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Made In The North East

Evaluation Report

May 2022

By Lesley Wood

Ubiquitous Arts

Please note: The optimal format to read this report and access linked media files is by using a laptop or desktop device.

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1. Executive Summary

This evaluation report was written by Lesley Wood of Ubiquitous Arts.

Evidence from Years 1 and 2 was gathered by Dance City and by Lesley Wood in Year 3.

The concept of The Made In The North East (MITNE) project was created by Dance City in 2017, with an ambition to make the North East a place where great dance was made, and for it to happen in a variety of contexts.

The project worked with nine regional venues

- Alnwick Playhouse, Alnwick
 - Queens Hall, Hexham
 - Middlesbrough Town Hall, Middlesbrough
 - The Witham, Barnard Castle
 - The Fire Station, Sunderland
 - Hartlepool Town Hall Theatre, and Borough Hall, Hartlepool
 - Darlington Hippodrome, Darlington
 - Gosforth Civic Theatre
-

The long-term aims of the project were:

- More dance work is created and toured in the region
 - More work made by North East dance artists is touring across the UK and beyond
 - More dance companies are established in the North East of England as touring opportunities increase
 - More work from beyond the North East of England touring in the region
-

To fulfil their collective ambition to initiate a world class piece of work made in the North East the consortium released a tender document in October 2020 offering a commission of £25,000. This is the largest commission for dance in the North East to date.

- In total 10 North East artists and companies responded to the Stage 1 Expression of Interest. The consortium shortlisted six applicants who were then invited to Stage 2 and then further shortlisted this to four who were invited to Stage 3 interviews.
 - In the final interview stages the consortium made a unanimous decision to engage Rendez-Vous dance, led by choreographer Mathieu Geffré.
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Key Project Outputs

All of the key outputs were met to a high degree.

Dance touring network North East created with at least five venues	FULLY MET
Networking opportunities	FULLY MET
Training sessions for dance touring network	FULLY MET
Commission created for a new piece of dance	FULLY MET
Regional tour of commissioned work	FULLY MET

Key Project Outcomes

With any evaluation there is a point of accountability, this is the point at which it is not possible within the scope and timescale of the evaluation to be able to measure outcomes.

It is important to note that for those areas in which outcomes have only been partially met this is more to do with the wide focus of the outcome and not the quality of what has occurred and the learning of those involved.

At a difficult time, when people found themselves negotiating their way through the global pandemic the project was able to meet many of its outcomes, outputs and aims to a high level.

1. Dance artists in the North East are better able to sustain a career through the establishment of a dance touring network.	OUTSIDE OF THE SCOPE OF THIS REPORT
1.1 Dance artists have more understanding of audience and venue needs when creating and touring their work	PARTIALLY MET
2. Audiences at network venues are more knowledgeable about dance	OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THIS REPORT
2.1 Audience numbers for dance shows increase at partner venues	PARTIALLY MET
2.3 Audiences in partner venues are more open to exploring dance	PARTIALLY MET
2.4 Dance artists/companies write more accessible copy about their shows due to training, workshops and marketing sessions enabled through MITNE. They can use more impactful and audience attracting imagery and have more discourse with audiences via social media, through sharing at partner venues and at pre and post show talks	PARTIALLY MET
3. Network venues are more confident in programming dance and do so more regularly.	FULLY MET
3.1 Programmers, communications, and ticket office staff are more confident dance programmers	FULLY MET

2. About the Project

The concept of this project was created by Dance City in 2017, with an ambition to make the North East a place where great dance was made, and for it to happen in a variety of contexts.

The Need

Initial research with regional organisations, creatives and industry professionals in 2017 identified some key areas of need. This was reviewed throughout the development of the project and added to as necessary.

01	Few venue networks or opportunities for regional venues to work collaboratively and to share knowledge and expertise to build audiences for dance in the North East region existed.
02	Regional and national venues were hesitant to programme contemporary dance.
03	Many regional venue programmers and marketing teams did not have the knowledge needed to feel confident building a sustainable dance audience.
04	There was a lack of connection between dance makers and audiences during the creation of work.
05	There were not sufficient benchmarks to define high quality dance.

The Project

In 2017 Dance City applied for funding from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to create what evolved into 'Made In The North East' (MITNE).

As project lead, Dance City formed a consortium of venues across the North East, with a collective ambition to make a world class piece of work with national significance, which was made in the North East by a regionally based company.

Using the expertise of Dance City's team, this strategic partnership has been able to:

- share years of knowledge, skills and experience
- support accessibility and diversity across the sector
- develop the programming of quality professional dance into more places and spaces in the region than would otherwise have been possible
- build the confidence of venues and artists by providing deeper insight around the process of producing a touring dance production and audience development

The Expertise

Dance City is the regional lead dance organisation, with a highly skilled and passionate workforce and many years' dance and audience development history. For many years, Dance City has provided essential opportunities for people of all skill levels in the region to discover dance and have their own personal dance journey. This has included commissioning and hosting dance performances, delivering workshops and dance related experiences for professionals and non-professionals alike.

Dance City is significant in the multinational dance ecology, with partners across the UK and Europe, and is a significant contributor to a huge body of learning, skills and experience around dance across the UK and Europe. Dance City's networks and connections have proved invaluable to many emerging and established artists and companies who work alongside them.

Dance City has established expertise in commissioning processes and has awarded over 40 commissions and provided support to dance artists and companies to realise their vision, in liaison with partner venues.

As the lead project partner, Dance City brought to the project

- Skilled, knowledgeable and expert staff teams
- A passion for the development and promotion of dance
- More than 30 years of regional, national and international dance experience
- Expert knowledge of dance development, professional dance artists and audiences in the North East region

The Consortium Partners

The consortium is made up of nine partner venues that are based across the North East region, and Dance City. They are;

Alnwick Playhouse, Alnwick, Northumberland

Alnwick Playhouse has played a major role in the life of the town since 1925 and has been a vibrant arts centre since 1990. The venue welcomes all ages, all audiences, professional and amateur performers and provides a home to local community groups.

Queens Hall, Hexham, Northumberland

Queen's Hall Arts Centre boasts a 350-seat theatre and two galleries all managed by Queens Hall Arts. QHAC has established itself as a strong base for an extensive range

of artistic activity, attracting the best international and national artists from music, drama, dance and national touring comedy to nonprofessional shows put on by local community groups.

In addition to programming within the building, QHA delivers an extensive outreach service bringing workshops and performances to communities throughout Northumberland.

Middlesbrough Town Hall, Middlesbrough, Teesside

Middlesbrough Town Hall was opened in 2018 after almost two years of renovation funded by Middlesbrough Council and the Heritage Fund.

Middlesbrough Town Hall has a theatre with a proscenium stage which seats 1,190, and there is a second concert hall which is underneath the main theatre hall. The building also offers bar, catering and has capacity for up to 600 people.

The Witham, Barnard Castle, County Durham

The Witham has been at the heart of Barnard Castle and Teesdale's cultural life for over 150 years and is a community venue for theatre, music, art and social events.

The Fire Station, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear

The Fire Station is a vibrant, mid-scale live music and performance venue in the heart of Sunderland, housing the brand-new state-of-the-art auditorium and the Engine Room Bar & Bistro. The Fire Station also introduced Live Theatre and Dance City to Sunderland in their brand-new studios, who offer an array of workshops for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

Hartlepool Town Hall Theatre, and Borough Hall, Hartlepool, County Durham

Original plans were that the 400-seater Hartlepool Town Hall would be the venue partner to host the commissioned work, however during the Covid 19 pandemic this venue became a Vaccination Centre and so instead all activity took place in the Borough Hall which has a main auditorium with a seating capacity of 1200 and a bar.

