

<b>Institution: University of Manchester</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 28 (Modern Languages and Linguistics)</b>
<b>Title of case study: Enriching Choreographer-Audience Relations in the Manchester Dance Community</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>The impact is on dancers and audiences in North West England. Choreographic practice in live dance performance was found through a collaborative research programme to build particular relationships with audiences. Where audience feedback influences the choreographic process the subsequent effect on how audiences respond to performances is marked. Strong links between audiences and dancers can enhance creativity in performers, and enrich and expand the imaginations and sensibilities of audiences. On the basis of this kind of empathetic relationship, the Manchester Dance Consortium has worked to enhance locally the quality of dance as a cultural asset and to intensify the involvement and receptivity of dance audiences.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The research by Professor Dee Reynolds took place in Manchester from 2004 to the present, with the first major publication in 2007, a single-authored monograph [3.1]. This was the stimulus for a collaborative, research project funded by the AHRC 2008-11, entitled 'Watching Dance: Kinesthetic Empathy', which used qualitative research and neuroscience to study dance audiences. With Reynolds as PI, the Co-researchers were: Dr Matthew Reason (York St John University), specialising in audience research, and Professor Frank Pollick, Dr Marie-Helène Grosbras and Dr Corinne Jola (Glasgow University) together with Dr Anna Kuppuswamy (Imperial College London) in neuroscience.</p> <p>Reynold's sole-authored work [3.1] was a study of rhythm in the context of the work of three choreographers, Mary Wigman, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. It argued that kinesthesia and kinesthetic empathy are key factors in how dance is received and in its capacity to impact on dominant economies of rhythm. The collaborative phase of the research then investigated how watching dance impacts on spectators, particularly by experiencing movement vicariously, even when spectators are not trained dancers. It explored the role of this form of empathy in audiences' experience of watching dance and their pleasure in watching; it compared responses in non-dancers with different experiences of watching dance; and it assessed how music and sound affect the experience of watching dance.</p> <p>Qualitative research methods were used to assess motor resonance and kinaesthetic responses in non-dancer spectators across a range of expertise; questionnaires assessed responses to dance, exploring spectators' motivations and how they relate to different kinds of kinaesthetic empathy; a contemporary dance piece was choreographed by Rosie Kay in collaboration with the Watching Dance team, using different soundscapes and the performance was followed by focus groups. The filmed piece was later shown to spectators while their brains were scanned by fMRI imaging to assess which types of sound-movement relation gave rise to shared responses between spectators [3.3].</p> <p>Visual and creative writing workshops were held following contemporary dance performances. Key Findings were reported in an edited book (2012) [3.2] as follow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Experiencing kinesthetic empathy:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relates strongly to previous exposure to specific dance styles, in both motor resonance and verbal articulation;</li> <li>• is a source of pleasure for spectators in watching dance;</li> <li>• takes more or less embodied or escapist forms, depending on motivation</li> <li>• can take new forms when spectators respond imaginatively through their own creative processes (visual art, creative writing)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

The impact of music/sound varies according to spectators' motivations but many spectators react strongly to sounds produced by the dancers themselves, especially breathing.

### 3. References to the research (AOR - Available on Request)

Key outputs:

- 3.1. Book. *Rhythmic Subjects: Uses of Energy in the Dances of Mary Wigman, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham* (Dance Books, 2007). ISBN 978-1852731120 (AOR)
- 3.2. Edited book. *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, co-edited and introduced by Matthew Reason and Dee Reynolds (Intellect Books, 2012). ISBN 978-1841504919 (AOR)
- 3.3. Journal article. Jola C, Abedian-Amiri A, Kuppuswamy A, Pollick FE, Grosbras M-H (2012) Motor Simulation without Motor Expertise: Enhanced Corticospinal Excitability in Visually Experienced Dance Spectators. *PLoS ONE* 7(3): e33343. DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0033343

Supplementary outputs:

- 3.4. Journal article. 'Dance and Neuroscience', Special Online Issue of *Dance Research*, co-edited and introduced by Corinne Jola, Frank Pollick and Dee Reynolds (Winter 2011). Editorial Introduction: DOI 10.3366/drs.2011.0019.
- 3.5. Journal article. Matthew Reason and Dee Reynolds, 'Kinesthesia, Empathy and Related Pleasures: An Inquiry into Audience Experiences of Watching Dance', *Dance Research Journal* 42(2), Winter 2010, pp.49-75. DOI: 10.1353/djr.2010.0006
- 3.6. Journal article. Corinne Jola, Shantel Ehrenberg, Dee Reynolds. "The Experience of Watching Dance: Phenomenological - Neuroscience Duets." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* (2011) DOI:10.1007/s11097-010-9191

Dance Books is the UK's only company devoted solely to the publishing of books and related materials on dance and human movement; it selects materials for publication on the basis of the specialist, dance research-backed knowledge of the author and is a key point of reference for the sector across the English-speaking world. Intellect books are an established academic publisher with a focus on the performing arts and cultural industries; they employ the customary systems of close editing and external, academic reader assessment. The journals cited are all peer-reviewed, with *Dance Research* being a leader in its field.

### 4. Details of the impact

#### Context

The Manchester dance scene has many talented choreographers and there is a dedicated body, Dance Initiative Greater Manchester (DiGM: set up November 1999), devoted to promoting dance in the area. However Manchester has been poorly served for dance relative to comparable cities. When members of the Watching Dance research team were invited to lead a discussion event at the Green Room following the Turn prize for new choreography in March 2011 [5.2], it became apparent that there was a need for greater collaboration between choreographers and between choreographers and audiences in order to create a truly supportive and dynamic environment for dance in the Manchester area and to grow audiences. The Manchester Dance Consortium was set up to this end in 2011 [5.1].

