





A TEN YEAR VISION FOR DANCE IN MIDDLESBROUGH





KEY TERMS IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS DOCUMENT

ACE - Arts Council England is a government-funded body dedicated to promoting the performing, visual and literary arts in England.

Artist - a person who works in dance performance in an artistic capacity either as a performer, choreographer, or rehearsal director.

Dance - all styles and genres of dance and movement based practices, not including circus/aerial.

Dance School - a dance school is where children, young people and adults can learn to dance through a private enterprise.

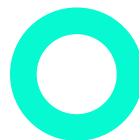
Facilitator - a person who leads or coordinates dance activity.


Practitioner - a person who practices dance as a profession in any capacity for example as an educator, or dance for fitness and health.

Teacher - a person who teaches dance as a profession. This covers all levels of quality as there is currently no regulatory body for dance teaching qualifications.

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A woman with blonde hair and glasses is seen from the side, looking towards a large, blurred crowd of people at night. The scene is dimly lit, with some lights visible in the background. A blue horizontal line with a circular end is at the top of the image.

***We need a
world where
everyone has
access to high
quality dance
experience
- no matter
who you are
or where
you live.***



WHY DO WE NEED A 10 YEAR VISION FOR DANCE?

Everyone deserves equal access to high quality dance experiences that are compelling, coherent, and progressive, helping people to live happier and healthier.

Through dance people can widen their aspirations and achieve their full potential as successful learners, confident artists and responsible citizens.

We need to implement change to transform the landscape by 2030.

Dance in Middlesbrough has had peaks and troughs. What we now need is a clear approach to the future of dance: a Ten Year Vision to build a coherent and progressive offer.

There is opportunity for change as the Tees Valley has been named one of Arts Council England's Priority Places (refer to page 26) with commitment to strengthening cultural and creative opportunities and ensuring they have a deep and lasting effect.

BACKGROUND

Patricia Verity Suarez, a Middlesbrough based Movement Director, working in collaboration with Amy Swalwell, TeesDance and Middlesbrough Council, has undertaken a research project to understand the current dance infrastructure and provide recommendations for the future.

This research project is one of the elements of Patricia's Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grant. It is important to note that the resources and funds were limited and for that reason this project has focused only on Middlesbrough, not the wider Tees Valley, and looked mainly at the provision for professional dance artists.

It has been produced in consultation with dance artists, TeesDance, Middlesbrough Council, Dance City, and Moving Art Management, coming together to realise the full potential of what dance can achieve for Middlesbrough.

The experience and expertise of the above partners was sought due to their extensive prior engagement with the dance sector in Middlesbrough, the strength of their networks to support us to create this framework and their intention to develop work in the region in the future.

METHODOLOGY

Throughout the Summer of 2021, research which took place including one to one interviews with 11 local dance artists that all have a strong link to Middlesbrough. Their relationship to Middlesbrough varied but include one or more of the following; working, have worked, studied or live in the borough. The interviews reflected on how local artists are working in the sector, what support and provision they have, where the gaps are and what changes they need moving forward.

Additionally, an online survey went out through social media channels and shared through ACE's Arts News Listings, in order to gather wider responses from the North East region. We requested dance artists with a specific connection to Middlesbrough to complete it. We had a 52% response rate resulting in 25 individuals giving quality focused responses. The artists were all connected to Middlesbrough and had a desire to contribute to this work, showing a real commitment, and investment to it and to the town.

AIMS

The aim of this project is to understand what the current strengths are as well as identifying where there are gaps in provision together with potential opportunities. Focusing on the dance workforce; artists, freelancers and practitioners, a Ten Year Vision for dance in Middlesbrough has been developed through individual conversations, a survey, working with Middlesbrough Council, Dance City and Moving Art Management. This vision provides tangible and practical recommendations to lead the way to a stronger, more vibrant and diverse dance sector in Middlesbrough.

The Ten Year Vision recommendations are publicly available and can be freely implemented by a range of dance deliverers including independent dance artists, companies, organisations, education institutions, community groups, councils, and local authorities.





MAKING THE VISION A REALITY

This Ten Year Vision is a call-for-action to local authorities, organisations, policy makers, senior managers, dance teachers and practitioners making a long-term commitment to come together to ensure this Vision for dance will be realised by 2030.

We need expertise, financial support, current dance artists and practitioners, at the heart of decision making, which results in programmes, partnerships and networks that increase the diverse and strategic dance offer.



THE D PROJECT DANCE COMPANY PD: EMILY WHITFIELD

WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT DANCE?



DANCE INSPIRES, CHALLENGES AND EXCITES!

