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a new artist programme

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MATERIAL

Winter 2018 – Spring 2019, vol. 1

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SIOBHAN DAVIES DANCE

WELCOME

By Siobhan Davies

Welcome to our first issue of *Material*, a new magazine about dance and choreography.

The last couple of years have seen me, my colleagues and artists begin to rethink what we do and how we do it at Siobhan Davies Dance. We wish to continue to be an artist-led organisation but with a range of artistic voices and enquiries leading the way. This publication is one way we can share what we are up to and enrich the dialogue in our sector.

I am witness to an incredible group of dance thinkers and makers and *Material* brings together several of these voices into one space. The content of each issue is connected to our programme and what others bring to us. We will need to reconsider our working methods as an organisation using both our imaginative energy as well as addressing the realities of the social and economic circumstances we are amongst. It is artists' enquiries that will gradually help us to build up evidence about the present and future of experimental dance.

I hope that *Material* will reveal some of the practices we are developing with artists and provide insight into our evolving organisation and our wider field.

We look forward to your feedback!

This Issue: Organisational Choreography

Organisational Choreography is Siobhan Davies Dance's organisational learning and change process using the flexibility, precision and creativity of choreographic thinking and making as tools. We are doing this by experimenting with new ways of working with artists and observing together what we are learning from our work. This issue begins to articulate what dance and choreography are doing now and some of the ways we are working with them towards a sustainable future for us and our art form.

DANCE IS...

A response from our 2018–19 CONTINUOUS artist, Lucy Suggate.

"Dance is the art form of the 21st century." This accidentally slipped out of my mouth one day.

At the time of slippage, I remember being preoccupied with a very bleak version of a moving future, that we are all being coerced via irresponsible capitalism, data and innovation into some kind of perilous sedentarianism. I was and I still am beginning to acknowledge and reluctantly accept my own artistic extinction or worse, becoming fully instrumentalised. And that any artistic desire, sense or reasoning is in fact entangled in a bureaucratic stranglehold. It would appear that THE SYSTEM (a series of inflexible, badly designed and poorly executed frameworks and conservative perspectives – outdated, expensive, complex and unsupportive) HAS BEATEN ME, leaving only the stale taste and reoccurring question of 'what's the point?'

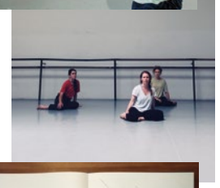
So I made the statement "Dance is the art form of the 21st century" as a contextual jibe at the 20th century, the birthplace of modern dance, of more iterations of white privilege, patriarchy and dancing obedience.

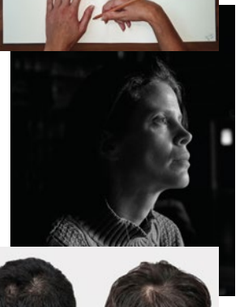
I said dance is the art form of the 21st century because dancing continues at its core to be disruptive and un-capitalistic in spirit. Dancing offers a glimmer of hope, an expanded way of being, multiple realities and everyday transcendentalism.

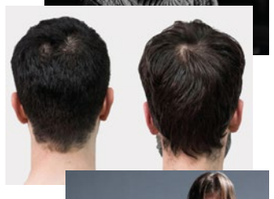
I said it because I see dance artists metabolising complexity and grace, I see them transforming time, space and themselves and others, I see them oscillating between advancement and disaster and see them turning scarcity into abundance. I see them changing narratives, I see them being on the side of humanity or maybe humility. That's why I said "Dance is the art form of the 21st century."

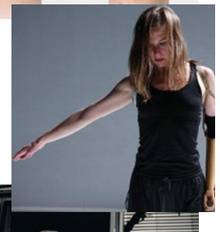
OPEN CHOREO-GRAPHY

This programme gives artists residency and performance opportunities at Siobhan Davies Studios that also invite wider audiences to experience and be part of the making process through open rehearsals, discussions and workshops. Here's what you can expect, in the artists' words.









SPRING PERFORMANCE EVENING

Jane Mason: Night flying, in collaboration with David Williams, draws on ideas related to deep time, the night sky and landscapes of being.

Igor and Moreno: Import lease gold craftsman point cemetery restrain fund right delicate senior sword cattle veteran trustee.

Annie Hanauer: I'm interested in human connection, the balance between unity and individuality, and approaching my practice with a sense of humour.

Zoi Dimitriou: Passing of images, intimate structures, objects that meet their shadow, stories told as to not disappear, dead and un-dead.

