The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia

Report by:

Ruth Osborne - 2016 Churchill Fellow

Study of Youth Dance Practice in the United Kingdom
I understand that the Churchill Trust may publish this report either in hard copy or on the internet or both and consent to such publication. I indemnify the Churchill Trust against any loss, costs or damages it may suffer arising out of any claim or proceedings made against the Trust in respect of or arising out of the publication of any Report submitted to the Trust and which the Trust places on a website for access over the internet.

I also warrant my Final Report is original and does not infringe the copyright of any person, or contain anything which is or in the incorporation of which into the Final Report is actionable for defamation a breach of any privacy law or obligation breach of confidence contempt of court passing-off or contravention of any other private right or of any law.

_________________________   _______________________
Date                         Name

**Keywords**
Contemporary Dance;
Youth Dance Practice;
Choreographer;
QL2 Dance;
Youth Dance in Australia and the UK
Index

1 Introduction – Summary and Acknowledgments

2 Executive Summary
   . Contact details
   . Project description
   . Highlights – places & people
   . Major lesson and conclusions learnt
   . How to disseminate and implement them in Australia

3 Program – people and organisations visited

4 My Fellowship and lessons learnt

5 Conclusions and recommendations
1. Introduction

My fellowship focused on research of youth dance practice across the UK. Youth Dance Practice is a specific area of dance for young people mainly based in the contemporary dance genre. It provides opportunities for young people to work collaboratively with professional artists, aiming for excellence in artistic, community and personal development outcomes.

My fellowship focused on three key goals:

- Research into excellence in youth dance programs focused on career pathways, mentorship, and creative collaborations across the UK.

- To scope and learn from the experiences of our international colleagues to inform the development of the Youth Dance Australia network and the possibility of an inaugural Australian national youth dance company project.

- To forge a foundation for future exchange and collaboration with companies and leaders in youth dance across the UK. It could take many forms such as reciprocal tours, visiting dancer exchanges, internships for arts administrators. It could also create the relationships necessary to attract choreographers specialising in youth dance practice to consider Australia for development of their work.

Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank everyone who has made it possible for me to undertake this fellowship:

- The Churchill Trust for seeing the value in my application and giving me the opportunity to research the work I am so passionate about and to affirm my beliefs.

- The Board and Staff of QL2 Dance in Canberra for supporting my adventure and covering my role of Artistic Director so proficiently, particularly Gary Barnes, Alison Plevey and Amelie Langevin.

- Churchill Fellow Philip Piggin for encouraging me to apply for the fellowship and helping me research the organisations and locations.

- Liz Lea for helping with planning the trip.

- Michelle Norris and Gill Rogers for their guidance with writing the report.

- All the wonderful directors, managers, choreographers, teachers and animateurs in England, Wales and Scotland who generously shared their knowledge, history and future desires with me.

- All the inspirational young people who demonstrated to me that positive youth dance practice works just as well in opposite ends of the globe.
2. Executive Summary

Contact Details
Fellowship Recipient – Ruth Osborne
1/25 Aspinall St, Watson, ACT
Mobile – 0418 943 857 Email – director@ql2.org.au
Artistic Director of QL2 Dance Inc. in Canberra

Project Description
My focus was to examine UK infrastructure and to understand the history of the
development of youth dance practice throughout the country. With my own long
history of working in this area I wanted to help broaden our Australian youth
dance practice, to provide evidence-based examples of successful ongoing youth
dance organisations and to pinpoint the support that is necessary to achieve this
outcome.

Highlights – People and Places
. Spending the first 2 weeks in London was a great opportunity to get a broad
picture of the general dance landscape. I managed to see some live
performances and visit galleries. Seeing Hofesh Schechter’s contemporary dance
company at the Sadlers’ Wells Theatre was a real treat.

. In Cardiff I met very inspiring people at Rubicon Dance. They are so committed
to the work of the organization and generous with their time in looking after me.

. Whilst in Birmingham I was lucky enough to catch a weekend festival with a lot
of dance performances in various city locations. I was also very impressed with
ACE Dance & Music, an organization that works closely with its community.

. In Nottingham I experienced ‘venue envy’ for the newly renovated warehouse
space that houses Dance4, an international choreographic centre. The four state-
of-the-art studios/theatre spaces, offices, meeting rooms, kitchen and dressing
rooms suit the organization’s wonderful work perfectly.

. I was happy to finish my trip in Glasgow as I had developed a great relationship
with YDance over the past three years and they all helped me get the most out of
the Scottish leg. Travelling to Edinburgh for day trips gave me the opportunity
to see a different perspective between the two cities.

Major lessons and conclusions learnt
. There are thousands of young people involved in local, regional and national
youth dance companies across the UK. Many companies have grown out of
community dance practice and are funded and supported through a variety of
sources. Australia has less than ten across the whole country.