Darlington Hippodrome, Darlington, County Durham

Built in 1907, Darlington Hippodrome underwent a £13.7 million restoration in 2016-17. The beautiful 1000-seat auditorium is now nestled amongst a bright and modern café bar and galleries as well as The John Wade Group Lounge, the Living Water Room and a rehearsal studio – all of these spaces are available for hire so you can host your event in unique and characterful surroundings.

Gosforth Civic Theatre, Tyne & Wear

Gosforth Civic Theatre is an arts venue, café and community hub in Gosforth, and is home to, and run by, Liberdade Community Development Trust.

Liberdade is a disability arts organisation, which began in 2003 as an apprenticeship scheme with the aim of enabling eight young people with learning disabilities to set up and run their own physical theatre company. Those eight original company members and now many more show how running an organisation can offer people

with learning disabilities choice, and the opportunity to shape the world in which they live.

The Made In The North East Delivery Process

As lead partner, Dance City:

- lead the delivery of the programme working in partnership with venues across the region
- worked one to one with partners to share knowledge and expertise on how to build a dance audience
- worked with partner venues'-staff to increase their knowledge and confidence in promoting dance to their customers
- initiated and led a venue network in the North East for dance
- supported programmers and communications teams to explore dance, sharing programming ideas, audience development tactics and building a passion for the art form
- led regular activities for the cohort such as seeing performances, attending workshops and meeting with industry professionals
- supported reflective practice which allowed the cohort to apply learning in their own context.

The Commission

To fulfil their collective ambition to initiate a world class piece of work made in the North East with a national significance, the consortium released a tender document in October 2020 offering a commission of £25,000. This is the largest commission for dance in the North East to date.

In total 10 North East artists and companies responded to the Stage 1 Expression of Interest. The consortium shortlisted six applicants who were then invited to Stage 2 and then further shortlisted this to four who were invited to Stage 3 interviews.

In the final interview stages the consortium made a unanimous decision to engage Rendez-Vous dance, led by choreographer Mathieu Geffré.

About Rendez-Vous dance

Rendez-Vous dance is the new company led by award-winning choreographer Mathieu Geffré. With Rendez-Vous dance, Mathieu creates projects to tell the past and current stories of LGBTQIA+ communities.

Mathieu's choreography calls upon intimate emotions to manifest with great physicality, intricacy, and virtuosity. Starting from personal curiosities, the work meets the audience through its universal and accessible resonance.

Rendez-Vous dance creates inclusive projects for everyone to feel involved and welcome. Rendez-Vous is a vessel for the expression of a choreographic voice articulating values of

inclusivity, diversity and harmony. The company's practice of dance has no age, no gender, no ethnicity or cultural boundaries: it is easy to access.



The Tour

In early Spring 2022 Rendez-Vous dance delivered nine performances in consortium venues across the region. Prior to this no dance company has ever toured this widely in the North East and so this has been ground-breaking for everyone involved and offered an opportunity for the consortium to learn from their individual and shared experiences.

For Rendez-Vous dance this has provided a unique chance for the company to build its experience of regional venues at an early stage of the company's development.

The Monocle, created by Rendez-Vous dance was a new piece of work inspired by the 1930's lesbian club Le Monocle in Paris.

Artistic Director and Choreographer Mathieu Geffré worked with a range of professionals to develop an absorbing performance which transformed traditional theatre settings into vibrant spaces where audiences experienced the story of The Monocle through live dance and music in an immersive safe space.

In total, 978 audience members saw this brand-new piece of world class contemporary dance

4. Programme Aims, Outputs and Outcomes

MITNE Key Aims

	Aim 1	More dance work is created and toured in the region.
	Aim 2	More work made by North East dance artists is touring across the UK and beyond.
	Aim 3	More dance companies established in the North East of England as touring opportunities increase.
	Aim 4	More work from beyond the North East of England touring in the region.

MITNE Key Outputs

	Output 1	Dance touring network North East created with at least five venues.
	Output 2	Networking opportunities.
	Output 3	Training sessions for dance touring network.
	Output 4	Commission created for a new piece of dance.
	Output 5	Regional tour of commissioned work.

MITNE Key Project Outcomes

5. Evaluation approach and methodology

Data has been gathered through

- Information provided by Dance City relating to Year 1 and 2 of the programme
- Online surveys
- Group discussions using reflective models (Jamboards and conversations)
- One to one conversation with key partners (which have been developed into digital stories)
- Polls (using zoom)
- Ticket sales and related data provided by each of the venues
- Pre-Show and Post Show Talks



Dance City post show talk

What we found

Outputs

Output 1: Dance touring network North East created with at least five venues

STATUS: FULLY MET

Initial targets were to find five local venues to create the consortium of partners. As the project progressed, this target was exceeded with a final total of eight partners plus project leads Dance City.

Consortium Partners

Alnwick Playhouse, Alnwick
Queens Hall, Hexham
Middlesbrough Town Hall, Middlesbrough
The Witham, Barnard Castle
The Fire Station, Sunderland
Hartlepool Town & Borough Hall, Hartlepool
Darlington Hippodrome, Darlington
Gosforth Civic Theatre

The network not only supported the aims of the project but gave much valued support to partners at a time of challenge created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the periods of lockdown when venues were closed and many staff furloughed, the network provided a place where partners could still feel connected, share skills and knowledge, and address the new challenges created by the growing crisis together.

“I found strength and support from those meetings online during lockdown, sharing circumstances and challenges, feeling connected.”

Consortium Partner

Output 2: Training sessions for dance touring network

STATUS: FULLY MET

The purpose of the training sessions was to:

- Equip venues with skills to be able to programme exciting, sellable dance at their venues
- Provide space for group learning, questioning, and sharing of experiences, insights and skills

- Provide partners with the tools needed to support the commissioning process
- Guide the performance delivery programme

Over two years, nine distinct, high quality training opportunities were provided for the cohort, which helped them to create new networks, and to develop their skills and expertise in programming and commissioning dance.

Partner commitment to the process was so strong, that training and network support continued through the Covid 19 Pandemic and was seen as one of the great strengths of the project, at a difficult time in history.

“One of the key moments in the project for me was the visits from external speakers across the project.”

Consortium Partner

As part of the offer given by Dance City, the consortium partners were provided with a half day of 1:1 tailored consultation by the Dance City Head of Communications. The 1:1's supported them to focus on audience development within their own context and offered an opportunity for them to reflect and learn from the lead venue.

Training Delivered

Caroline Greener, Dance City	Marketing and Audience Development
Tim Baker	Pricing promotion and value fencing
Marcus Romer	Piracy, risk taking
Sarah Shead Spin Arts	Working with dance producers and touring
Gary Clark Gary Clark company	Audience development and working with venues
Liv Lorent, balletLORENT	Audience development and working with companies
Martin Wilson, Tin Arts	Accessibility
Curious Arts	LGBTQIA+ awareness
B.A.i.D Black artists in dance	Ethnically diverse dance programming
Sarah Trist	The future of touring dance

- By project end, all the consortium partners were confident that the training had equipped them with skills to support their ongoing work and had also given them new networks to connect with as they develop new dance work
- Overall, the training had been very well received and has contributed to the wider learning of the project
- During shared reflective conversations the consortium partners expressed that whilst the training had a focus on dance, the learning could be applied to other areas of programming and that this was a great benefit of the workshops. There was also an agreement from the consortium partners that they would like to explore ways to continue to develop shared training and learning opportunities in the future

Output 3: Networking opportunities

STATUS: FULLY MET

Regular training and cohort meetings ensured that there were many opportunities for networking. Working with industry experts to ensure high quality provision Dance City programmed further training and networking opportunities to enable the cohort develop skills and networks that would strengthen the commissioning and programming of dance.