AUTUMN PERFORMANCE EVENING

Ben Ash: Wayfaring pathway. Landscape. Collapse. Left. Taken. It's relational. Balance. Anthropomorphic tendencies. Gathered. Encounter. Memory. Material objects. Used.

Lewys Holt: I work with improvised dance and text, a bit like stand-up. I make solos that are kind of about anxiety.

Eleven Farrer House: Eleven Farrer House is a home, creating a sustainable and flexible authorship environment. Collective exchange provides ground for investigative practice and actualisation of works.

Vicky Malin: Investigating our hands provides a particular frame (way) to reflect on each other's experiences, stories and desires.

Upcoming Open Choreography Performance Evenings at Siobhan Davies Studios

Fri 16 Nov, 7.30pm
Fri 8 Mar, 7.30pm

To find out more about how to be part of our Open Choreography performances and residencies visit siobhandavies.com.

Siobhan: When Siobhan Davies Dance (SDD) began to show work in galleries around 12 years ago, we had an awareness that visual art exhibitions were not about stillness. Individual works had arrived out of the movements of making and the movements of thinking. By bringing dance into galleries, we are offering our versions of movement, our versions of what our bodies mean to us and how we relate through them to where we are and who we are with.

So, what does dance bring to galleries? For me, it is attention to physical understanding and the specific knowledge generation that movement can bring to a subject, whether it be political or other.

Sarah: Absolutely. I'm very interested in the critical work that dance can do to find new ways to talk about something that is physical and about physical presence.

A lot of visual artists are beginning to work with considered pedagogical systems and structures, which are based in critical theory. But finding new knowledge of how to talk about something that is physical and the physical presence is so valuable. A lot of visual artists won't use their own bodies in work, and when they do it's often as a representation, an object or the three-dimensional outcome of a process of thinking. But I think there's something about taking two different types of knowledge, the theoretical and physical, and putting them together.

Siobhan: BALTIC and SDD are in the process of creating a space in which these different art forms connect together, alongside those people who are supporting those artists to realise their work. It's not the first time dance has been made for galleries, but we are being deliberate about taking the information we have collected through working in this way, adding to it by putting it to use, and then sharing what we continue to learn.

Sarah: Yes, there has been a lot of practice developed; there have been a lot of different models. What feels really exciting is the way this partnership was set up. We have the same set of values but from a different starting point, in terms of the knowledge of the practice we are involved in. It is rare we get to design a long-term collaboration between organisations that is carefully considered and trying to uncover what artists need to really work well with us.

Following the launch of our CONTINUOUS partnership, Siobhan Davies (Artistic Director, Siobhan Davies Dance) and Sarah Munro (Director, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art) reflect on this question.

WHY DANCE IN GAL-LERIES?

CONTINUOUS is a four-year partnership between BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art (Gateshead) and Siobhan Davies Dance that seeks to advance the creation, presentation and development of audiences for experimental independent contemporary dance within visual arts contexts. Find out more at siobhandavies.com.

CONTI-NUOUS ARTISTS

Introducing our first CONTINUOUS artists. In September 2018, artists Zinzi Minott and Lucy Suggate were chosen following an open call for two commission opportunities to create a new choreographic work, which will premiere at BALTIC in Autumn 2019.

Zinzi Minott's work focuses on the relationship between dance, bodies and politics. Strongly identifying as a dancer, she seeks to complicate the boundaries of dance and the place of black female bodies within the form. Her work explores how dance is perceived through the prisms of race, queer culture, gender and class. Zinzi is interested in the space between dance and other art forms, and, though her practice is driven through dance, the outcomes range from performance and live art to sound, film, dances and object-based work. Recently, she successfully premiered her new work *What Kind of Slave Would I Be?*

In 2016–17, she was artist in residence at both Tate Modern and Tate Britain. During her time there, she was commissioned by Tate to create *Nowse Bwoy and Aunty… The saving of a life*, which premiered in February 2017 at Tate Britain as part of BP Family Festival with sound from cellist Pete Yelding. She was also the 2016–17 artist in residence at Rich Mix and Dance Research Space and is currently resident artist at Somerset House and One Dance UK Trailblazers. Most recently, she has been awarded funds from the Arts Council England Artists' International Development Fund, as well as receiving the Jerwood Micro Bursary and the Live Art UK/Live Art Development Agency Diverse Actions Leadership Bursary. She was recently artist in residence at the Serpentine Gallery.