. The UK has developed infrastructure over 40 years through service
organisations and partnerships with professional dance companies as well as
arts, education, health and sport departments. Australia needs this kind of
support and profile to grow their sector. I think financial support for Youth Dance Australia as a national youth dance network will help this happen.

. There are more opportunities for broader career pathways in the UK with specialized qualifications for Teaching & Learning (Children & Young People), funded internships and leadership programs, and a greater variety of full time training institutions. I think Australia’s dance universities should place more importance on dance in the community - encouraging teachers, choreographers, animateurs and arts administrators to bring contemporary dance and youth dance to a broader demographic.

. The National Youth Dance Companies of England, Scotland and Wales bring an important focus on the value of youth dance practice. They hold a strong position in the national dance landscape and as role models they help to lift the standard for all other companies. I think it would be a perfect time for Australia to have some form of a national project and that Youth Dance Australia should investigate potential funding sources.

**Dissemination and Implementation**

The knowledge and understandings I have gained over my trip will be disseminated over time. In my role as Artistic Director of QL2 Dance my first opportunity will be to spread the word through my contacts. I will visit Ausdance National and Branches, the national tertiary dance institutions and the Australia Council. Arranging to meet with relevant people in federal government will be a focus. Building on the Youth Dance Australia network will be a priority, in particular working towards an International Australian Youth Dance Festival in 2019. Many of my contacts in the UK voices genuine interest in attending.
3. Program in tour order

**London, England - September 6 – 18**

*National Youth Dance Company (England)*
Met with Hannah Kirkpatrick, General Manager of NYDC (England) at Sadler’s Wells Theatre

*One Dance UK*
Met with Claire Somerville, Director of Children and Young People’s Dance

*Rambert Dance Theatre’s Youth Dance Company Quicksilver*
Met with Laura Harvey, Artistic Director of Quicksilver and attended their first workshop and orientation for the season.

*English National Ballet’s ENB Youth Co*
Met with Michaela Ellis, Project Producer (Creative Learning and Performance), Fleur Derbyshire-Fox, Director of Engagement and Julia Fitzelle (Learning and Participations). Attended a combined workshop with *ENB Youth Co* and a guest youth theatre company.

*The Brit School & Khronos Agoria (Boys)*
Spent the day with Julia Dark, teacher & Director of Khronos Agoria (boys company) and interviewed teaching staff. Observed dance classes of varying styles and standards and attended the Khronos rehearsal.
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance
Met with Veronica Jobbins, Head of Learning and Participation (Dance)

One Dance UK
Visited the office and met with staff (merged from Youth Dance England, Dance UK, Association of Dance of the African Diaspora and National Dance Teachers Association).

Attended performances:
- *An American in Paris*, choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon OBE
- Hofesh Shechter Company *Grand Finale* at Sadler's Wells Theatre

Visited Galleries and Museums:
- National Gallery
- National Portrait Gallery
- Tate Modern
- Victoria and Albert Museum

Cardiff, Wales - September 19 – 23

Rubicon Dance
Tracey Brown & Katherine Williams hosted me for 2 days, meeting with various staff and observing classes. They also organised meetings with other dance leaders:
- *Dance Blast* - Sally Carlson
- *Afon Dance* - Louise Prosser

National Youth Dance Wales
Met with Pauline Crossley, Principal Manager Youth Arts

- Met with Ruth Till MBE, a pioneer of youth dance in Wales and board member of *Ballet Cymru*.
- Attended a music concert at the Conservatorium
- Visited Cardiff Castle
Birmingham, England - September 23 – 27

**DanceXchange**
Met with Clare Lewis, Executive Director & Alex Henwood, Creative Learning & CAT Scheme. Observed classes for the Centre for Advanced Training (Dance) CAT Scheme.

**RDC Youth Dance Company**
Met with Adam Rutherford, Artistic Director

**ACE Dance and Music & ACE Youth**
Met with Iona Waite Education Officer, Juliet Thomas Development Manager. Toured their new building.

Observed three performances for the Birmingham Festival
Nottingham, England - September 28 – 29

*Dance4 – International Choreographic Centre*

Met with Paul Russ, Executive Director & Haley Arthur, Creative Learning & CAT Scheme. Toured their new building.

. Viewed class and choreographic workshop for *Next Door Youth* conducted by Jennifer Manderson, Co-director

Glasgow, Scotland - September 30 – October 18

*Y Dance – Scottish Youth Dance*

Ongoing meetings with Carolyn Lappin, Executive Director & Anna Kenrick, Artistic Director and visits to various workshops with teachers to observe specific programmes – *Shake It Up Schools Programme*

*Take the Lead* Leadership Programme (*Y Dance*)
National Youth Dance Company Scotland (NYDCS)
Attended 1st weekend intensive run by Anna Kenrick, Artistic Director & Yvonne Young, Assistant Director

Scottish Dance Theatre
Skype meeting with Dawn Hartley, Head of Creative Learning

Scottish Ballet
Met with Catherine Cassidy, Director of Engagement and Youth Dance Exchange Project. Toured their award winning building.