As the project continued, the development of skills became further tailored to the consortium members. Project leads at Dance City listened to the venues, identifying their ongoing and emerging needs and locating opportunities for them to connect with other people and organisations that would further develop their skills and understanding. Dance City invited a range of professionals to consortium meetings which expanded the networks of those involved. There was often a further advantage in that the guest professionals were then able to share their own contacts and expand the network further.

The relationships and networks that Dance City provided were essential to confidence building and opened doors into the professional community that the consortium may not have otherwise had.

In one instance the consortium talked about a need to understand more about aerial performance. Guest professionals with expert knowledge were invited to a consortium meeting and talked extensively about their own expertise and were able to signpost the partners to other sources of support and information through their own networks.

- The use of a mentor to support emerging dancers within the production had a significant impact on professional development and provided a deeper understanding of practical industry requirements whilst offering access to career supporting networks

“In terms of support, I think Andy was the biggest one for me throughout this process. Andy Gardiner was the dramaturg of the work and my mentor throughout my apprenticeships. I definitely found him so helpful.... I remember at first it was more like typical, you know “How was this week and what would you do differently?” But as soon as the process was going on, I realised that I can actually use Andy for

things that are not just The Monocle.... I wanted to apply for example for a different company audition and he helped me with my CV and he offered advice. He even emailed some people that he knew and it was really important for me because I saw how connections work throughout this sector, and it was really important to have him."

Natassa Argyropoulou: Apprentice Dancer



Photo: Cave & Sky

**YOU CAN LISTEN TO NATASSA'S JOURNEY [HERE](#)
A TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUDIO FILE IS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)**

Output 4: Commission created for new piece of dance

STATUS: FULLY MET

The commissioning process was delivered by all the venues with a call going out in October 2020.

Interviews for the Commission were delivered by the cohort themselves who worked together to develop questions to be shared with the applicants.

The tender process took into consideration the amount of work normally expected from dance companies and individuals when tendering for commissions and made efforts to streamline the process making it easier and less time consuming to apply. For those reaching the later stages of the application process, a stipend was available to support a more in-depth application.

Rendez-Vous dance led by choreographer Mathieu Geffré, was a unanimous choice. The consortium felt that the ideas and themes of the production were clearly articulated from the outset and fully embraced the aims of the Made In The North East project.

At the time, the £25,000 commission was the biggest dance commission to have been offered in the region and showed a significant investment in the sector. Rendez-Vous dance succeeded in securing further funding of £58,021 Arts Council England's Project Grants programme. This was a considerable grant for an early-stage company to receive and was a very positive affirmation of the company that had been selected by the consortium for the commission.

Output 5: Regional tour of commissioned work

STATUS: FULLY MET

The tour went out to nine venues across the North East.

Added value was provided through 'flash mob' activities delivered by community casts who had been choreographed by Rendez-Vous dance. The company invested additional time, working with community dancers across the region to choreograph flash mob performances in seven of the venues before the main production.

This included working with

- Liberdade a group of learning-disabled performers based at Gosforth Civic Theatre
- Over 60's groups at Alnwick Playhouse
- Groups from Dance City who performed at Dance City and Queens Hall Hexham
- Students from Sunderland College
- Community groups attached to The Witham
- Dancers local to Middlesbrough Town Hall
- Youth and Community groups associated with Darlington Hippodrome

Rendez-Vous dance also offered venues a menu of pre and post show talks and events including open rehearsals to engage with audiences.



Photo: Cave & Sky

Outcomes

Outcome 1: Dance artists in the North East are better able to sustain a career through the establishment of a dance touring network

STATUS: OUTSIDE OF THE SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

We are not able to demonstrate this outcome within the scope and timescale of this evaluation.

1.1 Dance artists have more understanding of audience and venue needs when creating and touring their work

STATUS: PARTIALLY MET

Challenges due to the global pandemic and timescale of the processes make it difficult to evidence this area fully.

- The pandemic made it impossible for most sharing opportunities to occur with the wider dance community to disseminate knowledge
- Timescales were difficult to manage due to repeated lockdowns and rescheduling of performances and so when people were able to meet there were often other priorities to consider

Although the evaluation timescales and financial challenges of a longer evaluation process beyond the scope of the project did not offer the opportunity to capture these wider, long-term outcomes we can indicate that there has been a significant opportunity for a regional dance company, Rendez-Vous dance and the consortium to develop their learning.

- The project has linked Rendez-Vous dance directly with venues at the development stage of their production and given the space for shared conversations about venue needs
- The involvement of the partners in the development of the commissioning process has embedded the needs of the venues at the heart of the process and guided Rendez-Vous dance's approach
- Rendez-Vous dance led open rehearsals in which they were able to have discourse with audiences which gave them a greater insight of their needs
- The project has provided a legacy of information and learning which will be shared by Dance City and the consortium through their own practice and their networks to further meet this outcome

The production

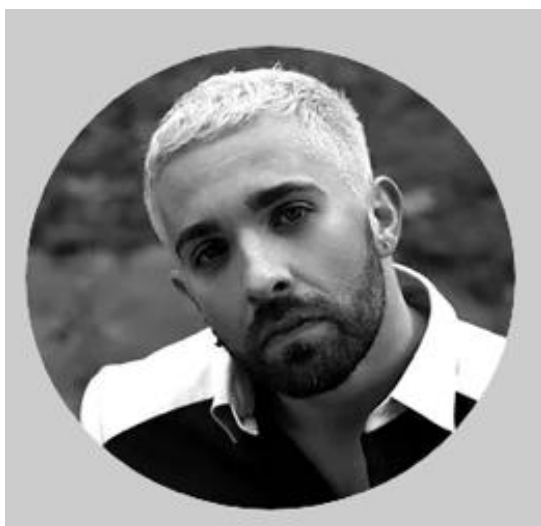
- Provided **315** workdays for creatives
- Involved **35** specialists in overall delivery
- Supported **2** apprentice dancers, giving them a formative experience at an early stage of their career and enabling them to develop their understanding of audience engagement and development
- Provided opportunities for **7** professional dancers in the North East to develop their training and employability
- Worked with **9** different singers (a singer was recruited local to each venue)
- Provided **142** public learning and participation sessions
- Engaged with **70** community cast members
- Had **240,252** interactions on social media
- Received **25,000** pounds funding from Made In The North East (Esmeé Fairbairn)
- Received a further **58,021** pounds from Arts Council England
- Engaged **1** sign language expert

Key Findings

- The tender document developed by the consortium clearly laid out the requirements for the successful dance company to engage with audiences and connect with them during the development process of the dance work and so this was in the development mix from the outset
- Through the process of working with Rendez-Vous dance, dance professionals were able to make contact with audiences through “flash mobs” and open rehearsals as well as learn by example how to develop work that engages with audiences and venues
- The range of venues and their different logistical needs provided an opportunity for the company and professionals working with them to develop their skills and understanding around developing work that was adaptable enough to be performed in small and large venues
- Consortium partners worked with Rendez-Vous dance to share the needs and requirements of the venues, which supported them when considering the design of the performance and practical requirements like set and lighting
- Financial and delivery constraints impacted on the time available for creative professionals to be able to focus on specific areas

“I learnt I'm doing too much and that was an interesting learning for me because it raises the question of the position of the artist within a project.... I dedicated all my time to delivering this project, and that goes beyond just choreographing it, or giving corrections to the dancers, or delivering workshops. It implies a lot more responsibilities ...”

