

Dance policy



Introduction

We will support the development of dance in order to achieve our ambition of putting the arts at the heart of national life and people at the heart of the arts. This means enabling artists and arts organisations to take creative risks and pursue new opportunities. Our policy summarises the context for dance and the Arts Council's role. It sets out our vision for dance and the priorities we have set to help us deliver it.

All our arts policies prioritise strengthening and developing the infrastructure for the artform. They identify particular areas of contemporary practice that we want to help develop. They confirm our support for individual artists.

Collectively the policies will help us deliver the six areas of our agenda for the arts: taking part in the arts, children and young people, the creative economy, vibrant communities, internationalism and celebrating diversity.

We are prepared to make choices – sometimes tough ones – about how we commit our funding to respond to the kind of ambitious thinking and high quality work that will take our priorities forward. We believe they will help us develop a confident, diverse and innovative dance sector that is valued by and in tune with the communities it serves.

Front cover

Children from rural schools with hip hop teacher Pako, from Portugal, taking part in Big Dance celebrations at Byland Abbey in North Yorkshire

Photo: Paula Solloway

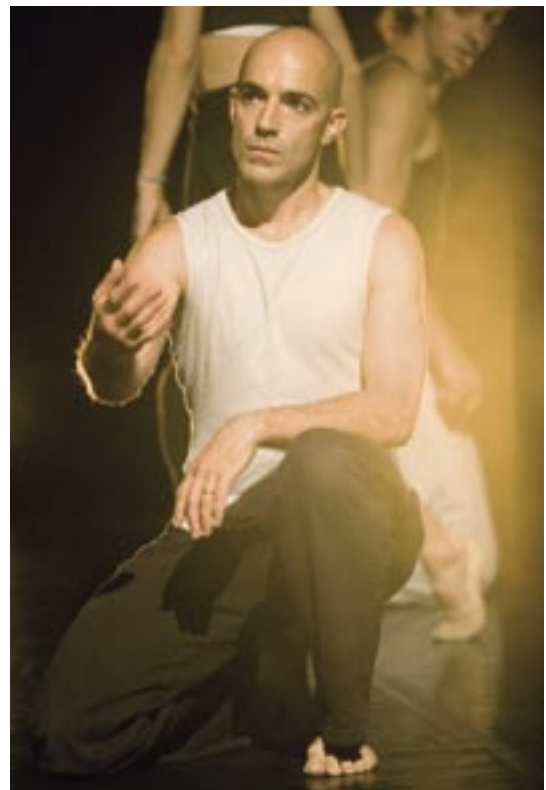
The context for dance and the role we play

Dance performance and participation celebrate our capacity to communicate through movement. They offer new ways of understanding our world and our humanity.

Dance is a creative physical activity that links art and sport. It stretches our imagination and our bodies, contributing to the health of individuals and communities. Twenty per cent of the population dances. Among young people it is the most popular physical activity after football. It is used in advertising, television, film and fashion to signify energy and aspiration.

Today's dance artists draw on influences from around the world: from hip hop to Kathak; from salsa to ballet. London has long been a major international dance capital and continues to be home to the majority of the artists and companies that work

nationally and internationally. Cities such as Birmingham and Leeds are hubs of dance activity and there is a growing appetite for dance in towns and rural areas across the country. The creativity and diversity of artists working in this country, our infrastructure for education, participation and professional training, the developments in dance and the moving image, and our support for artistic development set a world standard.



Russell Maliphant choreographing *Push*

Photo: Johan Persson

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From Where I'm Standing,
A South East Dance Commission
Producer: Lindsey Butcher
Director and photographer: Carl Stevenson

Dance is a collaborative activity. It engages with and benefits musicians, designers and visual artists. It is an essential part of musical theatre and often a key part of opera and film productions. The collaborative nature of dance has been key to its evolution. Classical dance is being invigorated through being presented alongside contemporary work.

Choreographers are taking artistic risks and engaging in new ways with audiences and participants. Dance-makers continue to work in traditional spaces but are increasingly finding new and unexpected spaces in which to perform their work, animating public spaces and our built environment.



Arts Council England is the major investor in dance as artistic practice. Our investment in the artform has grown steadily and audiences for dance have grown by 35 per cent since 1989.

We regularly invest around £44 million a year in around 90 dance organisations. A third of these only received funding within the last 10 years. These organisations include a range of repertory and choreographer-led companies, dance houses, agencies and promoting organisations. They provide the backbone for dance in this country. We also invest around £8 million a year in development grants for a wider range of organisations and artists.