Right2Dance Youth Dance Company
Met with Alleen Palombo, Artistic Director and her assistant. Toured their facilities.

. Met with Caroline Bowditch – Independent artist/teacher/choreographer and specialist in accessibility and inclusivity

. Met with Penny Chivas – QL2 Dance alumni, independent dance artist, contact improvisation specialist, runs Glasgow Jam (Contact).

Attended performances:
. Scottish Ballet - Theatre Royal, Glasgow
. Theo Clinkard’s Company - Tramway, Glasgow

Visited Galleries and Museums:
. Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum
. Gallery of Modern Art

Edinburgh, Scotland - October 9 & 14

Creative Scotland – Scottish Funding Body
Met with Emma Stewart-Jones, Lead Officer, Edinburgh

Dance Base
Met with Allan Irvine & Jenny Langlands. Toured their facilities.

Lyra Theatre
Met with Jo Timmins, Artistic Director at Artspace, Craigmillar. Toured their facilities.
4. Fellowship and lessons learnt

Youth dance is more than ‘young people dancing’, it is a form unto itself. The research undertaken in this fellowship seeks to bring more information to Australia regarding the UK model of youth dance. They have many relevant examples of what Australian youth dance is aiming towards – more interest in the youth as a creator than the competitive ‘results focused’ syllabus-based training through private dance schools that is so prevalent here and across North America. This activity focusing on creative collaboration and the young dancers as central has been happening in a broad sense across the UK for more than 30 years and has wide funding support from National and Local Government including Departments of Arts, Education, Health and Sport. Many of the UK organisations I visited are registered charities and have support through Lotteries. They also seem to have a greater degree of philanthropic involvement than we see in Australia.

I was interested in discovering the opportunities that can be created for dancers like career pathways to professional dance companies as well as other opportunities for young people to access creative life skills. These include:

- participation in festivals and special events
- building networks with other young dancers nationally and internationally
- touring to see diverse professional dance work
- access to exchanges for young people whether they are interested in a professional dance career or a broader arts focus.

These pathways develop creative people as well as dance artists and potential leaders of the future. Some forge careers in arts administration through internship programs. Many participants will also go on to contribute to the wider dance world through teaching, choreographing and facilitating wonderful community programs such as dance in prisons, hospitals, regional outreach and dance for disability. The impact of these organisations certainly spans not only across the breadth of dance but across art forms and into the broader community. Given the breadth of the contribution of these dance organisations, their effect is hard to measure and their contributions can often be undervalued.

Understanding these pathways will allow us in Australia to recognise the gaps in our own practice. Australia approaches the pathway from young dance student through to emerging artist in a very one-track way. The journey for young contemporary dancers in Australia is essentially through a university degree at one of the four major dance institutions – Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Victorian College of the Arts, Adelaide College of the Arts and Queensland University of Technology.

With the exception of the continual longitudinal programs of QL2 Dance and a handful of other youth dance companies in Australia, mostly dancers find their way through to a creative or choreographic career almost by accident with no well defined creative preparation for university studies or the demands of an
independent creative practice. The form of contemporary dance taught in many private dance studios generally covers the technical side of training and not the creative side.

There are many more pathways into contemporary dance in the UK apart from the university sector, this means more people having greater opportunity to take dance further. For example;

- there are a range of high school programs of full time dance that give students both the credit needed to enter university studies, but also the level of training that gives dancers the possibility to reach the next level of development.
- other examples are highly regarded dance conservatoires giving excellent technical training and artistic development.

These more diverse pathways mean that emerging dancers are not funneled through a single set of influences, and there are greater opportunities for access. While there is some professional dance work available in Australia, without tertiary training and qualification very few dancers make it into a career in contemporary dance. The dance sector in Australia would be enhanced by greater access to creative development within training.

I was also interested in understanding how UK organisations had survived large funding cuts, understanding their resilience and the process by which several UK companies had been merged, some even surviving a change of location to another city. One Dance UK is the national body for dance in the UK, formed by the merger of four organisations;

- Dance UK
- National Dance Teachers Association
- Dance of the African Diaspora
- Youth Dance England

This organisation now represents dancers at all levels of the dance industry, and champions excellence in education, youth dance, cultural diversity, performance, health and well-being, management, leadership and career development. After a transition period of operating as four organisations in one office they are now finding the way to work as one.