Mathieu Geffré: Award Winning Choreographer



INTERESTED IN LISTENING TO MATHIEU GEFFRÉ TALK ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE OF DEVELOPING THE MONOCLE THEN YOU CAN DO THIS [HERE](#).

A TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUDIO FILE IS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

- Working with the consortium organisations provided new links and networks to Rendez-Vous dance which will help their future growth and development
- Rendez-Vous dance delivered training to dance professionals in London sharing their learning and development outside of the North East and engaging national performers
- The use of a dramaturg to develop character was an innovative way to work. Dancers found new dimensions to the way that they worked by developing a strong character and narrative relating to their character. This in turn helped audiences to engage with the production

I think I'd been in other processes where I'd either stepped into a role... I knew who was needing to be filled and I stepped in and already knew who that was. ... But with this process we'd already been cast before and it really shed light on how much work had been done before we were stepping into the studio ... and in a way it kind of made you feel confident in the fact that there's a lot of individuals in this room and there's been time taken to find out who I am. And there's been a commitment made on that part and once they've committed the role to me for that, I'm now going to commit to the role for them."

Ellis Saul: North East Dancer returning home to work



Photo: Cave & Sky

TO HEAR MORE OF ELLIS' STORY ABOUT RETURNING TO HER NORTHERN ROOTS THEN USE THE LINK [HERE](#)

A TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUDIO FILE IS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

Outcome 2: Audiences at network venues are more knowledgeable about dance.

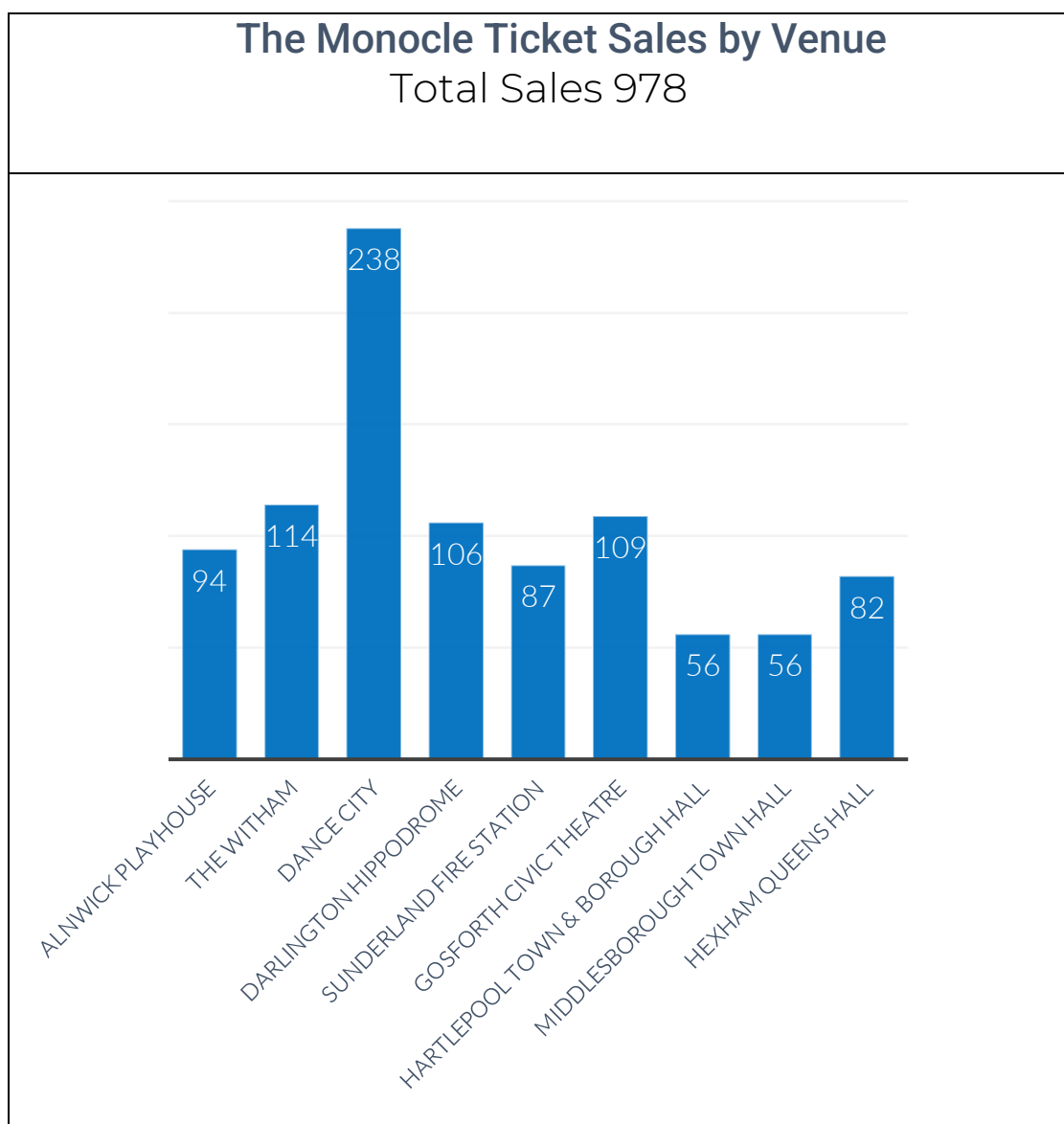
STATUS: OUTSIDE OF THE SCOPE OF THIS EVALUATION

The project has anticipated the setting up of steering groups within venues however due to the pandemic this had not been fully realised.

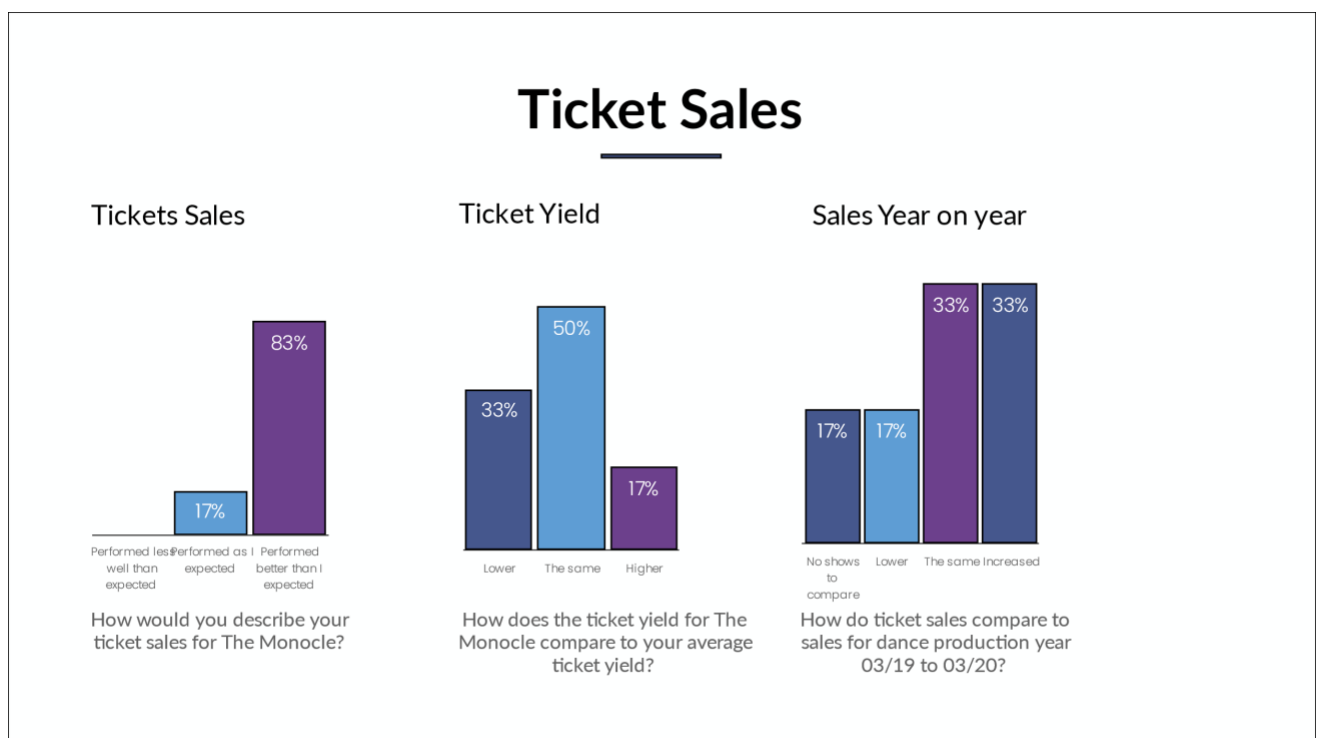
2.1 Audience numbers for dance shows increase at partner venues.

