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The context

The Gleneagles Ryder Cup and Glasgow Commonwealth Games may be yet to come, but 2014 in Scotland launched with the international biennale, British Dance Edition (BDE), the United Kingdom's largest dance industry showcase. Running from 30 January to 2 February in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and attracting almost 400 delegates from 40 countries, this was the first time that the event had taken place in Scotland.

The curating team, comprised of Morag Deyes (Artistic Director of Dance Base), Ailsa-Mary Gold (Artistic Director / Chief Executive of Dance House), Laura Eaton-Lewis (Director of The Work Room) and Roberto Casarotto (International Projects Manager, Opera Estate Festival, Veneto, Italy), had the envious but overwhelming task of programming the event. Just 27 companies from the 200 who applied were invited to perform a complete work at BDE; a further 11 companies were offered the opportunity to share studio work and another 40 were invited to take part in the Networking Trade Fair, held on the Friday and

Saturday (Apter, 2014). Janet Archer, Chief Executive of Creative Scotland, explained the potential impact of BDE's 2014 location:

I really do feel that here, in Scotland, we still need to sing better—and louder—about what we do across all the arts. But in terms of dance, where the quality of our work is really strong, I feel that hosting BDE will certainly help raise the art form's profile in a hugely dynamic way (Brennan, 2014).

Held every two years since its inception in 1998, the event attracts dance artists, producers and programmers from around the UK and abroad to watch the cream of the contemporary dance crop. The purpose of the event revolves around seeing and being seen. Dance artists hope to be noticed by programmers, producers and funders; programmers, producers and funders look to find key talents; and as a PhD dance student and Co-editor of the *Scottish Journal of Performance*, someone who does not belong to any of these groups, this proved to be an exciting and valuable opportunity to interpose myself between the academy and the stage.

This submission format, an event report, is unusual for a scholarly journal, but a growing number are exploring different mediums of enquiry. For example, performance reviews have a dedicated space in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, and 'Backpages' within *Contemporary Theatre Review* explores the practice of performance artists and theatre workers. This submission is also testament to the *Scottish Journal of Performance's* commitment to exploring new ways of scholarly communication, especially relating to new work and issues of immediate relevance. The aim of this report is to uncover and highlight some of the intersections between the 'real' and academic worlds of dance evident at this year's BDE, drawing on relevant literature to site some

of the issues and questions raised within an academic context.

British Dance Edition 2014.

Intersections between the academic and ‘real’ worlds of dance

Talk / Presentation: Siobhan Davies and Ian Spink, Friday 31 January 2014

This talk looked at themes of motivation, movement making and memory, and Siobhan Davies and Ian Spink were justly introduced by Roanne Dodds, Chair of the Workroom in Glasgow, as ‘contemporary gold’. Davies is one of Britain’s foremost choreographers and creator of works including *White Man Sleeps* (1988) and *Bird Song* (2004). Spink formerly danced with the Australian Ballet and Australian Dance Theatre and was previously Artistic Director of Citymoves in Aberdeen. The two dancers collaborated and created the company Second Stride (together with Richard Alston) in 1988; their shared history meant that this was a discussion rooted in the past.

The study of dance history has been criticised for focusing too narrowly on a set canon of phenomena; on key people, places, periods and trends (Aldrich, 1992; Carter 2004, 2007;

Sparti and Adshead-Lansdale, 1996). However, this was a discussion that reiterated the importance of hearing experiences and opinions from some of these 'key people' involved in choreographic processes. Spink focused on the need for and the choreographer's relationship with confidence. Davies recounted how in the early days she 'was doing it, while being it', describing the process as a constant race to catch up. She 'did not have a clue... but felt so released having the freedom to try'. Davies also described the process as necessitating 'a mixture of knowledge and bravery', the attraction of creating lies in the 'intellectual *slash* physical pull'.

The discussion moved on to an examination of the role of the digital archive—Davies has been extensively involved in this through Siobhan Davies RePlay, an AHRC-supported project with Sarah Whatley from Coventry University, which constitutes 'the first online dance archive in the UK' (Siobhan Davies RePlay). This project has directly resulted in a significant body of literature looking at the preservation of dance performance for cultural memory and kinaesthetic empathy (see for example Whatley, 2013a, 2013b, 2008). However, Davies takes a democratic and realistic view to the power and potential wielded by a digital archive, recounting how a film made from the back of the stalls in 1977, of a work called *Sphinx*, had the potential of making her look like a 'runner bean on speed'. Davies highlighted her belief that everyone should have the potential to create a physical archive, based on moves that are not necessarily dance-generated. Davies talked for example about how 'my body remembered picking up a child', a movement deeply inscribed, with sociological ties to the notion of everyday bodily habitus (Bourdieu, 1977), raising a key question: what movement needs to be or should be archived?

Siobhan Davies, Artistic Director, Siobhan Davies Dance.