This is key for our Australian youth dance organisations to understand, to ensure our ongoing sustainability of the art form, building a stable support base from one person’s passionate investment, to a long lasting contribution to the Australian arts landscape. I entered the fellowship with an intent to share these lessons through Youth Dance Australia, a developing network of youth dance companies across Australia who aim to foster more youth dance practice and share the successful models of the established companies and international partners. Youth Dance Australia is key in the Australian context to this sustainability of youth dance practice.
National Youth Dance Companies

The national youth dance companies of England, Scotland and Wales are run at an extremely professional level, they vary in profile and support, but are common in the comparative high level of funding they receive, their capacity to draw talent from the whole of the country and to attract high profile international choreographers. What’s more, they have a capacity to tour nationally and internationally. In particular the National Youth Dance Company, England (NYDC) has the profile to perform at top tier theatres and attract large audiences. An equivalent of these organisations here is the Australian Youth Orchestra (AYO). While AYO enjoys a similar level of valuing, investment and profile as those we see in other areas of the western world, Australia does not currently have a program of the same scale for youth dance. In fact support for youth dance companies is not a priority of our Federal Government.

National Youth Dance Company (England)
- Co funded by Arts Council of England and Education Department
- 400,000 British Pounds per year, run by Sadler’s Wells with different international guest artistic directors each year.
- Auditioned from across England, they meet periodically at Sadler’s Wells for intensive weekends then final daily rehearsals before performances.

My first interview in London was with the National Youth Dance Company of England whose home base is the famous Sadler’s Wells Theatre. So my initial impression was a sense of awe at the profile, history and the pride that such a setting offers. NYDC is presented at the same level as the internationally acclaimed touring companies and associate artists that perform there. They invite leading international choreographers to be guest Artistic Directors for one year. My first reaction was one of envy, but I also realized that as much as they had achieved they were also receiving criticism through the English national youth dance sector of being ‘elitist’ and that a large amount of money was being invested into an elite 45 young people. It was felt that this investment was therefore not being shared with a wider population.

From this I reflected that as much as I admired what NYDC has achieved there was too much difference in that model for Australia – so much money was taken from elsewhere to invest in a single central model that seemed like it achieved quite a narrow aim at the cost of a possible wider spread benefit. On the one hand, they have achieved true excellence, something to be proud of and a great direction for young people to strive for. The young people in the company are mostly on a pathway to the world’s major companies. However, on the other hand, from my concern about ensuring the breadth of youth dance practice in Australia I can understand that there may be some animosity or disappointment to what they are doing as it is a system which leaves many less supported organisations under-funded in its wake.
Recognizing this, NYDC is taking action to become more inclusive. They have engaged in a comprehensive review as a reaction to criticisms and have set in motion strategies to share their experiences, such as running a series of workshops in regional areas, making entry into the company possible for dancers with a disability and by encouraging their dancers to share their knowledge and experience back in their own communities. The company meets at regular intervals for intensive weekend rehearsals. The dancers are transported and accommodated each time.

**National Youth Dance Wales**
The *National Youth Dance Wales (NYDW)* is part of a national youth arts portfolio run by *National Youth Arts Wales Ltd*. This portfolio houses a national choir, orchestra, theatre company, brass band and dance company. It is funded by the *Arts Council of Wales* and 22 local councils and is a registered charity.

Similar to the NYDC, because they draw participants from across the country they cannot meet very regularly, in the Welsh company they meet three times a year for three week intensives. They also have leading national choreographers working with them. They are undergoing a remodeling of the structure at the moment.

**National Youth Dance Company Scotland**
YDance is funded by *Creative Scotland* to deliver dance to young people across Scotland. Part of this role is running the *National Youth Dance Company of Scotland* with dancers drawn by audition nationally. They meet in Glasgow for intensive weekend rehearsals once a month with most travelling from their full time courses, some travel as far as London and Leeds.

I spent a full weekend both in research and working with the *National Youth Dance Company of Scotland (NYDCS)*. YDance is the organization that facilitates the company. As QL2 Dance has had two previous opportunities to connect with YDance and NYDCS, both at the Glasgow Commonwealth Youth Dance Festival and through a tour by NYDCS to Canberra, hosted by us, this visit was now an opportunity to deepen that existing relationship.

I feel that this model works very well for the style of organization they are and the fact that the dancers are spread across the UK. But what I have observed from this experience is that the level of planning and the depth of engagement our dancers have in the projects and training program of QL2 Dance are much more consistent and immersive allowing for greater development of the young artists involved.

This clarified for me that if you wish to pursue engagement and collaboration with international youth companies, building a relationship with the company first is essential to ensure the investment of an exchange is worthwhile. Each youth dance organisation works similarly but can be also quite different in approach. Outcomes of collaborations can be negatively affected by the different working styles company-to-company. The more we can understand about the ways these companies work on the ground the more we can design effective
exchange and collaboration. QL2 Dance will pursue further opportunities to collaborate with NYDCS and others.

