious, such as lack of access to written information, application forms or assessment processes (many of the students at Pilrig Park have access issues with literacy), or lack of access to finance (most of the families of students are on benefits). Others are less obvious. Traditional audition approaches are problematic. Few students have been able to access ballet training, or attend contemporary technique class on a regular basis, yet given an opportunity to perform their own choreography, these young dancers may surprise those involved in selection processes.

What adjustments would be necessary to continue the dance training of these individuals? Ellen Muir believes that within classes this might be less than would be expected, depending on the attitude of the teacher involved. If a dance tutor is experienced at offering a differentiated class, attending to the differing abilities and ways of learning of each individual student, then it is simply a matter of extending that process. If a tutor rigidly applies one method of learning only, and everyone is expected simply to follow, then these students would fail. One area where support would be required, however, is in working with the social aspect of attending such training. The families of most of these students would need considerable support with processing the idea of such training as well as with details such as organising transport and so on.

Ellen Muir is setting up a community dance group for adults to ensure that those leaving the school have at least one opportunity to continue their involvement in dance. She also works hard to ensure that connections are made when students are still in school that may support students once they have left. For example, one current student, aged 16, is soon to embark upon work experience and her college taster (one day a week attendance at college). Efforts are being made to ensure that both are dance-specific opportunities.

Janice Parker

The involvement of disabled people in dance has always been a central strand to Janice Parker's work: from her initial involvement with movement in a physical education context, through her work in hospital settings, to her current work with traveller, with Artlink Edinburgh and the Lothians, and with numerous choreographers and different organisations as one of the prime elements in her international work. Why? Because it's simply more interesting.

At the heart of her work, there is one guiding principle: the need to stay true to the art, to her own artistic vision for a project or piece. Janice embraces a wide range of styles, approaches, models and alternatives. She argues that they are all needed, they are all right, and that it is this diversity within what could be seen as a narrow field that is part of its attraction. What might be appropriate for work in one setting, or with one group of people, might not be appropriate for another place or set of people, as each group is made up of individuals, who are by their own natures different and who have their own experience and skills to contribute. Janice works responsively and in collaboration while at the same time serving the art.

Janice Parker dislikes most labels, boxes and containment. Does debating whether participants are 'learning-disabled people who dance' or 'learning-disabled dancers' inform the art? She has actively chosen not to become the artistic director of her own company, for instance, as she feels that her independence and the variety of her work portfolio feed her creative work in a way that working in one channel alone would not. Having to deliver on the non-creative elements of the work blocks her creativity.

One area where she feels clear distinction is needed, however, is around the divide between recreational participation and professional performance practice, though both are relevant and necessary. Not only is this about a respect for the performers, it is about providing an appropriate context for an audience in which to receive the work. She firmly believes that a number of the learning-disabled dancers with whom she has worked have the potential to move into professional practice. Lack of access to training, however, remains a barrier to this at present, as does the lack of consideration given to the real costs of inclusion, which can be considerable.

In 2005 Janice was awarded a Creative Scotland Award, which enabled her to take time away from teaching to concentrate on examining her relationship with dance and learning-disabled performers, particularly in relation to three international collaborators: Martine Pisani, Rosemary Lee and Cesc Gelabert. The resulting publication, *Take a Look at What is Actually There*, is provocative on many levels. It engages directly with the art itself, deliberately side-stepping discussion on the social barriers or social benefits for learning-disabled people involved in dance. It looks instead at the artistic richness of this vein of work; rather than asking 'how can dance include learning disabled dancers?' it looks at just a few of the many ways this work can inspire, engage and enhance dance practice at both theoretical and performance level. It highlights the heart of the work – what impacts can one individual have on another? Janice describes this as the third thing – when you take two different people, approaches, sets of experiences and put them together, what you get is a third thing, a new vein of performance: neither one, nor the other, and belonging equally to both.

What next? Janice is currently working with Royston Maldoom in Germany on large-scale intergenerational, inclusive work that includes learning-disabled dancers, those with

mental health issues and those with brain injury (who are grouped together in German social care practice), and she is mentoring and teaching professional dancers in Germany and in Austria in her practice. She is also working through Artlink Edinburgh and the Lothians with disabled people with multiple impairments and complex care needs (funded by the Scottish Arts Council as a pARTners project), and is part of the national public art reference group with the Scottish Arts Council.