*Artists' Exclusive: Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process,
Friday 31 January 2014*

As the nation's investment agency, Creative Scotland has undertaken a number of arts sector reviews, the dance sector review being the most relevant in this context (Clark, 2012) and as Jon Morgan, Director of the Federation of Scottish Theatre explained, the conclusion was reached that more critical reflection was needed on creative processes. It was this sentiment that led to the incorporation of a session focusing on Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process as part of the *Artists' Exclusive* section of the BDE programme. Lerman's career spans dance performance, education and advocacy. The central premise of the unique multi-generational dance ensemble she founded, Liz Lerman's Dance Exchange (now named Dance Exchange), is the democratisation of dance.

The session employed the Critical Response Process, which centres on critiquing performance and providing feedback. It involves the central roles of facilitator(s), artist and audience, performed in this setting by Ailsa-Mary Gold and Roanne Dodds, Jennifer Paterson (Artistic Director of All or Nothing), and the delegates respectively. Dancers from Paterson's company performed four excerpts from the work-in-progress *Three's A Crowd* and delegates were then

asked to work through the key four stages of the process together. Briefly, they involve:

1. Giving statements of interest (as part of a settling-in period; the aim is to put the artist at ease and to get people talking to one another).
2. Answering questions put to them by the artist.
3. Asking the artist questions.
4. Giving statements of opinion (following a protocol, whereby the artist is asked if they would like to hear the opinion about 'x').

This is a process of inquiry. It is important for the artist to understand that if they really want to know what is felt by those providing feedback, then they do not say what *they* themselves feel. This is a process that gives the artist the opportunity to reach conclusions themselves, via opinions given and questions asked:

The Critical Response Process engages and energizes the community in interactive dialogue. Its mediated use of language opens multiple levels of creative and critical discourse, which in turn inform and enhance the community's conversation (Williams, 2002, p.93).

Significant literature exists on the technique, including the original text *Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process* (2003). The process has been used in a number of arts-based and non-arts-based contexts, such as to impart constructive criticism to choreography students—an experience that 'is so frequently a contentious and disheartening experience' (Williams, 2002, p.93)—and to facilitate student reviews of writing by their peers in an interdisciplinary setting (Mahoney and Brown, 2013).

Janet Archer, Chief Executive of Creative Scotland, attends Siobhan Davies Dance's Table of Contents at the BDE.

*Talk / presentation: A conversation about modern ballet,
Saturday 1 February 2014*

With an eminent panel featuring Claire Morton (Director of Morton Bates Arts Services), Emma Southworth (Senior Producer and Studio Programmer, The Royal Ballet), Christopher Barron (Chief Executive, Birmingham Royal Ballet) and Christopher Hampson (Artistic Director, Scottish Ballet), this event focused on the trials, triumphs and terminologies of modern ballet. Ballet companies view themselves as being in a position of significant responsibility, both as cultural ambassadors and, as Hampson put it, 'guardians of a national treasure'. Barron used the term 'citizen ballet' to emphasise this macro-responsibility.

The key focus was on the notion and very terminology of 'modern ballet': what barriers exist between ballet and contemporary dance? Are barriers needed? Should they be broken down further? Further questions followed: 'Is this a new term?', 'The term?', 'Is it important to have a label?' Hampson declared that he particularly dislikes the term 'modern ballet', finding it simultaneously helpful (the term 'ballet' can generate ticket sales) and challenging (the term can also dictate a certain audience that does not reflect or

appreciate the breadth and depth of Scottish Ballet's repertoire).

This discussion reflects a disparity and debate within the academy regarding the greater issue of classification of dance in relation to style, genre and form and where ballet is sited. The majority of studies label ballet as a form of concert or performance dance (Cohen and Copeland, 1983; Nahachewsky, 1995; Pugh McCutchen, 2006), although this has been explored more recently by Whiteside (2013) and was first famously contested by Kealiinohomoku in her seminal text *An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance* (1970).

Cohen and Copeland (1983) argue that dance styles relate to properties manifested by a work that are characteristic of an author, period, region, or school. Blom and Chaplin (1986) define individual dance style as a) choreographic style, b) codified technique or c) personal style. Particular styles can also be linked to significant dancers and choreographers 'glowing like stellar constellations' (Wigman, 1966, p.17). However, concerning ballet style, Morris (2003) has argued that strict adherence to the fixed forms of vocabulary and traditional methods of teaching and learning has led to a loss of opportunity for both progression and preservation of ballet styles. Significantly, the term 'modern ballet' has been adopted as a degree subject offered at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in conjunction with Scottish Ballet, with the curriculum described as 'classically based and complemented by a strong contemporary dance strand, allowing students to develop as technically accomplished, versatile dancers' (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland), thus challenging the claim that the ballet genre has no capacity to evolve.

Tramway: home of Scottish Ballet and venue for Day 3 of BDE.

*Panel discussion: Dance: what you can and can't say, Sunday
2 February 2014*

Chaired by Joyce McMillan, *Scotsman* theatre critic and columnist, the panel of this final spoken word event comprised Lloyd Newson (Artistic Director, DV8 Physical Theatre), Claire Cunningham (performer), Rosie Kay (Artistic Director, Rosie Kay Dance Company) and Christopher Hampson (Artistic Director, Scottish Ballet).

