

Dance Futures Part 2

Theatre Bristol has long recognised the need for intensive development to enable dance to flourish in the city. In 2016 we stepped up our thinking and planning to help make this happen, talking to loads of people connected to dance in Bristol and the South West about their needs and priorities, and the gaps and opportunities they're seeing right now.

This culminated in:

An [audit of dance provision in Bristol](#) – this is a live work-in-progress document and still has some gaps where we would welcome your input. We would particularly like to see wider range of the dance education work happening in schools to be represented here, and other dance practitioners – if that's you, get in touch and let us know!

A dance round table at M Shed with over 30 brilliant dance leaders, hosted by TB in partnership with Pavilion Dance South West, Arts Council England, Bristol City Council and Katy Noakes. This generated some great thinking around what we can do collectively to supercharge dance in the city, for artists, audiences and participants. The notes from this meeting are available [here](#).

We want to share with you what's been happening since that meeting, and Theatre Bristol's plans for dance development in 2017/18.

The following actions have come about as a direct result of the round table:

A draft copy of 'Moving Bristol – a Manifesto for Dance in the City' has been written by independents in the city, led by Katy Noakes and Laila Diallo on a voluntary basis. The report calls for:

- Dance being valued in the city and integral to the cultural calendar
- Opportunities and pathways to be visible and inclusive
- Celebration of a diverse range of practice
- Connecting the dots between socially engaged practice, talent development and performance.

Theatre Bristol is partnering with Bristol Play Music, Spike Island and Bristol Old Vic on [Cultural Curriculum for Bristol](#), exploring how arts can be embedded across the curriculum throughout academy chains. Theatre Bristol has engaged a Dance Leader, Laura Street, to represent dance in the research. If you are a dance artist working in schools and would like to find out more, do get in touch.

Lauren Scholey at Tobacco Factory Theatres made **the Theatre Café space at the Factory available on Monday mornings for dance artists to meet**. When not booked, access to the dance studio has also been made possible free of charge. The Monday Mornings Dance Socials and Collective Roll Around are not a hosted event but rather an offer of space where what happens is shaped by those who come. The initiative is driven by a willingness to develop more

opportunities for those involved in dance to connect up. Laila Diallo is leading on liaising with the venue and artists to manage and promote the opportunity.

Katy Noakes created 'Pass it On' as a pilot until end of February 2017 to run alongside the Monday Morning Socials at the Tobacco Factory, Laila's group offering advice to dance artists for free. Katy committed 1 day a week of her time for every 10 days she gets paid work in the sector

Cllr Estella Tincknell (Deputy Mayor at the time) called a follow up meeting with Katie Keeler from Theatre Bristol, Katy Noakes and Bristol City Council Arts Officer Lerato Dunn. While no longer Deputy Mayor, Estella's portfolio still includes culture, events and equalities. She will advocate as best she can.

Dance Programmers including Pavilion Dance South West met up and have agreed to meet 2/3 times a year. Those present also discussed ways in which they can make their dance offer clear.

THEATRE BRISTOL INVESTMENT AND DANCE FUTURES GROUP

Theatre Bristol currently receives a small KAP grant from Bristol City Council that was historically to match-fund Emma Jane Benning's role as Dance Producer. To date, this grant has been distributed in very small amounts as seed funding, underwriting programme, CPD, Dance Village and RISE Youth Theatre.

We are pleased to have secured this for 2017/18 but with the restructuring of BCC's cultural funding, we cannot guarantee it will come to Theatre Bristol in future years.

As a city, we've been plugging tiny gaps for a very long time. We need to think big in difficult economic times and be very confident about the benefits of investment in dance.

We have therefore agreed with BCC that, rather than disbursing it in small amounts, we will instead use our investment to super-charge the sector as a whole. The investment will be used to lead a vision for dance, aligned to the Mayor's priority for culture to reach all parts of Bristol and all people.

Capacity is an age-old problem with dance in Bristol. There are currently no paid posts specifically relating to dance in the city. We think focusing on capacity and leadership will give us the best chance of a legacy for this dance development work. This will include employing a Dance Futures Consultant to focus on strategy and fundraising over the next 12 months.

For other areas such as seed funding that no longer have a budget line, Theatre Bristol will feed the learning from past investment and initiatives in the city such as the Dance Associate scheme (dance artists resident in venues) to the consultant so those needs can be included in more strategic fundraising and long-term support.