Across the three national youth dance companies I visited, the dancers are mostly already at tertiary level and 18+ with an occasional younger person who is also already in full time dance training. This is a different approach to our programs’ broad focus from dancers who are having first contact with contemporary dance through to advanced tertiary training levels. The dancers I observed were all used to creating dance material and able to engage in creative tasks. They were comfortable creating work together despite not necessarily having a regular relationship with their fellow dancers. Even though they only meet once a month for weekend intensives they were still proficient at group creation. I observed a slightly higher proficiency in creative collaboration compared to the Australian context, which may be an effect of being older and/or already in full time training.

From this research, I would like to pursue the idea of a pilot national youth dance company project in the future. If it has been proven that the Australian Youth Orchestra has been successful over many years, it follows that with the right support some form of a national youth dance company could have the same kind of success, particularly if we incorporate the lessons learned from the English context.

Other Youth Dance Companies
The UK has hundreds of youth dance companies. We can compare this to the less than ten active youth dance programs in Australia. I define in this report youth dance companies and programs to be those interested in not only physical training but in the creation of creative youth in line with the model seen at QL2 Dance. I wanted to visit as many youth dance companies as I could, knowing that there can’t be 300 of an extremely high quality. I wanted to understand the breadth of youth dance company practice and understand how different structures worked and their value, with a view to taking lessons back to the Australian context. I had a high level of interest in understanding the value of these organisations to their communities.

After having visited the national youth dance companies, I was interested in the youth companies operating under the umbrella of highly regarded professional companies. Examples of these are:

Rambert Dance Company's youth company is Quicksilver. I observed Quicksilver's first rehearsal for the year and they had 18 dancers aged 15 to 19. The aim of this program is to prepare dancers for fulltime training with a view to securing career pathways. I imagined that this connection to a well-regarded professional company would be very valuable, but I found that Quicksilver itself had very little profile within Rambert. The young dancers were very proficient for a first rehearsal, but it was too early in their year’s schedule to demonstrate how the dancers create together. I was surprised that the contact hours were simply a once a week hour and a half workshop. They only increase these hours close to
performance opportunities. I had expected a higher level of engagement for a youth dance company. In my opinion, the potential for this model of being connected to a professional company is not yet being realised in this case.

The English National Ballet's youth company is ENB Youth Co. ENB is also a large well-respected company with a long history. I was expecting that the youth programs would be solely ballet, but found it held much more of a contemporary focus. I observed the first workshop for the young participants for the year. The dancers were skilled in classical and in a level of contemporary dance and were keen collaborators in the creative section of the workshop. The workshop leaders were very good and quite skilled at leading youth practice. The leaders used some themes from the ENB's repertoire that they are currently working on and connected the workshop to them. Again, this youth engagement is only once a week for a two-hour workshop. ENB Youth Co looks for performance opportunities but they don't work towards their own regular full season.

The Scottish Ballet, also a highly regarded company runs a youth program called the Youth Exchange Project. They have an interesting model of auditioning and drawing in young dancers with varied backgrounds. I was again expecting quite a classical company but the program focuses on bringing together different types of dancers. The program runs for 18 months at a time and looks for exchange potential with other youth companies. For example, they have taken a group to the Singapore Academy and to New York University. During the 18 month project they do workshops and create work, but are also given the opportunity to work within the company shadowing administration and production staff moving through different areas of fundraising and the leadership program as unpaid interns. The exchange that this culminates in is the end point of a much broader program. This was I felt a better example of the full potential of exposure to a professional dance company that the umbrella model offers.

Apart from these there is also a multitude of smaller independent companies. There are some really good ideas from these companies. All of them have grown out a community practice so they operate with much broader aims and objectives. The companies work to very much meet the needs of their individual communities. What I did notice was that these companies work on a very part time basis. I was surprised by the limited contact time they have to develop their work and/or meet the aims of their programs. The rehearsals are not as intense as we engage in through QL2 Dance. The set model seems to be that youth dance has a once a week contact requirement. Often this once a week model seemed more akin to what we offer in our ongoing training programs without the professional in theatre performance element that we work towards. The companies certainly are using the creative ideals of youth dance practice and of each participant. However, I found that in comparison to what we are doing we are currently offering a broader and deeper program for our participants and more fully participating in the development of the nascent artist.

Most of the other youth dance companies exist under the umbrella of professional dance companies, funded dance organisations, or connected to performing arts schools. Some initiatives are the brainchild of professional
independent dance artists in specific regions. These companies are not just in capital cities but regional cities, towns and villages. They range in focus from small groups of local young people wanting a positive arts experience, to vocationally driven aspiring young ensembles. Though they all have differences they basically share the aims:

- dance as an arts practice building confidence, team-work, taking responsibility of themselves and others, decision-making and reflection, promoting personal and social development
- a non-competitive environment that is supportive and inclusive

In one way or another all of these companies find physical and financial support to keep running. This proves that youth dance practice is understood and valued broadly across the UK. This is not the case in Australia where the few companies that exist around the country have had some success in being minimally funded locally, but the Australia Council fails to recognise this type of youth dance practice for its value to the national dance landscape. It is why youth dance practice has not flourished in the same way it has in the UK, where infrastructure has developed over the years to support its growth. Unfortunately, large commercially driven eisteddfods, festivals and competitions are the main drivers in the Australian landscape of young people training in dance as they can afford to run big events through the user pays method. This severely limits the type of young people who can access dance. Youth dance practice needs to be subsidised to reach as broadly as possible.