Over the last ten years, government's increased funding for the arts together with the National Lottery has changed the dance landscape by creating a number of dance houses. These spaces are homes for local, national and international dance production, performance and participation. They are helping make dance more accessible and

attractive to more people. However, there are still many parts of the country that lack adequate dance facilities.

Despite the growth of the dance industry there are only about 400 year-round jobs for dancers, most of these in the ballet companies. A further 1,200 dancers juggle short-term performing contracts with other work. Most dancers stop performing in their late thirties. Demand is outstripping supply for teachers, managers and leaders. There is more work to do to match demand with the skills and aspirations of dance professionals and to create an environment where a life-long career in dance is viable.

Young people have more opportunities to experience dance and new kinds of support for identifying and nurturing talent are being established. Tomorrow's dance artists, audiences and policy-makers will be increasingly diverse, discerning and demanding. Our vision for dance has to match the ambition of future generations.

Our vision for dance

Our ambition is for more people of all ages to enjoy and take part in dance that challenges, provokes, entertains and inspires them.

Dance can have a powerful effect on people's lives. We want to see the physical, emotional, mental and social benefits of dance extended to as many people as possible.

We want dance in this country to maintain and develop its international reputation. For this to happen, artists must continue to have the opportunity to push the boundaries of the artform and produce work of the highest quality. We will work with others to support the development of the dance profession, promoting opportunities for dancers to develop skills throughout their careers. We will continue to support Youth Dance England to reach all parts of the country, promoting the profile and achievements of young people

dancing. Centres for advanced training across the country are another way of developing young artists and ensuring that our most talented young people have the best opportunities to realise their potential.

We want to support arts organisations to take creative risks, develop new ways of working, new business models and new ways of increasing the visibility of what they do and connecting with the communities they serve.

There are a number of ways in which dance can be developed and distributed to ensure it reaches a wider audience. We would like to see more collaborations between producers, promoters and dance artists and a stronger touring infrastructure for live dance, with consortia of presenting venues and theatres commissioning new dance works.



Akademi's *Waterscapes*,
Somerset House, 10–14 August 2004

Dancer: Munisha Sevani

Photo: Richard Haughton



Anyone can enjoy dancing regardless of their age and background. We want everyone to have access to space for dance. This could be in a traditional arts venue or a local social, education, community, or health setting. Dance can also reach people through large-scale outdoor events such as Big Dance in 2006. This collaboration between the BBC, the Arts Council and the Mayor of London celebrated the joy of dancing across the country. We want to encourage more imaginative initiatives like this that enable dance to connect with audiences, including live work in non-traditional spaces, or work distributed digitally.

Dance connects people across the divides of language, faith, race and generation. It promotes empathy and a sense of community. For individuals and for communities, dance can build confidence, self-esteem and contribute to creativity. We want to help build

the partnerships that will develop the power of dance to promote healthy and vibrant communities.

Dance is a truly international artform. Dance artists are well placed to move across borders both physically and in their creativity. We want to help build and maintain England's international reputation as a leader in artistic practice, a provider of opportunity for artistic development, and a pioneer in education and socially relevant participatory work. We'd like to see more of our dance artists acting as cultural ambassadors and engaging creatively with international communities both here and abroad. There are a number of key international platforms such as Liverpool European Capital of Culture in 2008 and the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games 2012 that are a great springboard for engaging more people in dance and a great arena for showing the best of this country's dancers.

Our priorities for dance 2007–2011

To support a more confident, diverse and innovative arts sector, which is valued by and in tune with the communities it serves

- We will fund a portfolio of organisations that are contemporary in their approach and committed to engaging people in their work in new ways. We will continue to review the organisations we fund. We will prioritise those seeking to implement more sustainable business models and to develop partnerships that give their work greater impact and reach
- We will support the development of the dance profession. We will work to enhance pathways into the profession and we will promote opportunities for dance artists to develop skills throughout their careers. We will help create the time, space, money and networks that artists and managers need to develop their practice

To enable more people to take part in the arts as both audiences and participants

- We will promote collaborations between producers, promoters and dance artists and encourage new forms of distribution for live dance and for digital work. We will work with partners to promote and develop spaces for dance

To help create vibrant communities across the country

- We will develop the impact of dance in the wider community. We will promote the contribution that dance makes to a healthier society. We will build connections with wider creativity and physical activity agendas. We will provide advocacy, information and tools to facilitate effective partnerships

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