STATUS: PARTIALLY MET

Key Findings audience numbers and tickets sales



- In total there were **978** audience members
- The Covid 19 pandemic caused many challenges with venues being closed for a considerable time and then a slow return of audiences as confidence in the safety of venues increased. Without the pandemic it is hard to say how well shows may have done in comparison to where they are now
- Even in challenging circumstances, venues still found that they had positive audience responses to The Monocle with one venue completely selling out and many others having greater audience numbers than anticipated
- **Seven** of the venues found that ticket sales were higher than they had anticipated with two performing as expected
- Ticket yields had been lower than the year 19/20 for three of the venues, however four of the venues ticket yields remained the same and in two there was an increase.
- A third of the venues found that ticket sales were increased in comparison to dance productions in the year 19/20 and a further third remained the same
- Only two of the venues felt that sales had fallen against the year 19/20
- Dance City decided that for the process to be equitable venues make different levels of financial contribution to MITNE. This was a strategic decision and was based on venue capacity and scale
- Some venues were aware that a dance production may have a lower ticket yield and revenue but felt that MITNE was an opportunity for them to begin to develop their dance programming



2.2 Audiences in partner venues are more open to exploring dance

STATUS: FULLY MET

- Rendez-Vous dance introduced innovative ways to engage audiences and help them to feel immersed in the production, whilst also supporting revenue streams for themselves and the venues

“Mathieu came up with some really innovative offers for venues and to give their audiences added value on top of the show that was being presented.

So things like merchandise, programmes, posters, badges, postcards tote bags photographic prints that kind of thing were all available to buy in the foyer so people could take home a souvenir of the work that they've just seen.

Working with the hospitality at each venue to design a bespoke ‘The Monocle’ cocktail as something else that the audience could get involved with and when they arrived.”

Rachel Jean Birch: Moving Art Management

**TO HEAR MORE OF RACHEL’S EXPERIENCE AS A DANCE PRODUCER USE THE LINK [HERE](#)
A TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUDIO FILE IS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)**

- Having a menu of activity allowed venues the flexibility to choose what worked best with their audiences
- Venues that were in more urban areas and had a good following for dance found that they had better responses to dressing up and that people had embraced the opportunity to be immersed in the activities

“Our first sold out performance of the season. The pre-show talk, the open rehearsal, performance and post-show talk all felt accessible and safe to attend. Audiences received an invitation to dress up and on the night of the performance we witnessed a real celebration of The Monocle, everyone looked fabulous and the atmosphere was fantastic”

Dance City

- Some venues had found that there were challenges around the request for audiences to dress up and had needed to adjust their messaging as a result

“We changed the wording on it as it was putting off audiences and it was also putting off people that we were giving complimentary tickets... People were saying that they didn’t want to come if they had to dress up, they were saying I want to watch and enjoy the performance, but I don’t want to dress up”

Consortium Venue

- Using a dramaturg to develop a narrative for the production supported audience engagement by making dance feel more accessible

- The dramaturg also played an important part in the development of the dance productions themes and sharing the history of queer spaces



Photo: by Cave & Sky, feat. Andrew Gardiner

YOU CAN HEAR ABOUT THE ROLE THAT DRAMATURG ANDY GARDINER PLAYED IN THE MONOCLE [HERE](#)

A TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUDIO FILE IS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

Quality of Experience

This was a high-quality experience



The event felt well organised



I had no access issues



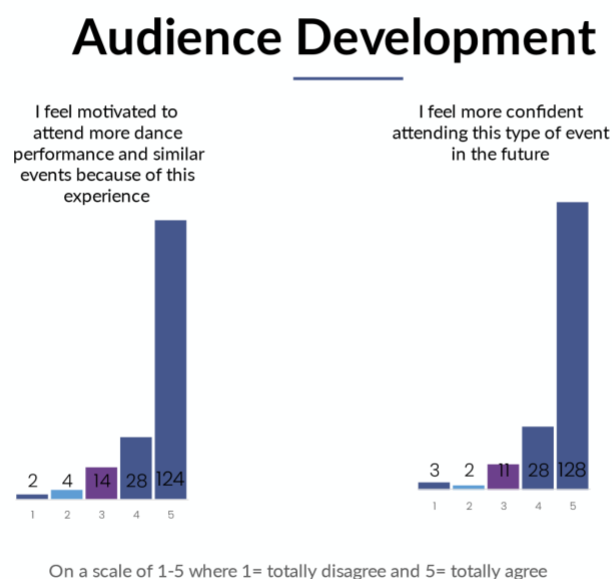
On a scale of 1-5 where 1= totally disagree and 5= totally agree

Key findings on audience experience.

- When asked to respond to the statement “This was a high-quality experience” 92% of those surveyed scored 4 or above on a scale of 1-5 where 1= totally disagree and 5= totally agree
- When asked to respond to the statement “The event felt well organised” 98% of those surveyed scored 4 or above on a scale of 1-5 where 1= totally disagree and 5= totally agree
- When asked to respond to the statement “I had no access issues” 98% of those surveyed scored 4 or above on a scale of 1-5 where 1= totally disagree and 5= totally agree
- Although the numbers of people attending wraparound activities delivered by Rendez-Vous dance varied, responses were very positive, and some venues found that there was an increase in sales after activities like open rehearsals

“It was interesting to learn about Le Monocle in Paris. An outstanding and memorable performance.”

