

Next Choreography Evaluation and Research: Year 2 Report



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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY of YEAR 2 REPORT:
Next Choreography Evaluation and Research
Kerry Chappell, University of Exeter: September 2016**

This report documents the Year 2 evaluative research outcomes of the Siobhan Davies Dance (SDD) *Next Choreography* project, as requested by the funder, Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF).

Next Choreography is a 3-year young people's project which aims to develop their knowledge, skills, insight and experience of different choreographic processes informing their artistic practise, engagement in the arts and career pathways. *Next Choreography* offers 3 different cohorts of young people (2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17) a one-year programme over three terms, each term with a different focus progressively building their understanding, developing their experiences and applying their learning and skills. The 2015-16 course for 12 participants included 35 practical sessions led by the Facilitator with input during 11 sessions from guest artists including 4 choreographers, a programmer/curator, and an art critic. The group attended 4 performance events and exhibitions within the course. The year culminated in the Next Choreography Festival shaped by participants who were mostly from Greater London, between 14 and 21 years old with an interest in dance and/ or choreography. Professional development for the Facilitator was integrated into the project. While the same Facilitator (Charlotte Spencer) was in post in Year 1 and 2, a new Facilitator is taking over the role for Year 3 (Amy Bell). SDD's staffing has been restructured in this period with course management carried out by the returning Learning & Participation Producer and new Programme Director.

The project was conceptualised to be impactful on: individuals and communities; the organisation; and policy and practice. This Evaluation/Research report details Year 2 achievements against the desired PHF outcomes. During Year 2, tracking of the main measures of success has also continued in preparation for reporting on all three years' data in 2017/18.

The evaluation and research used a mixed quantitative and qualitative methodology. Quantitative methods included: questionnaires (refined over time), attendance tracking across sessions/events, uptake of opportunities etc. Qualitative methods were used for data collection, which focused in a more in depth way on the lived experiences of three young people and the Facilitator, e.g. semi-structured interview, WHC wheels, reflective diary, observation schedules. All data collection was subject to ethical permissions as sanctioned by UoE. For Year 2 Outcomes data was drawn from the appropriate tools in the above list. The SDD team led on quantitative analysis and write up for Outcomes 1, 2 and part of Outcome 3, and the UoE team contributed to Outcome 3.

Outcome 1 Findings

Establishing YAG: The Youth Advisory board was formed in October 2015 with all NC 2014/15 members invited, with well over the 30% stipulation of participants joining the group (69% of the 2014-15 cohort), as well as other young people with SDD connections. As intended, the Youth Advisory Group (YAG - renamed by members) met once a month aside from holiday periods. The YAG were asked for input into the development of SDD youth and wider programmes, suggesting improvements to strengthen and develop youth activities; pitching ideas for future projects and sharing research and experiences they have had of SDD's programme.

YAG Programme: The establishment of a Youth Advisory Group ensured that young people's ideas continue to inform the development, programming and organisational decision making, enabling SDD to develop a regular activities programme which is relevant and exciting to young people. In Year 1 of YAG (Next Choreography Year 2) the group informed the development of a key piece of the Next Choreography Festival; The Young Artists Feedback Forum (YAFF - a slot for one young person to share their work within each and every YAG meeting). In consultation with the Next Choreography 2015-16 cohort this led to the creation of a Young Artists Feedback Forum within the festival for which 5 young artists out of 13 applicants were selected. SDD staff and artists have attended YAG meetings to give members an insight into career options and pathways available within the arts.

YAG & Communications: The YAG also met periodically with the Communications team during 2015-2016 to re-visit the Communications team baseline and outline their current understanding of marketing for young people, to gather feedback and direction from the YAG and inform SDD's communications strategy. This included informing SDD about new venues for advertising, trending social media hashtags and new popular apps among young people. As a consequence, SDD sent print to 14 new venues, set up a profile on the app Periscope and launched a cross-app social media campaign for the course and festival. The effectiveness of the overall Communications strategy is reviewed by monitoring the number of young people engaging with SDD. 324 more young people (under 21 years) attended a class, performance or event than in 2014-15. The percentage of building visitors under 21 rose from 4.57% in 2014 to 6.96% in 2015-16. SDD have achieved the outcome in Year 2 of 200 new young people attending SDD. In exchange for YAG's communications input, the SDD Communications Manager delivered a YAG session to support members to talk about their work and integrate audience communications into their creative process. It is worth noting that SDD is

reviewing the definition of 'young people' as 'under 21' this year in light of learning from audience demographics, with the wish to change this definition to 'under 25'.