List of Youth Dance Companies I visited

**London**
- National Youth Dance Company (England) - Hannah Kirkpatrick, NYDC General Manager, based at Sadlers Wells Theatre
- Rambert’s Youth Dance Company ’Quicksilver’ - Laura Harvey, Artistic Director
- English National Ballet’s ENB Youth Co - Michaela Ellis, Project Producer & Fleur Derbyshire-Fox, Director of Engagement
- Khronos Agoria (Boys company) - Julia Dark, director of Khronos, part of the Brit School

**Birmingham**
- RDC Youth Dance Company - Adam Rutherford, Artistic Director
- ACE Dance and Music ’ACE Youth’ - Gail Parmel, Director, Iona Waite Education Officer, Juliet Thomas Development Manager

**Nottingham**
- Dance4, an international centre for choreography - Paul Russ, Executive Director & Haley Arthur, Creative Learning & CAT Scheme
- Next Door Dance Co & Next Door Youth - Jennifer Manderson, co-director
Cardiff, Wales
- Rubicon Dance’s youth companies – Nubico, Young Nubico, Junior Nubico, Nuworx, Rebound (boys) – Katherine Williams, Director, Tracey Brown – Community Engagement
- National Youth Dance Wales – Pauline Crossley, Director
- Dance Blast’s Monmouthshire Youth Dance Company - Sally Carlson, Director
- Afon Dance - Louise Prosser, Director

Scotland
Glasgow
- YDance - Carolyn Lappin, Executive Director & Anna Kenrick, Artistic Director
- National Youth Dance Company Scotland – Anna Kenrick, Artistic Director
- Scottish Ballet ‘Youth Exchange’ - Catherine Cassidy, Director of Engagement
- Right2Dance Youth Dance Company - Aileen Palombo

Dundee
- Scottish Dance Theatre - Dawn Hartley, Head of Creative Learning

Edinburgh
- Dancebase, National Centre for Dance ‘Lothian Youth Dance Company’ - Allan Irvine, Participation Manager,
- Lyra Theatre at Artspace, Craigmillar - Jo Timmins, Artistic Director

Education Programs

There are many dance programs funded or co-funded through the relevant national education departments. I was particularly interested in the English context.

Centre for Advanced Training in Dance (CAT) scheme
The CAT Scheme - Centre for Advanced Training (Dance) is a wonderful example of how effective the English system has been. It is a national program supported by the Department for Education through the Music and Dance Scheme. Its purpose is to identify talented young people of high school age with diverse cultural and geographic backgrounds who perhaps wouldn’t otherwise have been able to access dance training. From audition they gain entry into an advanced program of training with one of nine leading dance agencies across England. Each agency delivers this program in a way that suits their location. Many CAT students progress to a higher level of full-time training, the NYDC England, and into the dance profession. As an example: at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance their intake of CAT students is 120 per year, 90–95% will go on in dance; 80% will be on some form of bursary and 50% of those will be on full bursary. The number of boys accepted is generally 40-45%

I viewed the CAT students at their weekend intensive training at Birmingham’s Dance Exchange working with highly qualified teachers and dance artists. I also observed the Nottingham CAT students training at Dance4. This highly successful scheme has been running for over 10 years and would be a wonderful scheme to
introduce in Australia – co-funded by Arts and Education. Because it is an Education program in England there seems to be wide support from the local community - dance schools and performing arts high schools - for their students to be accepted into the CAT Scheme. There are still problems in Australia with private dance schools prohibiting their students from experiencing opportunities outside their own dance schools’ programs. If this initiative was to be supported by Arts and Education and placed in leading institutions and organisations it may be more successfully received by both participants and training institutions.

The nine professional dance agencies across the country selected to deliver the program provide professional dance training and creative engagement for the auditioned young people. Each centre runs the program in their own way but covers a shared curriculum delivered by professional teachers and choreographers. The three organisations that I visited who run the CAT Scheme were:

- Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance - London
- Dance Exchange – Birmingham
- Dance4 – Nottingham

Aged 11 to 18 years a key aspect of the scheme is recruiting and retaining young people from diverse backgrounds. There is a means tested bursary scheme with approximately 80% on some level of support and 50% of them are on full bursaries. They train in Contemporary and Classical styles as well as Creative Workshops, performance visits and industry information. Some centres also provide courses in South Asian and Urban dance styles. The dancers come together from across their region and train on weekends, certain evenings and some school holiday intensives. Young people with a disability are encouraged to audition and they provide support for those who successfully participate.