Claire Cunningham

Claire Cunningham did not set out to be a dancer. Born with a physical impairment, her initial artistic ventures were in music, as a singer. When on stage, her desire was to keep as still as possible so that people just heard the song, rather than considered her body or the way she moved.

Claire is coming to the end of her one-year Creative Scotland Award for dance, one of the most prestigious awards any artist from Scotland can receive. It is a year that has seen her develop a rigorous personal training and development process, uniquely suited to her body (building body condition, stamina and body awareness), with mentor and key supporter Kally Lloyd-Jones; train in New York with Bill Shannon, the internationally renowned 'Crutchmaster', to develop her movement vocabulary and choreographic skills; and further develop her aerial skills with Jonathon Campbell.

Claire has undertaken training with CandoCo and created and toured work with Jess Curtis (USA) in England, Berlin and San Francisco (*Touch, Don't Touch, Catch and Under the Radar*) for both Blue Eyed Soul and Jess's own company. This work has also toured to Hong Kong and Taiwan, although, interestingly, has not yet been seen in Scotland.

Her movement potential was seen and encouraged by Linda Payne (with whom Claire works as Waterbaby, see below), and her first exploration of her movement capabilities was with Rodolfo Rivas Franco in Glasgow, when he was looking at the potential of using mobility equipment. Like all of Claire's other professional development opportunities that have led her to dance, this started as a coincidence – by picking up a brochure in which it was advertised and attending just two days of a five-day residency.

Claire is currently working on her first solo piece, to be premiered at the Dublin Fringe Festival, with support from, among others, Angus Balbirnie, and working on a physical piece with *Birds of Paradise* with choreographer Matt Foster. She hopes to showcase her aerial work in Scotland soon.

Waterbaby

Waterbaby is a collaboration between Linda Payne and Claire Cunningham to develop the first inclusive dance company in Scotland. Linda obtained professional development support from the Scottish Arts Council to experience at first hand different inclusive models for dance current in England (CandoCo, Blue Eyed Soul, StopGAP and Touchdown Dance), and the pair have created a schools tour, funded by Glasgow City Council, linking performance and workshop activities.

Linda is currently forming a junior dance company in association with Ashcraig School, Glasgow, and undertaking further work in Paisley.

Their first work, *Breathing Space*, premiered at City Moves in Aberdeen in September 2004, and their second piece, *Four Legged Friend*, premiered at Tel Aviv Opera House,

Israel, following an invitation to perform in the country's first inclusive arts festival in September 2005. *Four Legged Friend* is based upon friendship growing from a young age and explores how children are often left out because they are different. *Breathing Space* explores friendship at an older age and includes beautiful live vocals as an accompaniment.

Dance Base

Dance Base provides a wide-ranging regular programme of dance classes and workshops at a wide range of levels. It supports professional dancers through structured classes, residencies and workshops, programmes professional dance activity during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and runs an extensive outreach programme of dance activities.

The outreach programme has a specific element aimed at disabled young people (the pARTners programme run with pupils and staff in Edinburgh's special schools), and disabled people are also targeted through other strands (including work with those in mental health related settings, learning-disabled people, older people with age-related impairments and so on).

The outreach programme aims to provide sustained interventions of high quality linking excluded communities into the potential of Dance Base's whole programme, as well as introducing people to the idea of dance itself. This outreach activity seeks to break down barriers to dance, including those caused by outmoded concepts of entitlement and perceptions about whom dance is for. At the heart of this programme is the use of experienced professional dancers, who are individually nurtured to gain confidence and experience in working with a range of disabled people. The inclusion of disabled people within all aspects of the outreach programme is seen as fundamental to its success.

Disabled people are welcome to attend all aspects of Dance Base's activities and a small number of disabled people have successfully attended open and professional-level class activity. Teaching staff can access support and guidance (including the provision of dance support workers) through the Outreach Department.