YAG Attendance and Future: 69% of the 2014-15 *Next Choreography* cohort took part in YAG. 100% of the cohort living in London took part in at least one of the YAG meetings. 33% took part in two meetings, 22% took part in four meetings. Members of the YAG that were not part of *Next Choreography* 2014-15 attended 33%, 50%, 63% and 100% of meetings respectively. YAG attendance fluctuated, with one member attending all meetings but most averaging 2.4 meetings each out of 8. On average meetings were attended by 4.1 YAG members. Attendance was a challenge due to members' other commitments; YAGs early agenda being too undefined to excite members (although it picked up once the YAFF formed); and SDD staffing changes which have now settled. Addressing all these challenges, from September 2016 the YAG will reconvene for 8-10 meetings annually, aiming to grow, with 12 participants from Year 2 invited to join to take the group to 26 with the intention of more overall members meaning greater weekly average attendance, greater agenda autonomy for the group, as well as stronger relationships with SDD staff.

Outcome 2 Findings

In 2015/16 98 participation opportunities were forwarded to both *Next Choreography* cohorts from arts organisations, artists, and institutions (many from the Young People's Programmers Network and Dance Educators Group). 86 opportunities were taken up by one or more participants, 87% of the total opportunities. These opportunities included work experience at Sadlers Wells, a film commission from ICA, a Big Dance Internship, a Young Associate's programme at Ovalhouse, and a Choreographer position at Ignition Festival. Some opportunities were created directly by SDD, such as paid office-based project administration support for the *Next Choreography* Festival and Primary School Programme, and a Front of House position. At least 56% (potentially many more) of the two groups took up opportunities that SDD signposted or set up, although uptake was difficult to track. The 2015-16 group have been briefed to notify SDD as and when they take up future opportunities to address this.

Outcome 3 Findings

Evaluation Tools: As intended, across the staffing handover at SDD, through ongoing communication, SDD and UoE have continued to develop an effective partnership which allows for continued refining of evaluation methods. Year 2 methods changes have included: refined questionnaire questions to focus more clearly on outcomes, questionnaire data collection twice a year instead of three times

(time/funding constraints); participants' one to one sessions, including creativity wheel completion, twice a year instead of three times (apart from the three case study participants) as two collection points proved ample; SDD Learning & Participation Producer conducting interviews and some observations with case study participants with UOE support ensuring SDD staff are developing evaluation skills.

Dissemination: SDD and UOE have begun to identify opportunities, including digital possibilities for Year 3 (e.g. Cultural Learning Alliance, Arts Professional and Whole Education) to disseminate learning from the project including a) the pedagogy, b) the impact of *Next Choreography* on participants and c) the impact on the organisation, including the ways in which SDD programmes and communicates with young people. The Year 1 Executive Summary has been shared on SDD's website, and the overall Year 1 Findings have been shared at 3 key events for those who work with young people in dance: National Dance Teachers Association (NDTA) Conference research strand (SDD team, London); artists working with young people within the Big Dance 2016 South London Hub (Charlotte Spencer, London) and the dance and the Child international conference (UoE team, Copenhagen, Denmark). Questions and feedback from all three were constructively critical and showed participants taking key points away with them. The UoE team were then asked to submit an article for the daCi conference proceedings to be published online in autumn 2016.

The project pedagogies, their value and impact upon participants and Siobhan Davies Dance, will continue to be disseminated to the youth arts sector following the final year, when data from across the 3 years has been analysed and reported. SDD and UoE will create an electronic report which will be accessible to professionals working within the youth arts sector, alongside a practical and discussion based seminar to share project outcomes. Members of the Pan London Dance Partnership CYP, the Dance Educators Group (DEG), The Young Person's Programmer's Network (YPPN), The Dance Training & Accreditation Partnership (DTAP), and One Dance UK Children & Young People Expert Panel will be invited to this event.

Recommendations for 2015/16

There are no significant changes taking place to the course content or structure in Year 3; our evaluation of the course suggests the content and approach are engaging participants more deeply and broadly in the arts and choreography, as intended. A set of nuanced recommendations are however, offered here:

Recommendations under Strand A (Impact on the Individual) include: 1) quickly solidifying the YAG programme; 2) allocating funds to YAG in Year 3 to realise their plans for projects; 3) continued tracking of opportunity uptake; 4) further refining the Questionnaire to improve data capture about understanding of choreographic tools and approaches; 5) supporting the new Facilitator with information about recent pedagogical developments whilst enabling her to develop her own approach.

Recommendations under Strand B (Impact on Organisation) include: 6) SDD Communications team continue meeting with YAG for their input on attracting a younger SDD audience; 7) SDD continue responding to YAG's suggestions for the young people's programme and actively seek funding within the organisation to realise these thereby reinforcing young artist's voices within SDD; 8) SDD and UoE to capture exiting facilitator's learning and pedagogy in 6 months' time; 9) SDD and UoE to support new facilitator to reflect on and capture her learning and pedagogy in a complementary methodology to that used in Year 1 and 2.

Recommendations under Strand C (Impact on policy and practice): 10) SDD and UoE continue to seek dissemination opportunities and secure these for the end of Year 3; 11) SDD and UoE share Executive summary for Year 2 online, and seek additional online forums.

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