The Brit School
The Brit School is a different example of a highly successful arts education initiative. Based in London it is a unique free performing arts and technology school. It is an independent state funded City College of Technology of the Arts, dedicated to education and vocational training for the performing arts, media, art & design and the technologies that make performance possible. Funded through the Education Department and supported by The Brit Trust and additional sponsors the students come from vast distances (up to 2 hours away) and don’t pay any tuition fees. But they do undertake a lot of fund raising for tours and special events.

I spent a day and evening observing classes and rehearsals, and talking to teachers and students. The aim of this training program seems to be to prepare dancers for a variety of dance pathways. The dance course schedule was packed with technique classes in a variety of styles and rehearsals for upcoming performance opportunities. They have a boys-only group called Khronos Agoria that has been very successful nationally. The boys’ group has a real sense of pride and community spirit. In fact, all students and teachers at the school are proud to be there and work very hard through long days. They really are a
diverse group - culturally, geographically and socio-economically. Many graduates go onto higher full time training and successfully audition for the NYDC, musical theatre companies, contemporary dance companies, and cruise ship contracts.

I found The Brit School to be a very different and effective model compared to what I have seen of Australian high schools teaching dance.

Other Schools Programs
There is a lot of dance taught in the education system, though the experts I spoke to couldn’t vouch for the standard in many schools. What I was interested in seeing was programs delivered by professional dance organisations into the schools. Many ‘out of school’ organisations present programs in schools.

Examples of some successful models are:
- Rubicon Dance in Wales, a community dance organization with a 40 year history. They deliver extraordinary opportunities for people in all areas of life to participate in dance. They often work in schools in particularly deprived areas.
- YDance (Scottish Youth Dance) is the national dance organization for young people in Scotland. Amongst a variety of programs, they run school workshops, teacher training in dance for school teachers and several specific programs delivered in individual schools such as:
  - Shake it up – Curriculum based classes in primary schools particularly in deprived areas
  - Take the lead – A leadership program for high school students that aims to increase the ambition and aspiration by building young peoples’ confidence and capacity, health and wellbeing, and develop social, behavioral and emotional skills through dance.

Community Engagement
Australia’s community dance practice a completely different climate to that of the UK. In most cases in Australia community dance feels separate to the existing youth dance companies and professional companies, whereas the UK is much more integrated. There is much more focus on disability and people with disabilities being immersed in all levels of dance practice including professional companies and the National Youth Dance Company of England. There is a greater focus in the UK on dance reaching out into all regions including very isolated areas. Community practice is totally inclusive and included in the bigger picture. Through well-trained teachers, choreographers and animateurs, they provide inspiring dance programs and projects specifically aimed at giving everybody a positive dance experience. Traditionally hundreds of youth dance companies have grown out of these programs in various regions and have been funded within the core business of the organization. Depending on their size and remit, they are mostly funded by the government through the arts councils, often co-funded in projects with education, health, or sport. They also have a lot of support from local councils, lotteries and philanthropic sources.
Australia could learn from the way that dance reaches into regional communities. It is supported and respected and works to enrich the communities themselves. There are some excellent examples of great community dance practice in Australia but it is happening in pockets rather than in a well-designed system with a sense of infrastructure. This sector includes career pathways as well. In the UK, young dancers go into tertiary courses not seeing themselves initially as a community dance practitioner but are given a broader education to come out and be employable in and interested in community practice. In Australia community dance is often siloed and those working in community arts often don’t attract the same level of respect as those working in mainstream professional arts. There is huge potential for community dance here but I feel it is not valued enough in the university training programs. The typical young dance graduate here may feel that a career in the community sector is very much second best to being a company performer, whereas in reality it offers a rewarding life-long career. If more of this community dance practice happened in Australia, we would also see more youth dance companies springing up. And these youth companies would be able to experience dance in a truly creative way and less as a ‘trained machines’.

**Rubicon Dance in Cardiff, Wales** is a great example of excellence in Community Dance Practice. It has a variety of teachers who go into schools, prisons, retirement homes and hospitals to deliver dance. Rubicon’s programs target five challenged areas and within their great work they run specific disability, young mothers, and at risk boys programs. They gear their programs to the needs presented in the various areas they operate, for example running programs for refugees in an area where not much English is spoken, as well as workshops in prisons and classes for very young mothers and their babies. Rubicon also offers youth company experiences in Nubico, Young Nubico, and Junior Nubico, as well as Nuworks and Rebound for young participants.

**Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance** is the UK’s first conservatoire of music and contemporary dance. Their excellent courses, exciting performances and innovative education, community and social inclusion work leads the way in the advancement of creative artistic practice. They believe they have a responsibility to the wider community and through their courses and published research they seem to be at the forefront of community and youth dance practice.

**Festivals**

There are many opportunities for young people to travel, perform, connect with others from all over the UK through youth dance festivals such as;

- **U Dance** – a nation wide festival run by One Dance UK
- **Big Dance** – a dance event bringing people together from the UK and Australia to all perform at the same time in their own locations.
- **Horizons** – a combined festival run by YDance, Scotland
Commonwealth Youth Dance Festival – also run by YDance, held in Glasgow in 2014 to coincide with the Commonwealth Games. It drew over 400 dancers from countries across the Commonwealth. QL2 Dance participated in this festival.

SPECIFIC LESSONS LEARNED FROM ACTIVITIES:

- Youth Dance Practice is strong across the UK. It has grown out of community dance practice with hundreds of youth dance companies ranging from small community groups supported by local councils to higher profile companies connected to funded dance companies and to national companies.

- The level of understanding and valuing of dance for young people is much higher in the UK and is reflected in a much more diverse funding environment including:
  - National and local arts councils
  - Municipal councils
  - Government departments of education, sport and health
  - Philanthropic organisations
  - National Lotteries

- There is much greater support for dance being accessible in all regions of the UK not just the major cities.

- With regard to training, there are many performing arts high schools, colleges, conservatoires and universities that give dancers full time training. This has implications for more diversity in pathways and infrastructure.

- The Centre for Advanced Training in Dance (CAT) scheme is a very successful national model of identifying and training talented young people from very diverse backgrounds.

- The many well run festivals in the UK offer great opportunities for youth dance companies to learn, share and perform with other groups from different areas, nationally and internationally.

- Arts funded internships and apprenticeships offer a broader view of an arts career. Assisted by the existence of university courses that have a focus on community dance, graduates can more easily find employment and are skilled at teaching and creating in all capacities.

- The use of Young Ambassadors develops an important voice for youth dance.

- There are many excellent programs geared to various levels of experience, age and access for young people in dance with a disability.
5. CONCLUSION

It is the long running dance infrastructure in the UK that has allowed other groups to leverage this existing infrastructure and set up. This is stark in comparison to the Australian context where particular driven personalities have set up organisations against the odds, rather than because of a system that is designed to ensure that youth dance practice remains an ongoing part of the dance landscape. We need more awareness of youth dance practice so everyone can see the benefit. In particular there is huge potential in regional initiatives and local council initiatives. While there are great one-off projects for things like dance for at-risk boys, the potential benefits of ongoing youth dance practice are yet to be realised on scale.

The few companies that exist in isolation in Australia have varying degrees of local support and have done surprisingly well to date, individually creating world-class youth dance in their own regions. Each youth dance organization has been fighting their own fight and learning their own lessons without the support of the infrastructure the UK has developed. Despite this our companies are developing young artists through excellent training and positive creative engagement.

To my surprise despite meeting with 21 excellent organisations across the UK, I didn’t find an organization that had the depth of engagement over a long period such as QL2 Dance has with its participants, nor any with the same kind of longitudinal progression planning for career pathways as QL2 Dance does. It is particularly notable that QL2 Dance starts at age eight, often the first exposure of a young person to contemporary dance, and continues to support them all the way through to emerging artist. In the UK dancers need to move between organisations to access these pathways.

RECOMMENDATIONS

. Seek funding to further develop the Youth Dance Australia network to support the existing youth dance companies and help to nurture future groups. YDA will also help to deliver an International Australian Youth Dance Festival in Melbourne in 2019 in association with Ausdance Victoria.

. Encourage the development of more youth dance companies around Australia particularly in regional areas where the practice is valued for its contribution to community and where emerging artists can go into and work with these communities. This would be extremely rewarding for the both the communities and the artists involved.

. Build awareness and valuing of Youth Dance Practice across all government sectors, particularly arts, education and health.

. Broaden the training in the Tertiary Dance Institutions for dance students to learn and experience work in community dance, so they are more employable on
graduating, and they can join community organisations and contribute to a variety of valuable arts areas.

. Investigate the potential of a national youth dance company project in a structure similar to the Australian Youth Orchestra, bringing together the top talent from around Australia. Commission respected choreographers and perform in a national or international festival to represent Australia.

. Enlist more support and exchange from the major professional dance companies to recognize youth dance as a source of young potential dance artists with creative competence so that the developing artists see the company dancers as role models. The company dancers could mentor the developing artists. Engagement with the major companies would greatly raise the profile of and perceived value of youth dance practice in Australia.

. More philanthropic support and/or sponsorship for youth dance companies is needed. These companies don’t currently have the required profile but would hugely benefit from support. Those sponsoring youth dance are also given the opportunity to support a very positive message of young healthy people striving to find their full potential.