

# **Collective Inquiry**

## **North West Dance Symposium**

**Arts Bar, Liverpool  
Tuesday 15 & Wednesday 16 October 2024**





# Welcome

Between 2022 and 2024 the Dance Consortia North West Research Programme commissioned 17 projects to re-imagine the region's dance by researching, creating and delivering new work in collaboration with creatives and communities.

All commissions were open and flexible, and included dance from a wide range of areas of practice.

The programme strove to challenge inequalities and make space to share ideas, performances and knowledge with other artists, professionals and venues.

It also looked to use research for sustainable change in practice, engagement and dance infrastructure.

**This introduction to the 17 projects provides a compelling snapshot of the quality of dance in the North West today, and gives valuable insight into what matters to artists working in the field.**

The commonalities from across the research are also identified through spotlighting key themes and questions.

The full stories of these projects, including interviews, blogs, images and video footage, can be found at:

**<https://danceconsortianorthwest.org/research-programme>**



The project is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and delivered by Cheshire Dance.

Front cover image: Gemma Higginbotham Somatic Enquiry. Photographer: Lauren Schneider. Gemma was part of Ten Conversations, a project created and led by UCLan Dance Collective, as part of the DCNW Research Programme.







Image: LPM Dance: New Voices

# Introducing the projects

## **LPM Dance: New Voices**


Through the Research Programme, LPM Dance explored the impact of creative ownership of the choreographic and music-making process for dancers living with Parkinson's. Through a series of workshops in Fleetwood and Preston, New Voices considered how participants could become creators, co-curators and choreographers. LPM Dance commissioned a film about the dancers and their journey with the New Voices project and a podcast offering an insight into the artists' processes.

## **Bluecoat: Priya Mistry in residence**

Priya Mistry ([whatsthebigmistry](https://www.whatsthebigmistry.com)) participated in a pilot residency programme to support the Bluecoat to establish a framework for dance artist residencies. Bluecoat has since shared its learnings of this experience and highlights its continued vision to create a worksite which nurtures artists whilst also enabling audiences to experience, engage with and better understand creative processes.

## **Dr Sara Giddens: Life Class**

Dr Sara Giddens (Bodies in Flight / UCLan Dance) considered what authentic co-creation really means and what it might look like. Working in partnership with older social dancers from Nottingham and Preston, Sara developed bespoke live shows that brought together professional performers and local non-professional dancers and choirs to be showcased in the participants' community spaces and also at professional venues.



## **Together: Hybrid Scratch Collective**

Following the successful pilot of their Digital Programme and SCRATCH artist showcase, Together (formerly MDI) presented a second SCRATCH night as part of their commission.

Artists from their Collective took part in Together's Digital Toolbox and Dance Labs programme to explore artistic areas of focus and discover how digital technologies can support them on their creative journeys.

## **Adam Roberts: Labelled? Dance Theatre**

Founder and creative performing artist of Labelled? Dance Theatre, Adam Roberts explored how best to develop and extend new dance work as a neurodivergent artist, while undertaking R&D for a new piece that would explore his experience of being in special needs education.

From taking part in professional development workshops with Access All Areas and Yewande 103 and bespoke mentoring with Yael Flexer, to visiting Aerowaves: Spring Forward 2023 festival in Dublin, the DCNW Research Programme gave Adam the space and time to consider his practice as a neurodiverse artist and early career producer and opened up a vast array of networking opportunities.

## **UCLan Dance Collective: Movement Matters - Somatic Practice in the First 1001 Days of Life**

An artist collective from UCLan Dance worked with emerging UCLan BA students and established practitioners to explore developing and facilitating somatic dance provision for parents and young children in the community, with an aim to uncover best practice for social prescribing.

Movement Matters comprised two masterclasses, a workshop led by Miranda Tufnell, a practitioner workshop with Anna Daly and Anna O'Connor, a symposium to share process, findings and research enquiries, and a public exhibition.

The project not only identified the need and desire for collaborative community building through dance practice, but brought together practitioners in the North West for peer learning, sharing, mentoring and CPD opportunities.






Image: Sole Rebel

### **Sole Rebel**

Liverpool-based CIC Sole Rebel explored how it could best reach, educate, promote and perpetuate tap dance as a flourishing contemporary art form in the North West. Sole Rebel delivered and ran an outreach programme, presenting tap workshops and performances celebrating rhythm as a universal language, for schools, youth centres and organisations in the under-served communities of Liverpool.

The project ran alongside a new pilot Training & Performance Company project for recent graduates and emerging artists in the North West.

### **Ludus Dance: Digital Dance Cultures and Youth Dance Practices**

Ludus Dance set out to explore how the development of a digital platform in Lancashire might support the growth of digital dance practice within the local youth dance sector.

Using their existing Lancashire dance platform Big Up North (BUN), which was delivered online in 2022, Ludus Dance examined how best to create an event which encompassed remote engagement alongside presenting live streamed performances and the sharing of dance films (which were watched simultaneously by an audience of young people from their own locations). As part of their project they carried out a scoping exercise of digital dance practices.