Audience Member

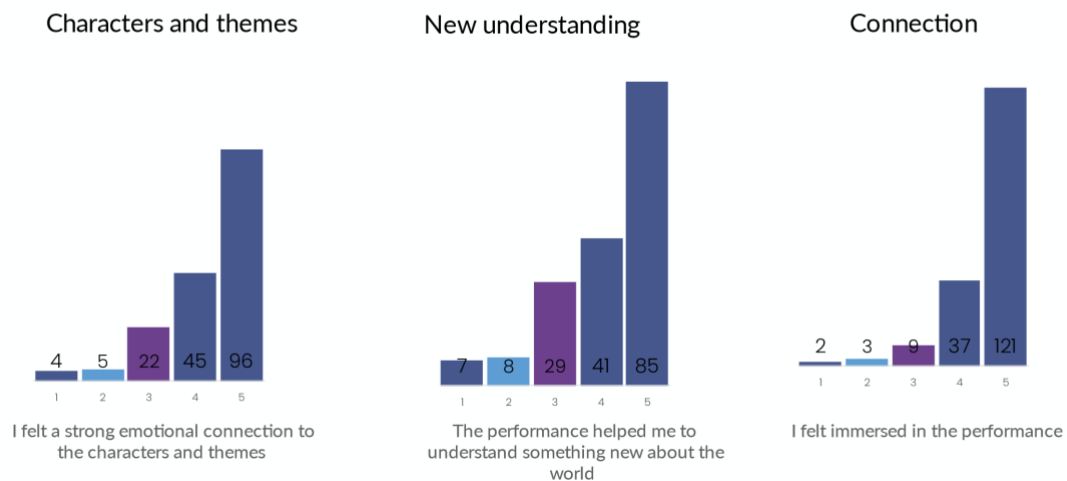


Key findings on audience development:

- When asked to respond to the statement “I feel motivated to attend more dance performance and similar events because of this experience” 88% of those surveyed scored 4 or above on a scale of 1-5 where 1= totally disagree and 5= totally agree
- When asked to respond to the statement “I feel more confident attending this type of event in the future” 91% of those surveyed scored 4 or above on a scale of 1-5 where 1= totally disagree and 5= totally agree

Participation and Engagement

On a scale of 1-5 where 1= totally disagree and 5= totally agree



Key findings on participation and engagement

- When asked to respond to the statement “I felt immersed in the performance” 92% rated this as 4 or over

“I felt totally immersed in the performance. Had seats on the stage, performers included us in their amazing dance.”

Audience Member

- When asked to respond to the statement “The performance helped me to understand something new about the world” 81% of those surveyed scored 4 or above on a scale of 1-5 where 1= totally disagree and 5= totally agree
- Audience comments suggested that the themes of the production had offered representation for them and opportunity to see stories that were about them

“This was a brilliant performance, thank you. I don’t go to many dance performances and felt completely immersed in this. The performers - dancers and singer - were amazing. So pleased I went to see this. As a lesbian, it’s also important to me to see a show focused on this history”

Audience Member

- Characterisation within the production was good. When asked to respond to the statement “I felt a strong emotional connection to the character and the themes” 82% of those surveyed scored 4 or above on a scale of 1-5 where 1= totally disagree and 5= totally agree.

- The timing of open rehearsals was essential as it could be difficult for those working or in education to access those that took place during the day.
- Some venues commented that the timings of wraparound activities had created challenges. Activities during the day had meant that those working or in education were generally not able to attend.
- Venues found that the cost of the extra staffing resource needed for the wraparound activities was at times prohibitive.
- For those venues who had open rehearsals they had found that audiences were very positive and in one venue ticket sales increased immediately after the open rehearsal.

2.3 Dance artists/ companies write more accessible copy about their shows due to training, workshops and marketing sessions enabled through MITNE. They can use more impactful and audience attracting imagery and have more discourse with audiences via social media, through sharing at partner venues and at pre- and post-show talks

STATUS: PARTIALLY MET

We are unable to fully evaluate this outcome due to the scope and timescales of the evaluation. We have been able to base our findings on the experience of Rendez-Vous dance and their ability to meet this outcome.

Surveys were shared with community casts however response rates were relatively low with a 17% response rate and so may not be indicative of overall experience.

Key Findings

- Rendez-Vous dance engaged a social media professional, Jessica Mallinson 'How To Own It' and as a result social media interaction was good and the company found that they had a significant increase in interactions
- The quality of promotional material by Cave and Sky was considered to be very high by the venues

"The Monocle was really engaging, the design work was excellent, it made a really easy call for use to put it on the front cover of a magazine. It was nice and clear and concise, even without wanting to go into the themes it was engaging enough for people to want to find out what it is. Often dance promotional materials have to have some explanation on there of what it is but I found that with the images people just instantly got the feel of the show even if they hadn't really read down to the written text."

Consortium Venue

- The production was reviewed several times very positively, venues found that after reviews there were increases in ticket sales

- Rendez-Vous dance provided **142** additional activities for audiences to develop their understanding of dance these included, open rehearsals and pre and post show talks
- Rendez-Vous dance worked with **70** community cast members
- Flash mob performances were developed with a community cast that was local to the venue. Community casts included
 - Local students
 - Venue users attending dance sessions prior to the production
 - Regular venue users, this included a group of disabled performers
 - Over 60's groups
- These performances took the form of “flash mobs” who appeared from ‘nowhere’ and performed in public spaces before the main performance to engage with the audience and set the atmosphere
- In total **7** flash mob performances took place at the different venues
- Venues being closed due to the pandemic sometimes struggled to find groups to involve due to the change in communication and connection with audiences
- Those who were able to connect groups with Rendez-Vous found that community casts encouraged family and friends to attend the performances boosting audience numbers
- Working with community casts allowed Rendez-Vous dance to connect with groups linked to the consortium venues to develop their skills and experience
- The flash mobs were also very instrumental in venues connecting with local education providers. This was significant experience for early-stage creative professionals and gave them an insight into the world of professional dance
- Many of those involved in community casts were already familiar with dance but were excited by the opportunity to be able to connect with a professional choreographer and have the opportunity to take part in public performances

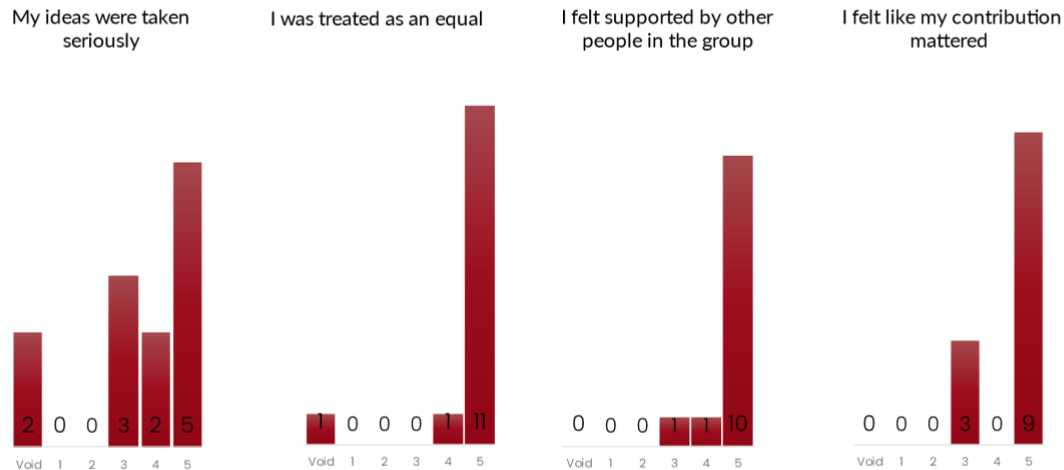


Dance City and Queens Hall Flash Mob Community Cast

LISTEN TO CAROLYN'S STORY ABOUT BEING A FLASH MOB MEMBER [HERE](#)

A TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUDIO FILE IS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

Valued



On a scale of 1-5 where 1= totally disagree and 5= totally agree

- 58% of those involved in flash mobs who responded to surveys, when asked to respond to the statement “my ideas were taken seriously” rated this as 4 or over
- 100% of those involved in flash mobs when asked to respond to the statement “I felt treated as an equal” rated this as 4 or over
- 91% of those involved in flash mobs when asked to respond to the statement “I felt supported by other people in the group” rated this as 4 or over
- 75% of those involved in flash mobs when asked to respond to the statement “my ideas were taken seriously” rated this as 5
- The flash mob experience has helped participants to form friendships and find support from others involved
- In some cases, groups felt inspired enough to develop work of their own