Front of House staff at Dance Base are shortly to receive disability awareness training and there has been a photographic exhibition of the work of the Outreach Department aimed at raising their profile in November 2007.

Scottish Dance Theatre

In 2007 four international guest dancers – Caroline Bowditch, Michael King, Cornelia Kip-Lee and Daniel Daw, joined Scottish Dance Theatre's resident company. Each was selected for their skills, talent and professional performance ability – and because they were disabled dancers. The resulting piece, *Angels of Incidence*, toured as part of the company's spring tour to critical acclaim and obvious audience approval. This is the first time in the UK that a mainstream dance company has integrated dancers with such physical impairments into the main stage work of the company, rather than used disabled dancers to work on a site-specific or purely outreach-focused initiative.

The piece had a long gestation, dating back to Janet Smith's attendance at two conferences on disability and performance in 2001. Here she began to think about the potential within the company for working with disabled dancers. She also observed a simulation set up by Graeae Theatre Company (London) using disabled actors, and realised the additional strengths disabled people can bring to casting and performance.

An initial exploration took place with Adam Benjamin (who had previously worked with SDT to raise the confidence and skills base of the dancers, in order to support their education work with disabled people) and four disabled dancers. This led to a full funding application being created for the whole programme.

The piece has created a thirst for more in some of those it involved. Michael Popper, one of the dance tutors involved in the programme, is currently creating a fandango with Michael King, one of the dancers; another, Dan Daw, is applying for funds in his native Australia to work with Ballet Lavent, having been inspired by a piece choreographed for the same programme as *Angels of Incidence*. There is also the possibility of more creative work with Caroline Bowditch emerging. Caroline's training has also left its legacy on the staff of SDT and of the Dundee Rep.

The involvement of disabled dancers had an impact on the company's education work too, at all levels. The guest dancers were involved in all elements of the education programme, from running classes for dance professionals from throughout Scotland, to working on interactive lecture demonstrations and workshops in schools and colleges. The company was able to witness people's attitudes shift – attitudes about the capabilities and potential of disabled people, about their own definitions of dance, about the potential for inclusion. The guest artists were able to inspire young disabled people interested in dance by relating their own stories, and by showcasing their skills.

All the company members, from the dancers through to the members of the administrative team, now have a greater confidence and are more at ease working with disabled people within the full range of their work.

YDance

YDance (formerly Scottish Youth Dance) is the National Youth Dance Agency for Scotland. It has a stated aim to encourage all young people to get active and develop their creativity through dance and has a wide number of programmes designed to ensure that this aim is met, by working throughout Scotland at a variety of levels with young people, and also by the provision of CD-ROMs for dance activity. The team at base is the tip of the iceberg; YDance also employs 12 full-time dancers, and many more on a sessional basis, to work across the whole country.

The team at YDance has a number of different specialisms – working with young children, with young offenders, and so on. At the time of interview, no current staff member was seen as having a specialism in dance and disability (although project director Anna Kenrick, who joined the team in September 2007, has experience with both Magpie Dance and Anjali, both English companies specialising in working with learning-disabled dancers). Freelance practitioner Linda Payne is brought in for training work and for specific schools or group projects where disability is a key area.

YDance offers support to dancers working for the organisation who want to extend their knowledge around working with disabled people. Each dancer is offered continuing professional development sessions (two dancers have expressed a desire to explore movement therapy). All dancers wanting to work for the company have to attend induction sessions that cover aspects of inclusion.

Disabled people are often a part of YDance's work – a young deaf dancer was mentioned, and also one with an eating disorder – although there have been no specific projects

focusing on disabled dancers. There is clear potential for YDance to be more influential in the dance and disability field in Scotland, as they provide a bridge over which interested and talented young people can cross into vocational training. As yet, while ensuring that access is achieved, the company has not become involved in role modelling or taking more proactive steps towards encouraging disabled people to move forward in their engagement with dance. This is not due to a lack of interest, but a number of other competing priorities and interests.