### **Connor Elliman: Baggage**

Baggage was a coming together of queer people to tell a story that would resonate with others in the LGBTQIA+ community, with pop up performances at Chester Pride 2022.

Connor Elliman explored the notion that queer people are often perceived as arriving with trauma or baggage, and the way in which this affects queer bodies entering public spaces. Connor created a documentary to reflect on the creative process of the artists and musicians.

### **Lucy Nicholson: Moving With**

Dance artist Lucy Nicholson and film maker Jonny Randall created Moving With, a short film capturing a precious moment in time between mother and son and their local landscape. A celebration of simple things: being together, moving together, listening, and watching all we have on our doorstep.

Moving With offered a contribution to the work being made in Cumbria, for Cumbria by Cumbrian residents. It nurtured a relationship with creative dance amongst young people so that the vital role which creative movement plays in our sense of self, well-being, creativity and connection to environment could become apparent to schools and families.

The film, which was selected for the Kendal Mountain Festival and is a winner of the Osprey Short Film Awards at the Keswick Festival, showcases a unique aesthetic and creative practice – an intergenerational, sited improvised work.

### **Rosie Watt: Blackpool Dance Research**

Rosie Watt, producer and arts practitioner, looked to the DCNW Research Programme to consider how people want to experience dance. With two key questions that asked how communities want to engage with dance and how dance could be used as creative expression to tackle multiple disadvantages and make a positive impact in places like Blackpool, Rosie's research sought to evaluate to what extent an enhanced dance infrastructure could benefit the town.

Consulting with Blackpool & North West based dance artists & organisations and the community itself, as well as with local cultural organisations, practitioners and voluntary organisations, Rosie's research looked to identify a joined-up strategy to boost investment and creativity.



Photo: Swati Dance

### **Swati Dance Company: South Asian Dance in the North West**

Dr. Swati Raut from Swati Dance Company explored the current landscape of South Asian Dance in the North West with a view to unearthing how best to raise its profile and promote better opportunities and links within the sector for its artists.

Swati sought to identify skilled South Asian dance artists and practice in the North West, and look into how to widen their audience. She looked to connect with northern venues, promoters and development organisations engaging in programming and producing South Asian dance, and to identify the levels of community engagement in the practice.

With questions around how to inspire and build artistic and creative confidence and skills in the non-engagers of formal dance infrastructure, and how traditional techniques can be utilised to communicate contemporary stories and issues, Swati also provided a scratch platform for less visible artists to explore their artistry.

Tasked with responding to the theme of 'Shifting Seasons', four artists, Anu Hariharan, Gayathri Ganapathy, Adona Matthew and Karishma Parekh, were commissioned to create new work and develop their experiences of working with contemporary rather than traditional themes, extending their vocabulary whilst building confidence in their practice.

## **24 Hope Street Artists Collective: Digital Open Labs**

24 Hope Street experimented with the use of technology when making dance. This newly formed collective of 11 North West based dance makers and a creative technologist looked to increase the potential of Liverpool's dance makers by developing the scope of digital technology in dance through a series of open labs and Digital Collaborations.

The project brought together artists, technologists and critical observers - the 'outside eye' - to understand the enhanced potential of dance making when technology is paired with dance from the first stage of creation.

## **UCLan Dance Collective: Ten Conversations**

Ten Conversations sought to make visible, communicate, promote and widen the reach and values of practice, research and training in somatic-informed movement and dance for health across Cumbria and Lancashire, questioning "how far and in what ways can we intersect with organisational providers of healthcare and well-being to develop and deliver partnerships and collaborative working approaches?"

The activities within the project brought 10 practitioners together in conversation with 29 individuals and organisations to gain knowledge, understanding, direction and support. The Ten Conversations project has proved to be a first step towards a shared vision of creating a sustainable movement and dance for health hub in Cumbria and Lancashire.

## **UCLan Dance Collective: Shared Dances - Choreographies of Care**

For the Research Programme, a collective of researchers from UCLan Dance considered how to best articulate and share movement-based transdisciplinary research in settings across the North West and beyond, and considered how they could develop a robust network that supports and critiques such work.

For the project, the collective disseminated the learning, methodologies and impact of co-created work from nine movement-based practitioner research projects, creating opportunities for open and progressive dialogues, which evaluated and celebrated the work and practice.

Through an exhibition and symposium, the project reinvigorated a North West based conversation on how to grow audiences and awareness of the practice beyond the immediate dance sector.