Lucy Suggate is a dance artist and choreographer recognised for her articulate and engaging solo performances as well as group installations informed by elements of synchronicity, cooperation and believing performance to be a communal act.

Her work is rooted in a movement practice that is an ongoing inquiry into the perceptual and physical expansion that occurs when engaged in durational moving and thinking. This work is often supported by sound and music that accelerates the process of altered states, encouraging the body, and the performer, into heightened states of awareness, availability and articulation; it's during this space that new constellations, ideas, patterns and possibilities emerge through the sifting.

A lot of her current focus is around creating spaces and conditions to support more expanded and fluid approaches to dance and choreography both in doing and spectating. Research and questions that challenge and interrogate dominant systems often frame the whole process, such as what do we choreograph and how do we dance in the 21st century, the age of crisis, complexity, opinion and information?

TORCH-LIGHT

Our Torchlight Artists programme supports an invited dance artist or choreographer to investigate a topic, theme or question of urgency in their practice over a 12-month period. Throughout the programme, they share their research with audiences, colleagues and communities at Siobhan Davies Studios and beyond. Katye Coe is the 2018–19 Torchlight Artist.

by Lauren A Wright, Programme Director, Siobhan Davies Dance

Research is the wrong way to think about what it means to shine a torch into all this fog.

This is a line written by Jonathan Burrows in a piece we commissioned for the book accompanying *material / rearranged / to / be*, our recent touring work for galleries. He's writing about all of the information, ambiguous but also specific and deeply rich, that populates the body and mind of a dancer while dancing – how it comes up and moves around in ways that can be approached and used systematically, like research, but also always goes its own way.

Shine a torch – this is what our new Torchlight programme invites artists to do. For a year, they are given space, time and resources to hunt around within their practices, directing attention to questions and interests that are always present as they make or perform dance, but which rarely get the time they need. The parameters are flexible, but we ask that they make this process available to the public – as workshop participants, discussion partners, event witnesses, text readers, podcast listeners, etc. This comes from artists' expressed wish to spend more time thinking and doing more deeply and from audiences' enthusiasm to engage with the processes of dance and choreography, as well as its products.

A torch helps with searching in fog and with leading through it. Torchlight Artists are also invited to lead us as an organisation as we adapt our ways of working to facilitate artists' work in new ways. The Torchlight programme is a key aspect of our larger process of Organisational Choreography; through this, we aim to find in our organisation the flexibility of a performing dancer to adapt to these and other artists' needs in a complex and changing environment.

Katye Coe is Siobhan Davies Dance's first Torchlight Artist. As a dancer, she brings huge intelligence into her work with choreographers, metabolising their ambitions and instructions to reflect them back through her dancing in ways they often don't expect. She's applying this approach to her work at Siobhan Davies Dance too. One of her core ideas, about the careful surrendering of self that happens in performing dancing, is already informing the way I think about my agency and the uses and values of its limits within my practice as a facilitator of dancing for and with others.

Choreographer and former Rambert dancer Patricia Okenwa interviews Katye Coe about her plans as a Torchlight Artist.

Patricia: Can you tell me a little bit about your areas of interest as a Torchlight Artist?

Katye: I began Torchlight with two anchoring themes: surrender and the afterwards. I approach my time as a Torchlight Artist from the perspective of a dancer.

I've read and heard a lot about how dancers' capacities for empathy might be measurable, by neuroscientists for example. This may well be so, but I believe that the information that dancers can manifest goes further and deeper than that which is measurable. What I would like to do this year is to bring attention to this other, often unspoken kind of information because it is precious and quite probably useful for and beyond the arena of dance. Often, in my experience, dancers don't get many good opportunities to talk about their experiences of dancing.

Patricia: Why do you think you choose to dance? Why is that your way of finding agency in the world?

Katye: I've learned that what we do when performing dancing is something that all humans do – that we are always working in relationship. Performing dancing definitely helps me to understand how to attend better to these relationships with other people, other situations, other beings and other things. And the learning that I experience when I'm dancing isn't something that is exclusive to dancers. I like to imagine that this awareness, listening and attention that we tune so finely in dancing is a capacity that everybody has deep down. But perhaps it is often buried because we don't use it in the everyday.

Maybe we don't attend to these awarenesses so much because we are encouraged to make rational sense of everything, or perhaps because intuition is not widely valued. In contemporary society, our attention also tends to be split simultaneously between many different things a lot of the time.