There is potential in so many areas of YDance's work:

- employment – the potential to lead the way in relation to the employment of disabled dancers (dance teachers, practitioners and so on)
- dance development – through proactive involvement of disabled dancers in dance clubs, dance youth theatres, project Y and training events
- specific dance and disability projects – such as mirroring events like CandoCo's summer school, but for younger people
- training – training dance workers about inclusive practice
- dance support workers – establishing best practice in relation to the use of dance support workers in dance training for disabled dancers
- CD-ROMs – currently the *3, 2, 1 Go!* and *Any Body Can Dance* CD-ROMs (aimed at Primary 6 +) are being used by special educational institutions for a wider age range – perhaps a more age-appropriate one is required (or elements of the older ones could be adjusted to be used)?

Indepen-Dance

Indepen-Dance specialises in dance performance projects, predominantly for adults with learning disabilities and their carers. Working from a model established by Wolfgang Stange (founder of Amici Dance), the company works with learning-disabled people, their carers and other interested parties to create an inclusive model of dance open to all.

The company currently offers eight classes a week (seven of which are general classes and one of which is performance based). The company has 140 people attending regularly and a register of around 220 people in total. Everyone who attends sessions is encouraged to become involved – there are no spectators – and in addition to the classes, the company also runs a number of training activities, opening up Indepen-Dance to different ways of working and extending participants' knowledge. Currently training events are being led by Harriet Buchan, Wolfgang Stange, Dina 13 (from Germany) and Christopher Benstead.

The company produces one or two professional performances each year. Performances tend to follow a similar rehearsal model to Amici, where the whole performance group meets for a week of intense rehearsals with a noted choreographer before giving between one and three performances of a piece, although this model is changing. There has been some work focusing on fewer dancers (for example, a series of four duets for four dancers) and some work on encouraging learning-disabled dancers to become involved in choreography.

Like many companies that involve learning-disabled performers, payment is an issue (paying learning-disabled performers can have a negative impact on benefits status). The company currently makes donations to performers. Company members are able to input into the company through regular user group meetings (three times a year), when all who

attend are asked what they would like to see more of and what they like and don't like about the company.

Indepen-Dance has an ambitious vision for the future, which it clearly articulates. It would like to be involved in or host a festival of disability dance, involving up to eight companies engaged in such work from across Europe, focusing on companies with whom they have a working relationship. The event would be an opportunity to share working practice and raise the profile of the work, as well as an opportunity to create work on an international level. The company has also begun working with younger children with learning disabilities, and is forming a youth dance company based on this work.

In time, Indepen-Dance would like to be an exemplar in Scotland, providing both a physical space and a national focus for dance and disability in the country.

Michael Popper and Michael King

Michael Popper met Michael King when they were both working on the Scottish Dance Theatre piece, *Angels of Incidence*. As well as developing a strong working relationship, Michael Popper was interested in the approach that Michael King brought to his work, and bid for funds to enable the two to explore work inspired by the fandango together – a dance characterised by virtuosity, posturing, competition and male sexual prowess.

The work they are engaged in is emphatically not about disability, to the extent that if when they view work back on the camcorder they use for this purpose, the work seems to have 'disability' in focus, that work is removed from the process. For a disabled dancer, the opportunity to engage in work not linked to disability is a rare one. (When asked if it was interesting to be asked to work on a piece not focusing on disability, King gave the down-to-earth response: 'Fuck me, yes.')

The pair make an interesting contrast – the pragmatic, northern King and the more intellectualising, dancier Popper. Both are very 'male' dancers – with Popper's work based on solid, contemporary technique and King's learnt and adapted styles with a movement vocabulary drawn from nature, animal movement and adapted class technique. Currently they are engaged in an exploration that may lead to the development of a full piece, or indeed a dance film, as some aspects may be best captured in this medium.

The two are also engaged in running classes for other dancers. Instead of running a class aimed at non-disabled people in which disabled people have to adapt the exercises to be able to 'fit', the pair were involved in inverting the principle. By running a class aimed at, for example, wheelchair users, the non-disabled dancers would be the ones forced to find the adaptation. This process would therefore ensure that not only did they understand the principles behind adaptation of technique, but also that they had experience of trying it out at first hand.