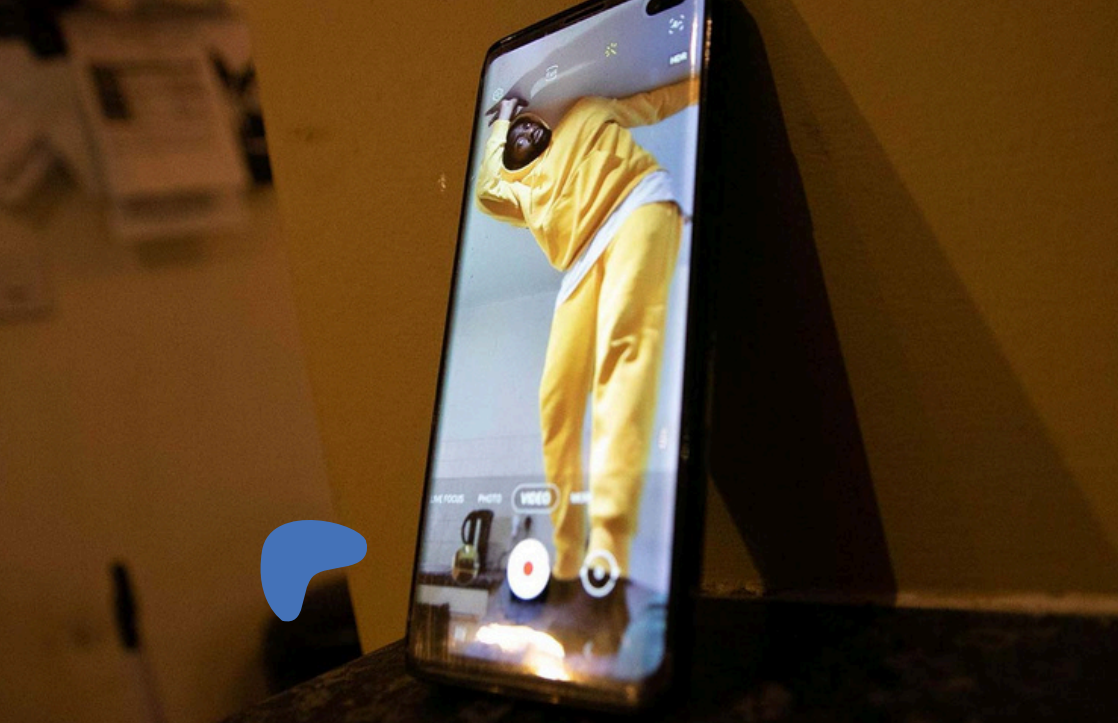


Image: Chad Taylor: Lost Online

### **Chad Taylor: Lost Online**

Chad Taylor has been delving into what are the negatives and positives for dance given the digital evolution of social media. Through his piece *Lost Online*, which he has been adapting from a digital piece to a live performance piece, Chad explored how young people respond to the online world – and how the digital world can impact on their mental health and their relationships with others.

### **Company Carpi**

Company Carpi set out to explore how independent companies can evolve and tour work through further development of their piece, *When You Light A Candle You Also Cast A Shadow*. Originally commissioned by DCNW in partnership with Lancaster Arts & Culture Warrington in 2019, *When You Light A Candle...* is a hybrid dance theatre performance with live music, created by choreographer Bettina Carpi and composer Gary Lloyd.

Following a tour of 14 performances to five North West venues, Company Carpi explored and shared some of the successes and challenges encountered in the process.



## Themes from across the research.

### **Learning together:**

Who do we need to talk to?

What conversations do we need to have to support each other?

### **Finding time:**

What could we achieve with more time?

How does time impact the creative process?

How can we carve out creative space?

### **More visible together:**

Who do we want to see us?

How can we as dance artists become more visible?

### **Creating together:**

Whose stories are we telling?

What can co-creation offer us and the sector?

### **Widening our reach:**

Where do we tell our stories?

Can stepping outside our boundaries and forging new partnerships make us stronger?

### **Our future together:**

What questions do we need to ask ourselves and others?

How can we build a stronger voice, more presence, and greater confidence?



## Where next?





Image: Company Carpi  
When You Light A Candle, You Also Cast A Shadow

# About Dance Consortia North West

Hosted by Cheshire Dance, Dance Consortia North West is a partnership of dance artists, companies, venues, Higher Education institutions and dance development organisations across the region, working together to respond to the needs and ambitions of the sector.

Our partners include:

## Executive Group

24 Hope St, Liverpool, Blackpool Grand, Bluecoat, Chaos Arts CiC, Cheshire Dance, Company Carpi, Company Chameleon, Culture Warrington, Fallen Angels Dance Theatre, hÅb, Higher Education Reps, Independent Artists & Producers, La Petite Mort Theatre, Lancaster Arts, Ludus Dance, Movema, Project Auske, Storyhouse, The Lowry, Wired Aerial Theatre, DCNW Chair Adam Holloway, Arts Council England observer(s).

## Connected Groups

Dance HE NW Consortium, Edge Hill University, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool Hope University, LIPA, University of Salford, University of Bolton, University of Central Lancashire, University of Chester, University of Cumbria.

## Artists Network

Artists Led For Artists is a 100+ strong, open membership group of NW dance artists. It has come together to advocate for dance artists, their connections to the wider dance sector, champion diversity and visibility of artists as well as share resources and knowledge to further the development of the art of dance.

## Venues

Blackpool Grand; Bluecoat, Liverpool; Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal; Capstone Theatre, Liverpool; Company Chameleon, Manchester; Contact, Manchester; HOME, Manchester; Lancaster Arts; Storyhouse, Chester; The Lowry, Salford; New Adelphi, University of Salford; Unity Theatre, Liverpool.



[danceconsortianorthwest.org](http://danceconsortianorthwest.org)



Supported using public funding by  
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