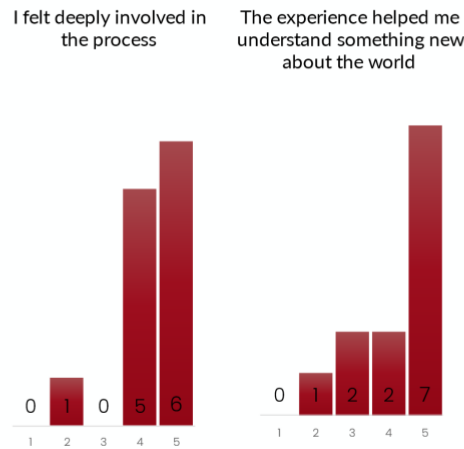
“I’m a bit of a perfectionist and I’ll really admit that I like to get things right... it’s a bit about that not letting anyone down, because when you’re in a community cast, you’re part of a team”

Joan: Community Cast Member

TO HEAR THE INSPIRING STORY OF JOAN WHO WAS ONE OF THE COMMUNITY CAST THEN LISTEN [HERE](#)

A TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUDIO FILE IS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

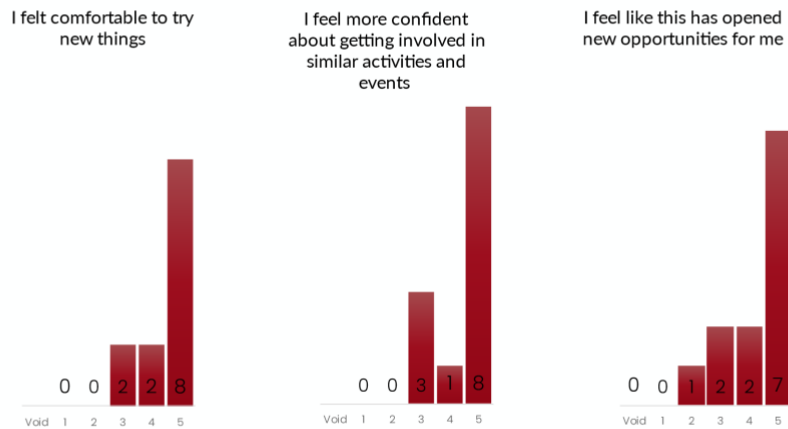
Empathy and World View



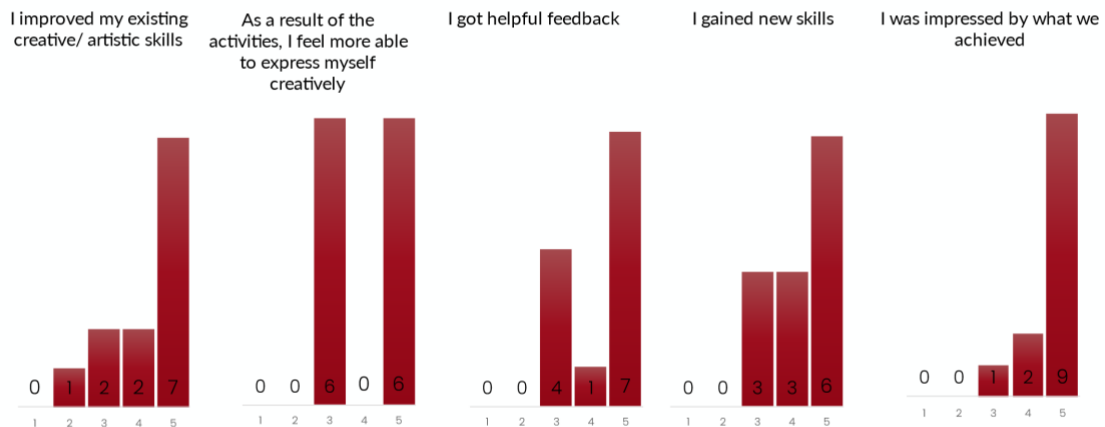
On a scale of 1-5 where 1= totally disagree and 5= totally agree

- 91% of those involved in flash mobs when asked to respond to the statement “I felt deeply involved in the process” rated this as 4 or over
- 75% of those involved in flash mobs when asked to respond to the statement “the experience helped me understand something new about the world” rated this as 4 or over
- The opportunity to be a part of a community cast has increased the confidence of those taking part to get involved in similar activities and events. 75% of those involved in flash mobs when asked to respond to the statement “I feel more confident about getting involved in similar activities and events” rated this as 4 or over
- 83% of those involved in flash mobs when asked to respond to the statement “I feel like this is open to new opportunities for me” rated this as 4 or over

Community Cast



Creative Development



- Although community casts were made up of a mixture of experience, most community casts found that they had improved their creative/ artistic dance and performance skills
- 50% of community casts felt that they were more able to express themselves creatively through dance
- 75% believed that they had gained new skills because of the experience.
- 3 of the members of a community cast have felt inspired enough to go on and develop dance work of their own
- Community casts had been impressed by what they had achieved

- Rendez-Vous dance had an extremely accessible approach to their work and supported a community cast of disabled dancers to perform in advance of Rendez-Vous dance's performance
- There was a value to community casts being able to work with professional dancers

"For them to be partnered up with the dancers and then go in the theatre and watch the dancers after all of that lead up, that build up to it was "Wow we know them, we have worked with them, I know their names, I've danced with them and now I am watching them in a professional way... They absolutely loved the show"

Heather: Facilitator Gosforth Civic Theatre

LISTEN TO THE STORY OF LIBERDADE AND THEIR WORKSHOP WITH RENDEZ VOUS DANCE [HERE](#)

A TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUDIO FILE IS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)



Liberdade in rehearsals with Mathieu Geffré

Outcome 3: Network venues are more confident in programming dance and do so more regularly.

STATUS: FULLY MET

3.1 Programmers, communications and venue staff are more confident dance programmers.

Many of the venues found that using online digital programmes gave them more flexibility to connect with their audiences and would continue to work in this way in the future. This had happened due to venues being closed over the pandemic and there being no physical spaces to share programmes and online being the only way to connect. The use of online programmes increased audience reach and meant that the venues could do less seasonal programmes and instead share things by the calendar and for a longer period of time.

- Some venues had found new ways of marketing shows by connecting with community groups and partners to directly market the work, this had included identifying community groups with a vested interest in the themes of the production. This has proved so successful that they will continue to use this approach in future.
- One venue moved to individual marketing for each performance and more focused audience profiling. This led to a different audience for them and is something that they will continue to do.
- The world-wide pandemic had created issues around lead in times for promoting shows as some of the bigger venues plan their marketing with much longer timelines

“The Monocle was a spectacular piece of work but lead in times were small. We require 9 to 12 months to market most shows. For dance it would be 12 to 18 months in order to build an audience and cross sell.”

Consortium Venue

- There were some concerns about the proximity of the venues to each other and how this might have impacted on ticket sales. However, some venues that were very close to each other found that they were appealing to different types of audiences and that there was space for both of them. The Producers were aware of the challenges around this and considered this carefully when planning the order of venues.

“Having a NE tour was challenging as we had to keep our marketing of the performance to our own individual area rather than the wider region”

Consortium Venue

- There are areas to consider within the organisations around the retention of knowledge. Staff turnover can impact the legacy of learning.