Although the work they are currently engaged in is being led by Michael Popper, he is clear that it is only possible through the partnership the two dancers have created. He may have created the blueprint for the project, but the machine for the work is comprised of two parts, and both dancers inextricably own these.

Maggie Singleton, Arts Development Officer, Glasgow

Maggie Singleton is one of the Arts Development Officers for Glasgow City Council and, as such, is well connected to a wide range of dance and disability activity within the city –

Indepen-Dance, Waterbaby, Claire Cunningham, Tramway and more. Maggie Singleton's own background is in dance and it now provides a significant element of her delivery programme.

Glasgow City Council supported Waterbaby to undertake a schools tour, linking dance workshops with disability awareness sessions, and also ensures that access and inclusion are central to all dance activity undertaken on behalf of the local authority. This is partly in response to the Disability Discrimination Act, which requires public bodies such as local authorities to go beyond anti-discrimination measures to proactively ensure that equality of opportunity is created, but it is also linked to Maggie Singleton's (and other staff's) commitment to principles of equality and inclusion.

All dance workers working for Glasgow are expected to have a similar approach to inclusion, and they provide awareness-raising activities to ensure that this is so. Maggie feels that over the past ten years there has been a shift in attitudes, thanks to the dedicated work of such companies as Indepen-Dance, who have challenged misconceptions and shown the capabilities of disabled dancers.

There is a sense that the 'dance community' in Glasgow has changed in recent years. In the past it may have been easier to draw all elements of such a community together to discuss subjects and gain a consensus. Perhaps because of the increased membership of other communities (as is provided by communication mechanisms such as the internet), there seems to be a lessening of geographic communities. Maggie commented on the important function of conferences in order to inspire others. Ten years ago a national three-day conference/festival in Scotland called 'Dance for All Abilities' drew together a range of practice and made a significant difference.

Appendix 7.2: Dance and Disability in Scotland questions paper

1. Introduction

Janice Parker's report on her Creative Scotland Award is called *Take a Look at What is Actually There*, and in many ways, that could also be the title of this questions paper. In Scotland there is a large amount of activity in relation to disability and dance – in some cases, activity that is more progressive than that in England, certainly more progressive than in many international contexts. But much of it is unknown, uncelebrated and unconnected. Where groundbreaking activity is occurring it is not always being recognised for what it is, and thus fails to make the most of its existence to inspire and involve others.

There is much activity, but it does not form a seamless progression route for a disabled person wanting to engage in a career in dance. There are significant gaps around training and in relation to access to information about the dance communities in Scotland.

This short paper hopes to highlight some of the key questions that have emerged from a short period of research I have undertaken for the Dance Department of the Scottish Arts Council. My name is Jo Verrent, and I am a disability arts specialist living in England. My background is in the performing arts and I have been working on increasing access to dance and drama training in England since 2001.

I have given each question raised in this paper a letter (a to t) to aid people in responding (either at the meeting on 8 November or by e-mail to joverrent@adainc.org).

2. Starting points

The research leading to this paper has been short and intense. There will be omissions and errors. The point of opening up the findings so far through this paper, and the meeting in November, is to make the dance community in Scotland an integral part of this process, not just people who have been consulted as part of it.

This paper is deliberately short and provocative. Where you disagree, let me know. Where there is activity I have missed, fill me in. Where you have plans that address some of my concerns, share them so that as a sector, a more sustainable vision for dance and disability in Scotland can be created.

From across the whole of the research, a number of key interlocking questions have emerged for me:

a. Inspirational individuals inspiring individuals

Much of the work in this field is driven by individual people, even when they are within companies – people committed to making a difference through the work they deliver, promote or develop. Yet often they, and their work, remain hidden, only on show to 'those in the know'. How can these people and their practice be highlighted so that they can inspire a wider range of people?

b. Small steps, long journey

Many individuals and organisations are on the same journey towards widening perceptions around inclusion in dance. How can all the steps that all the different organisations and individuals are taking be linked so that everyone can see the journey and the importance of their part in it, no matter how small their steps are?

c. Labels

It is known that labelling work 'disability arts' can at best distract and at worst turn away potential audiences.²¹ How can work be profiled to achieve the highlighting and linking mentioned above, without switching audiences off?

d. Beyond recreation

Getting disabled people to engage in dance beyond a recreational/participatory level seems key. There is much practice occurring at this level and yet few professional disabled dancers emerging at the other end – what are the missing rungs on the ladder of opportunity?

e. Taking time

It took Janet Smith eight years from an initial provocation to produce *Angels of Incidence*. How can funders support development that may take time and need to grow at a pace taken from the work, not from a funding application? How can other practitioners be encouraged to open up their tracks on this journey, so that others can be inspired not just by the end results, but also by the journey itself?

f. Confidence or skills?