Patricia: So in relation to the audience for this project, what are you searching for? You seem to want to share something of the unnameable – is that your intention?

Katye: I don't know, and in some ways that question highlights the fact that none of what I intend is about knowing or passing on a message or proving something. I hope that in coming and joining in at the events I'm organising at Siobhan Davies Dance and later at Dance4, audiences and participants will be encouraged to feel and perhaps make use of these ways of listening and communicating.

Katye's next events are on 25 November 2018 and 16 March 2019 at Siobhan Davies Studios. For more details on this event and Torchlight, visit siobhandavies.com.

KATYE COE

BIOGRAPHY

Katye Coe is a dancer based in the UK. Her work as a performer spans over 20 years of international performance practice, and as a dancer she collaborates currently with Joe Moran, Florence Peake, Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion, Keira Greene, Charlie Morrissey and Stefan Jovanović.

Between 2008 and 2016, Katye was the founder director of Summer Dancing and Decoda. She was course director for BA Dance at Coventry University between 2010 and 2016.

Katye teaches independently across the UK and internationally, and her teaching practice is an extension of her performance practice. Katye is a certified Skinner Releasing Technique teacher.

Katye is the 2018–2019 Torchlight Artist at Siobhan Davies Dance; Katye is a member of the Sadler's Wells Summer University cohort (2015–2019).

She is currently studying for a PhD at the Centre for Dance Research, Coventry University, supervised by Simon Ellis, Susanne Foellmer and Jonathan Burrows.

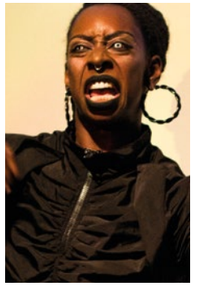
UP-COMING

Our 2018–19 CONTINUOUS artist Zinzi Minott shares some of her cultural highlights for the coming season.

Women in Jazz: A Celebration of the Past, Present and Future

Barbican Library,
London, EC2Y
16 Oct – 31 Dec, 2018

"A long overdue exhibition recognising the many women that created this sound."



What Kind of Slave Would I Be?

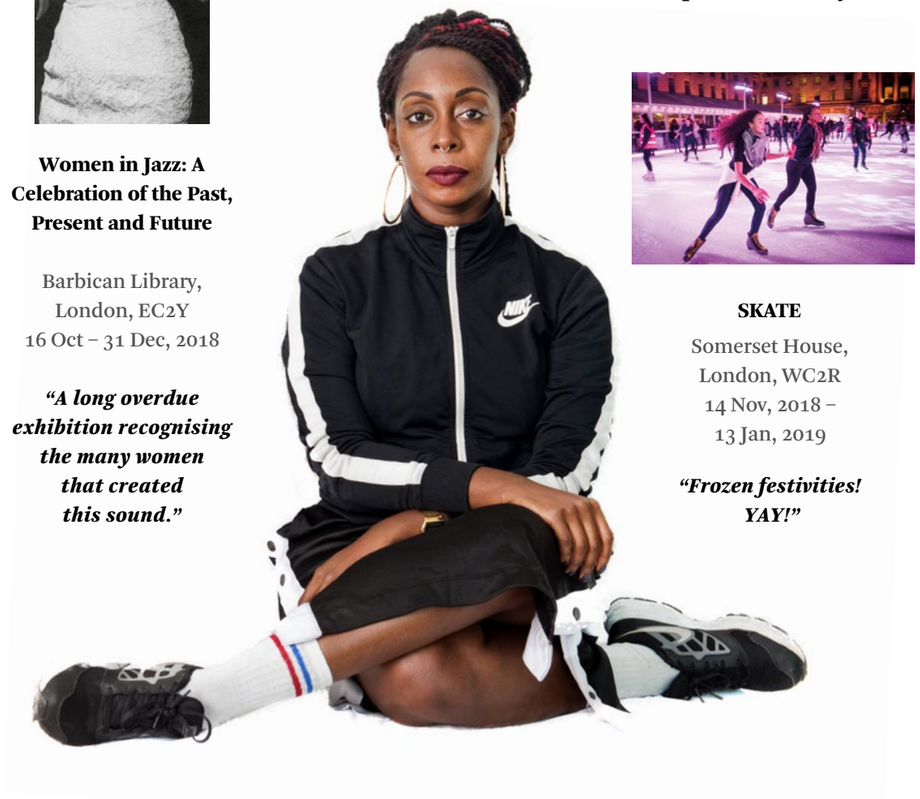
Rich Mix, London, E1
April 2019 (date TBA)

Minott performs her 2017 work.