“Staff leaving the organisation left us in a challenging position where the remaining staff didn't have a huge amount of knowledge about the project”

Consortium Venue

- The nature of the consortium has meant that venues of a range of sizes have worked together to share their learning and experience. This had presented challenges in terms of fitting the set and performances on different sized stages and how the immersive approach of the performance connected to the audience, however, it had also offered a great deal of learning for those involved.

“What was special about the cohort working together is that the scale of the venues was so different, so we had much smaller venues like The Witham in Barnard Castle and we were also asking for the work to be presented at the Hippodrome in Darlington and they are vastly different spaces, with different audiences and that was part of the beauty of it... but that did present challenges as well because of the level of facilities available. The level of support was equal across the board, everyone was there to help and do as much as they possibly could...”

Producer Dance City

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW DANCE CITY DEVELOPED MITNE YOU CAN LISTEN TO ALEX’S STORY [HERE](#)

A TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUDIO FILE IS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

- The venues felt that they had learned a great deal from being involved in the production from start to finish and as a result had a better understanding of how they could support dance companies.
- Involvement with MITNE has helped the venues to support ways of developing new audiences and the dance ecology of the area.

“I especially wanted to ensure that we developed dance both for the artists in the city and the audiences ... knowing that it’s a chicken and egg situation in that if you don’t have a venue that really can present dance and you don’t have any dance coming in to the city and you don’t have audiences for dance it’s all bound together, and so I was very keen to get more high profile dance and dance that would certainly be relevant to audiences... so it is important try and programme work that is easily accessible, this is what I was after when I joined this consortium”

Helen Green: The Fire Station Sunderland Culture

TO HEAR MORE ABOUT HELEN’S JOURNEY WITH MITNE AND HOW IT HAS IMPACTED ON PERFORMANCE AT THE FIRE STATION THEN LISTEN [HERE](#)

A TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUDIO FILE IS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)



Photo: Cave & Sky

- The Monocle has offered a starting point for many venues to begin developing their dance audiences.
- The MITNE consortium have learned a lot about commissioning and programming dance and have a deeper understanding of the challenges that dance companies face in terms of developing dance performances.
- Members of the consortium were not always aware of why a dance performance could be more expensive than for example a drama performance but felt clearer on this by the end of the programme.

I feel like there can be a bit of a different language and this can be a challenge however this process has helped me to understand what goes into the art form in itself and what the demands are for the artists. I have a bit more confidence about different dance forms and also what will suit us and what will not. I feel like I have an opinion now.

Consortium Venue

- Working on the process from start to finish has increased understanding about the need for dance organisations to have a specialised rehearsal space. This has presented opportunities for the consortium venues to consider new ways of working with dance organisations where they may be able to offer rehearsal space in return for support in working with communities. For example, providing rehearsal space in return for a dance company delivering a community workshop.

- For some venues, there may also be an opportunity for them to connect dance companies with other partners or local organisations who may be able to provide suitable rehearsal space. For example, connecting the dance company with a local college that may benefit from having a professional company in residence.
- The venues have learned a lot about pricing structures. Each of the venues was able to make its own choice about pricing based on audiences and costs. The venues then shared their experience of the different pricing structures with each other to further their learning.
- Some venues used “a pay what you like” approach.
 - It was found that this worked best when
 - clear instructions were given to audiences on how to make the payment
 - when venues had a group of regular users that this could be marketed to
 - where audiences had the disposable income to make good donations
- Some venues had found that when they used this approach, people did not necessarily turn up as there was no financial outlay. However, one venue found that charging £2.00 for audiences to reserve a seat had increased the number of people who attended for this type of show.
- Several venues have increased their programming as a result of their experience.
- One of the venues found that The Monocle had helped them to increase the range of products that audiences would engage with

“A piece of work of this nature is not something that we would usually program because it doesn't usually appeal to our audience, however, we achieved this by communicating directly with those groups and using a pay what you like pricing strategy. We ended up with a larger audience than we normally would, we ended up with 100 when we would have normally expected about 70”

Consortium Venue

- The consortium partners now feel that they have a resource in each other that they can connect with to support their future development.
- As awareness of the consortium has increased dancers and dance companies are now keen to engage with them and start a dialogue about how things can be developed and dance in the North East strengthened.
- There was learning about the amount of guest seats that were offered and the importance of dance companies to be able to share their work with potential investors and how this impacted on costs for both parties.
- Understanding that the levels of learning within the programme can support venues and dance professionals to develop future work by connecting performance with other agendas.
- The programme has had several levels of learning that can support the development of the wider industry. There has been direct learning for the venues and Rendez-Vous dance, however, learning has also extended to those in the flash mobs which have included students of dance.

- The format of the work has supported learning for students in further education. This is particularly significant in terms of how the industry is developed. Those students who accessed activities through flash mobs were able to develop an early understanding of professional dance through their involvement in a professional production at a regional venue. They were also able to develop networks with venues and with a North East based dance company.
- Community groups working as part of the community cast were offered the opportunity to connect with professional dancers and to develop their skills in a public performance. Some of those involved in community casts have gone on to develop dance performance work of their own.
- Working with apprentice dancers has provided early-stage creative professionals with the essential experience to support them as their careers develop. Many educational establishments struggle to provide this level of real-life authentic experience.
- MITNE and The Monocle have given creative professionals and professionals working in programming and commissioning a space to explore, experiment, and learn from each other.
- The commission given by the programme has provided an opportunity for award winning dancer Mathieu Geffré to transition from dancer to choreographer and to develop their learning around the managing and running of a professional dance company.
- Beyond the professional learning and development, the theme of the project has been significant in developing a deeper understanding of “safe spaces” and LGBTQIA+ history for those involved in the performances themselves, for the venues and for audiences.
- The Monocle performances have developed the consortiums understanding of creating “safe spaces” and why this is important. Audience responses have suggested that this has been positive for them. One venue found that their audience remained at the venue socialising longer than they normally might for the reason that they felt safe.

“People stayed after the show and that never really happens, people started having drinks and it felt comfortable and that was really positive”

Consortium Venue

**TO LISTEN TO A COMBINED DIGITAL STORY OF ALL CONTRIBUTORS FEATURED ABOVE,
LISTEN [HERE](#)
A TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUDIO FILE IS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)**

Looking Forward

At a difficult time, when people found themselves negotiating their way through the global pandemic the project was able to meet many of its outcomes, outputs, and aims to a good level. The learning from the project has been positive for those involved as a result the partners have reflected upon the following areas for future work.

- Some project outcomes were difficult to measure within the scope of the evaluation. Future evaluation can be best supported by considering evaluation methodologies within the initial project planning. For example, making outcomes SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time constrained) and establishing baselines at the beginning of projects to be able to evidence when change has occurred.
- Rendez-Vous dance found that sufficient funding needs to be in place to ensure that creatives have the time and the reflective space to be able to develop high quality work. Creative professionals may find themselves juggling several roles within a production to “make ends meet” including balancing creative roles against the practical management and delivery of a production. For this reason, the company plan to look at developing its structure and seeking funding to expand its team.
- The partners have found that shared training and development has been useful in allowing them to talk and share ideas as well as developing their level of knowledge and building networks. For this reason, they would like to look at further opportunities to share training.
- As the lead partner Dance City has been able to share its knowledge with the consortium and are seen as a key partner by the nine venues, it is hoped that this relationship will be built upon in the future to develop further dance work in the region.
- Each of the partners has found that their understanding of programming and commissioning dance has increased as a result and this is something that they will continue to develop within their venues.
- Dance City plans on sharing its knowledge from the process with other dancers and dance organisations within the region to further meet outcome 1.1