Does working with disabled people in dance require a separate set of skills or it is about gaining a confidence in an approach to the work? Is it a 'special' area, best dealt with by 'specialists'? Are there elements of the work that can be undertaken by anyone?

g. Who 'counts' as disabled?

Disabled people make up 20% of the population of the UK, and that includes a wide range of people, the largest percentage of whom have hidden impairments. How can we ensure that all disabled people are included within dance – those with hidden impairments, sensory impairments, physical impairments, learning difficulties, mental health related needs and complex care needs?

3. Findings

The findings reported are a snapshot of provision – they are not meant to be a definitive list of activity in Scotland, more to illustrate the levels of work occurring under each heading. The final report for this research (due December 2007) will include a more detailed listing of findings.

Recreational and entry-level provision

There is considerable access to recreational and entry-level participatory practice for disabled people in Scotland. All the mainstream companies and organisations contacted are engaged in delivering some aspect of provision aimed at engaging disabled people (by mainstream I mean those which do not have a specific disability remit).

This includes (but is not exclusive to):

- Scottish Dance Theatre – within their educational and outreach activity, heightened during the *Angels of Incidence* tour, but occurring regularly beforehand too.
- Dance Base – considerable strands of educational and outreach activity aimed specifically at Special Schools, the mental health sector and other disability-related groups, and inclusion within mainstream classes possible and welcomed.
- Glasgow City Council Arts Development – all work with strong inclusion elements, and much targeted work aimed at reaching disabled groups and individuals (including

²¹ Audiences London research 2005–6.

funding of Waterbaby to undertake a schools tour, thereby taking a disabled dancer into schools in a role-modelling capacity).

- Pilrig Park Special School, Edinburgh – has performing arts as a core element in their school programme, using dance performance to engage their students and to support delivery of other subjects.

h. How do we ensure this level of activity is sustained and maintained?

Training

Access to vocational training for disabled dancers is less easy to evidence. If a disabled person wants to move beyond recreational provision, to consider dance vocationally, there are two routes available – via mainstream dance training or via specialist provision for disabled dancers. There appears to be a small number of specific groups where disabled dancers can work together and extend their knowledge and practice (for example, with Indepen-Dance, for learning disabled dancers) and a lack of access for those who wish to train in a mainstream environment. By tracing the training routes for a small number of disabled dancers performing in the UK in 2004, research in England showed that most wanted to progress through mainstream training but had found more success through disability-related opportunities, particularly through association with specific companies, due to the barriers they experienced in accessing mainstream provision.²²

Access to formal dance training in general is an issue in Scotland. To progress to full-time vocational study, most students have undertaken considerable advanced training in previous years. The *Audit of Specialist and Advanced Dance Training Provision to Under 16s in Scotland (2003)*²³ audited private dance schools, secondary schools, further education colleges and other specialist dance training providers (such as companies and organisations) and found many issues associated with the lack of advanced training for dance in general, and also that many of those who do gain such advanced training then go on to continue that training in England and not in Scotland. The study states, 'Furthermore, and although not a particular area of our study, the Scottish Arts Council would need to consider access to advanced training for those from ethnic minority and young people with special needs or a disability. We have not sampled current students to determine the current levels but would speculate that these groups are under represented.'

There appears to be a clear divide between those who feel that a specific skill set is needed to include disabled dancers within mainstream training, and those who feel that it is a matter of confidence on the part of the teacher and of extending the principles of differentiation and adaptation which should already be present in any training.