Athi-Patra Ruga: Of Gods, Rainbows and Omissions

Somerset House,
London, WC2R
4 Oct, 2018 – 6 Jan, 2019

"New and rarely seen works from the internationally renowned South African artist Athi-Patra Ruga, which challenge post-apartheid identity."



SKATE

Somerset House,
London, WC2R
14 Nov, 2018 –
13 Jan, 2019

"Frozen festivities! YAY!"

PARTI-CIPATE OR ELSE?

by Henrietta Hale and Gitta Wigro, Co-Directors of Independent Dance

Independent Dance, often called ID, is a dance organisation resident at Siobhan Davies Studios.

We are excited to be hosting Rebecca Hilton this December as part of our annual WinLab season. Rebecca is, as she puts it, "a dance person"; she is also a research professor at the Stockholm University of the Arts, working in and with the research area Site, Event, Encounter. She describes this as a "matrix through which to explore the hows, whys and whens of art meeting society, and the fluid, 'in flux' nature of such meetings."

Image: PARTICIPATE OR ELSE? by Rebecca Hilton. Created through one of Rebecca's word practices

Working with Rebecca taps into our interests and questions about the effects an arts organisation can have on the communities it serves, and what it does for those communities it touches through location but doesn't actually reach. Already, through the planning and conversations we have had, Rebecca's processes have challenged us, furthering our investigations into how change and transformation might happen through the events and spaces for encounter that we create, be they classes, workshops, public talks or performances.

Rebecca is leading the WinLab 2018 workshop PARTICIPATE OR ELSE? on 8th and 9th December, and together we will be hosting a free Long Table event on 8th December where members of the public are invited to take a seat at the table to join a discussion/performance. Both these events explore relations between ethics and aesthetics in participatory performance practices and investigate some of the intricacies and complexities of generating art in the public sphere.

GUEST ESSAY

Nothing About Us Without Us – Artist Advocacy in Dance
by Joe Moran, choreographer and Artistic Director, Dance Art Foundation

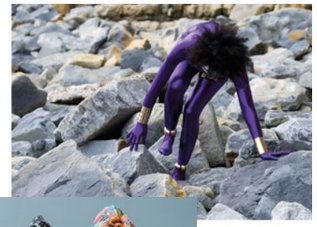
I am increasingly uneasy using the term 'we' in dance, and need to acknowledge that I am a serial offender of its indiscriminate use. In fact, I curated a series of fourteen events over two years under the title *Why Everyone Wants What We've Got*. My intention was to speak up for dance's critical acumen and the potency of 'embodied critical knowledge' amidst the resurgence of interest in dance and choreography in the visual arts and wider cultural sectors. It was a response to a sense that, at the time, dance was positioned as the subjugated poor relation invited into contemporary art contexts on very specific terms, without recognition of its own critical discourse or art history and a question over its legitimacy in that frame. In my attempts to galvanise and advocate for dance and artists and the proliferation of bodies of knowledge in dance and dancing itself, I have easily fallen into homogenising language that flattens complexity and veers towards an essentialism that I wish to stand against. Dancer, choreographer and writer Alexandrina Hemsley recently commented: "I always want to question when we say 'we' what exactly do we mean and how to hold this 'we' as space where there are also divisions – and that doesn't necessarily undermine or cause the 'we' to crumble."[1]

I am interested in how Alexandrina's questions pertain to advocacy in and for dance: so that there is more equitable distribution of resources; so that dance is disabused from the fantasy that it is not complicit in systemic discrimination, racism and sexism and takes action; so that the unsustainability of dance within austerity is faced; so that dance increases its share of public subsidy; so that the expertise of artists and dance professionals is not continually lost from the art form; so that artist and freelance labour is paid; so that models that no longer work are ended or reimagined; so that money raised for artists is actually received by artists, or so that public buildings built to house artists are no longer utterly unaffordable for artists; so that multiple expert knowledges are shared freely; so that there is more critical debate; so that there is more informed curation; so that dance is not thought of as difficult; so that audiences are not underestimated; so that adults are not infantilised; so that more people have recourse to being heard; so that power is redistributed; and so that 'we' may stand shoulder to shoulder.