#### Pathways to impact

Since 2011 the Consortium has been working to implement aspects of the underpinning research in ways that can benefit the Manchester dance community. It was designed to provide support and development for the dance scene, and to augment the impact of choreographic practice in performance on audiences. Comprising choreographers, dance spectators and representatives of dance venues and local bodies, of which the first meeting was held in June 2011 [5.1; 5.2], with 25 invited participants from different local dance constituencies and led by Reynolds, Joseph Lau (choreographer) and Karen Wood (formerly PhD student on the Watching Dance project and now postdoctoral lecturer, researcher and choreographer). Following the March 2011 Green Room

## Impact case study (REF3b)

event Reynolds and Wood were commissioned to carry out audience research and produce a report on a new experimental dance piece by Julia Griffin at Victoria Baths, Manchester (April 2012) [5.3]. This fed into the Consortium's approach to the impact of its projects on audiences and dancers and into the design of questionnaires for subsequent events, and the planning of those events (see below).

The principal beneficiaries of the research are: choreographers, dancers, audiences and dance venues who are able to engage through the formal infrastructure that the Consortium has set up [5.1]. A Working Party includes choreographers (e.g. Fiske, Griffin, Patrick, Platt, Say) along with dance audience members and representatives of agencies and venues (DiGM, Z-Arts, Contact). This led to a pilot event, Platform Zero [5.5] in March 2012. This gave 6 selected artists (performing 3 duets) the opportunity to show work in progress and gain feedback. Selection criteria included ability to reflect on processes of making and involve audiences and the Consortium worked with artists to structure audience questionnaires [5.4].

In October 2012 the Consortium obtained funding (£10,250) from Arts Council England to support its activities with a part-time administrator. On 29 November 2012 the Consortium held its second performance event, Platform 0.1, again supported by partners DiGM and Z-Arts.

### Reach and Significance

The Platforms are creative collaborations between choreographers and audiences. Choreographers present short works in progress and receiving written feedback from audiences on their responses. The Consortium's webpage brings together the projects activities, enables audience collaboration, and acts as a networking portal [5.8].

At Platform 0.1 the Consortium decided to extend its networks to include music artists. This time the selection criteria stipulated a sound component (an important aspect of the underpinning research). The Arts Council funding enabled the provision of mentoring for participating choreographers by a distinguished composer, Alan Williams.

Platform 0.2 took place on 14 May 2013 at Contact Theatre, Manchester (45 feedback forms returned). An on-line review noted how "All three works are great demonstrations of the variety and experimentation, which the Manchester Dance Consortium encourages" [5.6]. A 3-day Micro-Choreolab was held on 4-6 July 2013 (led by professional artists Niku Chaudhari and Emilyn Claidand) with the aim of fostering exploration between dance artists and musicians of how to enhance performance and optimize impact on audiences and their understanding of the interactions of body, movement, feeling, and involvement [5.8: MDC Events/Past MDC Events link]. One choreographer remarks on the uniqueness of the Platforms' contribution to dance regionally and is benefit for North-based artists generally. A reviewer, a regular attender, speaks of Platforms as contributing to 'the region's growing and diverse community of dance artists and [giving] dance makers [...] a valuable new space for showing their work to interested audiences in the city', resisting 'the conservative and commercial mould that increasingly characterises regional theatre and dance especially'.

The impact of this work is on **cultural life**, generating new ways of thinking about dance and watching dance that influence creative practice and change audience sensitivities, and inspiring and supporting new forms of expression in dance. The reach of the impact activities is local and regional through support to the dance community (choreographers, dancers, audiences, venues and agencies) in the Manchester area, and through attracting and channelling funding. Through creative interactions between choreographers and audiences and also between dance artists and artists in other media (beginning with sound artists) the Consortium has generated a new optimism, openness and dynamism in the Manchester dance scene and provided new performing opportunities (and thus **employment**; as also for the part-time administrator) for emerging choreographers, e.g. at the three new Platform events. It is artistically and culturally significant as it is generating **new ways of thinking** that influence dance and its audiences, who continue to engage with the issues between performances through blog entries, comments, and networking opportunities [5.7; 5.8, Events/Networks links].

**Impact case study (REF3b)****5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

All claims are referenced in section 4.

5.1. Minutes of Manchester Dance Consortium Working Party meetings:

[http://www.watchingdance.org/news\\_events/mandancon/index.php](http://www.watchingdance.org/news_events/mandancon/index.php)

5.2. Programme of events (archive):

[http://www.watchingdance.org/news\\_events/archived\\_events/index.php](http://www.watchingdance.org/news_events/archived_events/index.php)

5.3. Audiences' Thoughts on *A Ghost of Someone Not Yet Drowned*.

A quantitative and qualitative evaluation of audiences' experiences of *A Ghost of Someone Not Yet Drowned*, Victoria Baths, Manchester, 19 April 2012. On file at Research Office, School of Arts, Languages and Cultures.

5.4. Audience feedback sheets to Platform Zero dancers. On file at Research Office, School of Arts, Languages and Cultures.

5.5. Audience feedback sheets to Platform 0.1 event. On file at Research Office, School of Arts, Languages and Cultures.

5.6. Review of Platform 0.2 event, WhatsOnStage.com 15 May 2013: at:

[http://www.whatsonstage.com/blackpool-theatre/reviews/05-2013/platform-02-manchester\\_207.html](http://www.whatsonstage.com/blackpool-theatre/reviews/05-2013/platform-02-manchester_207.html)

5.7. Manchester Dance Consortium Facebook page, with audience and practitioner comments:

<https://www.facebook.com/dansortium>

5.8 Manchester Dance Consortium webpage: [www.dansortiummcr.org](http://www.dansortiummcr.org)