Our investment will be broken down as follows:

Dance Futures Consultant – to work with Dance Futures group to draw together strategy grounded in collective working, and fundraise to meet these ambitions. Additional resource is needed to meet the full fee.	£7500
Involvement of independent artists in Dance Futures Strategy development – payment for artists’ time.	£2300
Theatre Bristol oversight and management of project, and contribution towards artist support including Theatre Bristol Agents bursaries .	£3900
Katy Noakes/Dance Village - planning, development and fundraising*	£1500
Testing Ground* - work in progress platform for dance with Circomedia	£1000
RISE - dance and young people organisational development and match for any bids coming out of Dance Futures*	£1200
Total	£17,400**

**These are historical multi-year commitments from the previous KAP funding structure that Theatre Bristol had already committed to. Katy Noakes’s contribution was originally for her capacity and planning on Dance Village, but as the Grants for the Arts bid was unsuccessful she will be using it to support alternative dance activity in the city.*

***includes KAP money b/f from 2016/17*

The Dance Futures Group should include people who can commit time and resource to developing city-wide strategy and delivering its outcomes, making it an organisational priority. We recommend that the Dance Futures Group includes Katy Noakes (independent), Laila Diallo (independent), Helen Cole (In Between Time), Nicolas Young (Circomedia), Rhiannon Jones (Trinity), Lauren Scholey (Tobacco Factors Theatres), Zannah Doan (Pavilion Dance South West) and Theatre Bristol in the first instance. The group can then invite members as appropriate. We are confident that this group will pledge resource and time to lever in more.

The consultant will have a budget to pay for the involvement of freelance independent artists in the process.

The energy in the city and the commitment from key stakeholders to work together to improve the dance offer puts the city in a good position to generate investment collectively. We feel that the strategy and fundraising efforts would have the best chance of success by focusing on specific areas and opportunities, particularly **young people, education and training, and dance and health**. Growing from these strands where there is already momentum and groundwork, bids could cover better pathways, increasing participation, international partnership, developing people and capacity, fit for purpose facilities, and profile.

The people in the Dance Futures group are more than capable of thinking big to attract investment that includes the highest quality participation, participation, talent development and performance. While Arts Council England and Bristol City Council may have a role to play, there is relatively untapped opportunity from bodies such as Sports England, Bristol Ageing Better, Health Commissioning and the European Union as well as trusts and foundations.

NEXT STEPS

Theatre Bristol is currently working to secure the remaining investment needed to employ the Dance Futures Consultant.

In the meantime we want to move ahead with some groundwork activity that will mean the consultant can hit the ground running. There are priorities for both TB and the wider sector – as ever if there's something you're already doing or want to connect better on, get in touch and let us know.

1. TB is **pursuing partnership with Bath Dance and Swindon Dance**, particularly around:

Information dissemination – building on theatrebristol.net (currently in a development phase) and the new bathdance.net site, as well as social media like Dance in Bristol, Let's Get it Sorted on Facebook and former initiatives like the Bristol Area Dance Agency newsletter, the aim is to create a better beacon for dance. As there are very few stakeholders in dance in the city – no venue, no producing company, no festival – it would be great to have a portal that feels like home, potentially connecting to dance research in Bath Spa and University of Bristol.

Artist Support - TB already employs 4 Artist Support Associates (ASAs), 2 of whom have dance specialisms. Extra capacity of an ASA on 1 day a week to support professionals connected to Swindon and Bath Dance as well as Bristol could help join the dots between the three locations.

Opportunities – exploring potential to better connect e.g. helping more young people from Bristol access the training in Swindon, linking up artists and sharing physical resource.

2. **Supporting and advocating for Trinity** as a venue working hard to develop dance and offering great residencies and performances through its Ignite programme.

3. **Working with Ujima Cultural Collective** to join up pathways and support for artists, and to ensure strategic dance development in Bristol includes and is more representative of both BAME dance forms and artists.

4. **Liaising with Arts Council England** to keep them up to date with dance development, and facilitate transparency about the role of artist-led initiatives in the dance ecology. As Bristol's funding environment changes, the need to be

clear about Bristol's unique contribution to dance is more important than ever. The potential to promote Bristol's groundbreaking interdisciplinary dance/technology work could contribute to this identity.

5. Helping artists find allies and understand the landscape. Theatre Bristol Artist Support Associates provide support with this, and TB aims to facilitate more matchmaking on strategic initiatives, feeding resulting ideas to the consultant. This is more urgent than ever with the absence of Dance Village. We are also shouting louder about our ASAs, and seeking opportunities for them to work proactively out and about across the city.

6. We are planning to explore potential for **sharing strategic thinking for dance between Bristol and Cardiff** with National Dance Company Wales.

Other priorities for the Dance Futures Group and the wider sector

1. Continue to **emphasise the need and opportunities for facilities** in conversation with BCC and other partners. Sports people are not expected to be world-class without facilities, so how can dancers? Our allies recognize this issue. Explore unexpected places like hospitals. One example is [Outset](#) (for visual arts)

2. In response to conversations with Estella Tincknell and BCC, and building on *Bristol Moving*, **develop a manifesto** confidently setting out the benefits of investing in dance in the city and asking for help in key areas (not listing demands) that reference BCC's development plan.

3. **Identify opportunities arising from Bristol's Cultural Strategy** - dance has a vital role to play in opening up culture in Bristol.

4. **Address the gap in inclusive/integrated dance**, e.g. by connecting with StopGap or GDance's CPD models for developing local skills.

5. **Connect with Hippodrome and other commercial players**, make it clear what Bristol needs and how they can engage.

6. **Build on the great dance work happening in other context e.g. museums**, where performance is increasingly recognized as an effective way of encouraging more meaningful engagement with exhibitions.

If you want to be included in our dance audit, let us know about dance that's not on our radar, or contribute to the ongoing conversation, feel free to get in touch with sophie@theatrebristol.net