To stand as 'we' in order to address some of these concerns, I wonder if a first step for dance is to be more precise in its language. Discussions of dance and notions such as embodied intelligence frequently refer, without being explicit, to somatic-informed contemporary dance, a diverse body of practices that locate knowledge, autonomy, self-definition and power in lived, embodied

experience. Or perhaps what is spoken of is what choreographer Emilyn Claid neatly describes as "Western post-structuralist/postmodern/post-feminist/academic/queer/independent dance culture."[2] Any discourse that lacks specificity is the ground for unspoken agreements and for ill-defined norms and values to dominate in ways that both exclude and do not speak to or for those unfamiliar with its terms. This is not to say that somatic practices are not accessible and urgent; on the contrary, such work has made profound contributions to embodiment studies and proposed radically reconfigured concepts of subjectivity. However, I would still argue that it is important that any one perspective does not lay claim to all of dance but rather it more exactly lay claim to its own offer and position.

A second and closely related step is for contemporary dance to reckon with its neutralisation, naturalisation and de-politicisation of the body. Somatic practices have centred on problematic notions of the wisdom of the moving body, the body as teacher and the premise that the body cannot lie. Along with a historical artistic turn to minimalism and the pedestrian within a



racially biased canon, such discourse has fostered a powerful naturalising function. This has propagated the fantasy of a neutral or de-politicised body impervious to critique that the person is always-already mediated and constructed by their culture, history, education, training, opportunity, discourse and recourse to knowledge and privilege. As choreographer Jérôme Bel contends, "a choreographer who shall remain nameless said 'The body does not lie'. Such a remark is based on that disgusting old modernist myth bogged down in Judeo-Christianity. The body is not the sanctuary of truth, authenticity or uniqueness, it is deeply subjugated to culture, politics, and history."[3]

A third and crucial step that I wish for dance is a decentralised, multiple and democratised collective voice (one not practised in this single-authored text, despite implicating and conjuring other voices). Choreographer Efrosini Protopapa helpfully reflects, "Does this need to be about one thing, or could a group of artists be pursuing multiple agendas at the same time, depending on what's more urgent for each one of us?"[4]

How might these steps lead to action? A key urgency I see is systemic exclusion of artists from the policy development and strategic decision-making that shape our art form. I do not propose that artists hold all the answers but our voice is essential in conversations that have such impact on our lives. Choreographer Janine Harrington frequently reminds me, citing a maxim from disability activism, "nothing about us without us."[5] Lack of representation is often attributed to artists being a network of disparate individuals lacking a single organised access point. However, artists are also frequently dismissed as being strong on criticism and weak on solution. I emphatically refute this: artists are expert producers, curators, audience developers, relationship builders and advocates – it is remiss to underestimate our power and contribution. Not all of us are all of these things all of the time but as a multi-dimensional collective 'we', we are formidable.

Artists are consistently tutored out of ambition for resources, only a generation or two after those who built our current dance infrastructure. In reaction, I frequently I ask my peers: what would you, or we, do with a million pounds? Like choreographer Gillie Kleiman, I want to see "more artists making more decisions about more resources,"[6] such as artists making up 50% of all arts boards and funding panels. Like Fest en Fest festival[7], I want to see more artists curating, enlivening institutions and fostering international exchange. But more than anything, I want to see artists in leadership positions where they remain artists: running buildings whilst creating performance, curating theatres, building audiences, leading teams and driving the art form forward. Collectively, artists have immeasurable knowledge of dance, are engaged in continual, sophisticated negotiation of the complex terrain of leadership, and have an unflinching propensity for working in collaboration to reimagine the possible and find solutions to complex challenges. Frankly, I think we need all of that right now.

Endnotes

1 Alexandrina shared these ideas at the 2018 Dance Umbrella *Open Forum: Future Facing* panel conversation, speaking up for those for whom 'we' is a reminder of the power that active systems at work (within dance and wider cultural sectors) have to exclude.
2 Taken from Emilyn's 2006 book *Yes? No! Maybe…: Seductive Ambiguity in Dance*.
3 Bel made these comments in an interview with Gerald Siegmund that is available on his website.
4, 5 & 6 Efrosini, Janine and Gillie shared these ideas at recent Artist Gathering meetings.
7 Fest en Fest is a new international festival of expanded choreography curated by H2 Dance: Hanna Gillgren and Heidi Rustgaard.

Many thanks to Alexandrina Hemsley, Gillie Kleiman, Nicola Conibere, Florence Peake, Eve Stainton, Eva Martinez, Heidi Rustgaard and Katye Coe for their input and comments.

CREDITS

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