Although some success has been reported in England, it is still confined to a small number of educational institutions. For example, the dance team at Coventry University²⁴ has developed experience and expertise in teaching and learning methodology in this field by working closely with disabled dance students on their course,²⁵ and by training learning support assistants to work with them.²⁶ For those with some impairments – such as asthma, dyslexia and anorexia – access to provision can be simple.²⁷ For those with

²² See note 11 above.

²³ See note 10 above.

²⁴ See note 12 above.

²⁵ See note 13 above.

²⁶ See note 14 above.

²⁷ See note 15 above.

physical and sensory impairments, adjustments can appear harder to make (although in practice this is not always the case).

Some renowned disabled dancers have only been able to access training on community courses. For example, David Toole, an international dance performer, trained at LABAN, gaining a professional diploma in community dance, but was not able to gain access to other programmes at the time he wished to train.

In England, a concerted effort and a significant level of resources over five years have seen the numbers of disabled people involved in the DADA scheme²⁸ increase more than fourfold, although levels are still under half the most conservative estimate of disabled people within the population.²⁹ For dance, these awards are available for training only in ballet and musical theatre. (There are no longer any contemporary dance providers offering Dance and Drama Awards.)

Some of the 'stepping stones' to vocational training, such as summer schools and training programmes, have a key role to play in ensuring that disabled people gain both the skills and confidence to move forward into a career in dance. Some providers are unsure of the levels of disabled people attending such provision, as monitoring is not in place.

i. How can disabled people gain access to mainstream dance training?

j. How can they gain access to the 'stepping stones' that lead to such training?

k. How can those disabled people who wish to, gain disability-specific training at, and leading to, a vocational level?

Professional development

Within the disability and dance sector, it is recognised that many disabled dancers come to dance as adults. David Toole, one of CandoCo's key dancers for many years, only began dancing at 24, for instance. This was also evident in *Angels of Incidence*: the four disabled dancers employed by Scottish Dance Theatre were all older than most of their other company members. This is partly assumed to be linked to a lack of access to training for younger disabled people and partly to the assumption, even in the minds of disabled people themselves, that 'disabled people don't dance'.

This can mean that individuals often develop and craft their practice outside the formal training routes. Claire Cunningham is an example of this. Claire's progression in dance has been individually tailored with the support of many organisations and individuals. Her Creative Scotland Award meant that she was able to continue and extend this bespoke approach. I know of no disabled dancer in England who has been awarded such a prestigious and high-level award by its key funding body to date.

Professional development for non-disabled people working in the disability dance sector, such as dance practitioners Janice Parker and Linda Payne, is also essential, and appears well supported, both by the Scottish Arts Council and through companies such as Independent Dance. In order to ensure the opening up of practice in training institutions, the influence and involvement of knowledgeable, committed practitioners will be essential.

²⁸ See note 16 above.

²⁹ See note 17 above.

l. Scotland has a good reputation for ensuring the professional development of disabled artists and those concerned with disability arts practice – how can this be sustained and developed?

Choreographic/artistic practice

Within disability dance there is a huge range of approaches and aesthetics emerging. Some work is integrated, some features only dancers with one type of impairment (such as companies of learning-disabled dancers), some companies work with non-disabled dancers, and so on. Traditionally, almost exclusively non-disabled people have choreographed disability dance, although this is starting to change. Within Scotland, some of this wide range of approach and aesthetic can be seen in the work of Indepen-Dance, traveller and Waterbaby. The involvement of mainstream dance companies and practitioners in this field (such as X Factor and Scottish Dance Theatre) is exciting, and shows maturity in the mainstream yet to be seen in England.

m. How can Scotland best capitalise on some of the most progressive steps it has taken in regard to profiling high-quality disability dance work?

n. How can Scotland ensure that disabled dancers and would-be dancers have a chance to appreciate the wide range of approaches and aesthetics in which they could develop?

o. How can disabled dancers develop and display choreographic skills in the future?

Programming

Many venues appear to programme disability dance. Bill Shannon should move to Scotland given the frequency of his work appearing on programmes! There seems to be no resistance to programming work including disabled performers providing it is interesting material delivered with quality. Much work programmed in this field is international or comes from England (including Amici, CandoCo and Touchdown Dance). It is interesting that, apart from her education work, Claire Cunningham has performed in England, Ireland, Berlin, San Francisco, Hong Kong and Taiwan, although not yet in Scotland.