With high attendance by delegates, two key themes emerged out of this highly invigorating discussion: quality of dance education, and the meanings and stories that dance should convey and is capable of conveying.

Dance education: Newson began by expressing deep concern over the poor body language and lack of artistry and basic technique displayed by dancers at vocational institutes. Over a decade ago, Morris (2003, p.20) argued that part of the issue in ballet training institutions is that teachers 'assume that their role is to teach students to perform the codified steps "correctly"'. Education institutions focus too heavily on training to the detriment of choreographed movement, and additionally, the lack of a student-led approach prevents dancers from acting

independently and experimenting with their own progression, expression and creativity. Morris (2003, p.20) cites Foster (1997) in pointing out that 'such elements as interpretation, variation or performance style' are given limited attention. This impedes dancers' ability to meet the demands of different choreographers and companies.

Newson's comments drew both concurrence and difference of opinion from the audience. Delegates shared the concern that the standard of British dance was below par but the notion that training did not reflect the multicultural nature of British society was also raised, and the strengths of the dance industry were highlighted. However, all were united in agreement that this issue was a long-standing debate, and one that is likely to reoccur.

Dance as text: The discussion revolving around dance as a transmitter of meaning is rooted in the notion of dance as text, an exploration well-critiqued in postmodern and poststructuralist dance studies literature (see for example Desmond, 1997; Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999; Goellner and Murphy, 1995).

A key theme of the talk revolved around the argument that dance is associated with freedom of expression and trustworthiness because of the artform's commitment to movement as text, rather than speech as text. McMillan recounted how audience members watching the National Theatre of Scotland production *Black Watch* (2006) preferred the choreographed movement scenes to the text, 'because they associate movement with authenticity and language with untrustworthiness'. Hampson stated that he can always see honesty in a dancer: 'it can't lie, dancing. I can see right into who they are; even bits of them that they can't see'. The identity of the dancer is of no account, nor whether they dance at an amateur, vocational or professional standard, as long as they are dancing. As

Hampson succinctly stated: 'You can't say nothing with it [dance]'.

Dance cannot help but convey messages; the problem arises when we consciously try to convey specific meanings through movement. Newson's solution is 'to use whatever means necessary with particular commitment to movement' to communicate meanings in his works, because 'movement isn't great at doing sub-text'. Hampson recounts the famous quote by George Balanchine who stated that 'There are no mothers-in-law in ballet', summing up the limitations in focusing on character-driven narrative. Our very physicalities can also limit the messages being conveyed. In reference to the dominance of 20- to 30-year-old, able-bodied, white dancing bodies, Cunningham (a multi-disciplinary choreographer and performer) pointed out that 'if you just keep using the same bodies, you can't say everything'. McMillan reiterated the need to look at 'what kinds of bodies tell what kinds of stories'. However, challenge can act as a key motivator; choreographer and Leverhulme Artist-in-Residence at the University of Oxford, Rosie Kay explained that she is drawing less on text because she finds it so addictive to use dance as a means of expression and believes that it is good for audiences to work ideas out for themselves.

plan B's The Shoogle Project at BDE.

Summary

British Dance Edition is a multi-faceted event, featuring performances, works-in-progress, networking fairs, and talks and presentations. Ostensibly, the event showcases the talent of UK dancers and dance organisations to national and international programmers. However, the topics explored, debates instigated and discussions held throughout BDE 2014, particularly in the 'text-based' events of talks, presentations and panel discussions, mirror the foci of current discourse in dance studies: the mechanics of archiving dance; challenges of dance specific terminology; the quality of dance education; the nature of dance as text conveying meaning. This report has only covered a fraction of the events and issues present at BDE in order to give them some focus and situate them in academic literature and discussion. However, the overall aim of the report is to argue for greater cohesion between the academic world of the dance scholar and the 'real' world of the dance worker, often the subject of scholarly enquiry, through utilising the BDE to look at some of the many intersections where they collide, challenge and complement one another.

Cohesion can be more overtly discerned in physical settings such as networking events, theatre and studio performances, and open academic lectures and seminars. However, literature is a dominant mode of dissemination and communication, and the majority of paper-based investigations which draw these two 'worlds' together see the researcher critiquing dance practice and theory, with conclusions reached remaining within the ivory towers of the academy. This report, which sets within an academic context the conversations enjoyed at a non-academic event, is freely available and illustrates that many of the deliberations in the macro dance world are shared by dance researcher and worker alike. We should not just be dancing and talking to communicate these debates and discussions, but have the opportunity to read, report, preserve and expand upon them as well.

Delegates attend a Fair Exchange Networking Session at Tramway.

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About the author

BETHANY WHITESIDE embarked on an ESRC CASE Studentship in 2011, supported by Capacity Building Cluster 'Capitalising on Creativity' grant #RES 187-24-0014, following completion of an MSc in Dance Science and Education at the University of Edinburgh. Her PhD focuses on the sociology of participatory dance. Since embarking on her doctoral study, Bethany has presented and published at national and international conferences and given guest lectures at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the University of Edinburgh. She was recently appointed Visiting Research Scholar at Temple University Dance Department, funded by the ESRC as an Overseas Institutional Visit.