Through this short research intervention, the existence/potential for three solo/small group performances were found (Michael King with Michael Popper, Claire Cunningham and one emerging from Janice Parker's work). How might these be developed and shown?

p. How can the prevalence of programming be highlighted to inspire?

q. How can programmers support emerging Scottish disability dance work to gain profile and audiences in line with its development?

Audiences and critics

Audience response to disability dance is naturally as varied as the range of disability dance work available. There are some strong 'critical friends', such as Mary Brennan at *The Herald*, who report sensitively on the work, although there are others who still equate disabled dancers with 'ugliness' or poor quality.

The *Scottish Arts Council Profile of Dance Attenders in Scotland* (October 2002)³⁰ does not mention disabled people in relation to either dance product or dance audiences, but does define a distinct set of desired characteristics associated with dance by attenders and non-attenders, all of which can be seen to impact on disability dance:

³⁰ By Heather Maitland and Tim Baker, available from the Scottish Arts Council website.

- Something for all the senses, offering a combination of live music, visually attractive sets, costumes and the skill and physicality of the dancers, emotion communicated by the dancers to the audience and some kind of narrative element (and this can simply be a sense that the piece is about someone or something). Participants felt strongly negative if an element of the whole was missing.
- The power and physicality of dancers. They feel disappointed when the dancers on stage do not achieve something physically out of the ordinary. Attenders and non-attenders want to feel impressed by this 'wow' factor and choose not to attend when the publicity material fails to convince them that the event will deliver it.
- The skill, talent and grace of the performers. They were often disappointed and saw dance that did not achieve this as 'amateurish'.

r. How can critics and audiences be introduced to some of the more complex issues around access and aesthetics in order to better appreciate disability dance in Scotland?

Inclusion in the dance community

Surprisingly, even in Edinburgh and Glasgow, information exchange appears to be patchy. Often individuals reported finding out about classes, performances or opportunities by coincidence rather than through traditional information routes.

Disability-related performances tend to be advertised without emphasising their disability-relatedness, which is in line with findings in London (audiences like/are interested by the work when they see it but tend to be 'turned off' by the idea of disability arts if work is badged in this way). However, this can then impact negatively on their potential for developing a disability dance informal infrastructure and acting as inspiration.

s. How can traditional information routes for information within dance communities be opened up to include disabled dancers?

t. How can an informal disability dance infrastructure be created and supported?

Appendix 7.3: Individuals and organisations who responded to the research

Birds of Paradise: Robert Softley

City Moves: Ruth Kent

Dance Base: Morag Deyes, Janet Dick, Joanne Thomson, Chris Wilson, Pamela Day

Dance House: Karen Wood, Sheila McCubbin

Foundation for Community Dance: Ken Bartlett,

Glasgow Arts Development: Maggie Singleton, Kirsty White

Indepen-Dance: Karen Anderson and Claire Mitchell

Irky Pirky: Karen Wood

Pilrig Park School: Ellen Muir

Plan B: Frank McConnell

The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama: Professor Maggie Kinloch

Scottish Arts Council: Susan Hay, Maggie Maxwell

Scottish Ballet: Cindy Sughrue, Ailsa-Mary Gold

Scottish Dance Theatre: Janet Smith, Amanda Chinn, Michael Popper, Dawn Hartley

Telford College, Edinburgh, The Centre for Professional Dance Training: Winifred Jamieson

Touchdown Dance

Tramway: Steve Slater

Waterbaby: Linda Payne, Claire Cunningham

West Lothian Council: Emma Jones

West Lothian Youth Theatre, Salmagundi Theatre Company: Rachel Ostridge

X Factor: Alan Greig

YDance: Yvonne Young

Independent dance artists/facilitators

Lesley Craigie

Claire Cunningham

Michael King

Janice Parker

Sharon Took-Zozaya

The above were located through desk research and via existing contacts. An additional 43 contacts were made who did not respond to information about the research programme.

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