Dance offers a wide range of physical, psychological, social and emotional benefits including:

- ▶ Artistic & aesthetic understanding
- ▶ Cultural awareness
- ▶ Health and well-being
- ▶ Learning & attainment
- ▶ Life & employability

Dance is an accessible, adaptable and enjoyable form of physical activity, cultural and artistic expression; as well as for what it can do: it improves fitness, educational attainment, opens up new career opportunities and widens artistic and cultural horizons. It has particular appeal to people who may not readily engage with traditional sports, such as young women and some cultural / ethnic groups.

Dance is unique as a physical art form sitting across both sport and culture.

Dance is great at any age, from classes for children through to care home activities. Everyone can dance, those who are able-bodied, or have a physical or learning disability. It is an all inclusive activity and art form! Dance can be done in informal settings like in gardens, or by individuals in bedrooms, as well as in formal settings.

Dance makes the body the instrument of expression, dance removes barriers between an individual and what they want to communicate. Its contribution to education is unique because it combines bodily movement with creativity and imagination. As a body of knowledge, it illustrates the development of human culture and society.

Dance breaks down social and cultural barriers and improves communications between individuals and groups. It is an effective medium to promote community cohesion, expressing people's common purpose through dancing and performance.

From either an informal or formal setting young people can go into dance as a valuable and viable professional career and needs to be encouraged as a possible option for young people to pursue.

Watching professional live dance can inspire, motivate, challenge, widen aspiration, artistic and cultural appreciation and develop skills in perception, interpretation and critical judgement. The immediacy of live dance, with its heightened sense of concentration and the power of the dancer to communicate, collaborations across music, design, lighting and technology, and the sense of event – all make watching dance live in a theatre setting a special and unique experience. Dance can also take place in outdoor and site-specific places offering bespoke experiences for the public.

LOOKING BACK AT DANCE IN MIDDLESBROUGH

From this research, it has been clear that provision in Middlesbrough has had various peaks including during when Tees Valley Dance had been operating from 1999, touring their repertoire of work and on dance education projects including developing a dance and movement curriculum for primary school teachers; Classroom Moves (2006) in collaboration with Linthorpe Community Primary School. During 2012 Tees Valley Dance was no longer in receipt of regular Arts Council Funding and between 2013-2015 supported dance through offering a travel bursary for dance artists in the Tees Valley for training and creative development as well as supporting the development of projects including SouthPaw Dance Company's Riots! and the D-Project's Celtic Christmas in 2014.

Another peak was when Middlesbrough Council had Arts Officer; Phil Douglas, who had a strong passion for dance, pushing for lots of activity and was the central point for communication, networks and profile. There was an annual programme of work under Dance Middlesbrough between 2012-2016 consisting of professional and community dance performances and events including supporting the touring relationship between Northern Ballet and Middlesbrough Theatre.

Dance Middlesbrough supported independent artists in developing their work. There is lots of nostalgia with people in our interviews speaking fondly about these times.

More recently, Amy Swalwell delivered an online festival; TeesDance Festival 2020, which celebrated and profiled the dance workforce in the Tees Valley. The festival was a huge success with 14 artists programmed across two weeks of activity (see Appendix A for stats on the festival). This festival became a catalyst for TeesDance as an initiative to respond to the gaps locally using Amy's wealth of knowledge from working at a national level at One Dance UK in supporting the sector, engaging policymakers and creating positive change to use this experience in Middlesbrough. Additionally, as a Freelance Producer, Amy most recently worked on Middlesbrough Mela (2021) and programmed dance workshops, performances and Ceilidh as part of the Family Day event. It is evident that when there is a person, or company, with expertise and passion for dance, there is a strong drive to make things happen and be a change-maker. For dance in Middlesbrough to thrive, it needs to harness this to establish consistent provision.



Although Middlesbrough has been (and still is) a thriving area for private dance schools, this is not enough, many young people do not have access to any high quality dance provision due to financial barriers. We need subsidised provision for equal access alongside the offer of dance schools as a means to expand opportunities and development for children and young people. Dance schools in Middlesbrough are well established and will continue for years to come and do act as a viable route into the profession, especially in Musical Theatre.

There are lots of case studies of where subsidised provision has helped as a pathway into the sector. George Williams, from Middlesbrough, took part in youth dance provision locally before joining TIN Arts, who spotted him on a visit to his school. He went on to be one of the first young people with a disability to be in the National Youth Dance Company. Additionally, more recently, 19-year-old Tom Sutton, grew up in Middlesbrough, and first experienced dance in primary school by Urban Kaos, he then went to Holmwood School to be part of Youth Dance Academy before attending the Centre for Advanced Training, the National Youth Dance Company and is now training at Rambert School. Routes into dance are further illustrated in Appendix B.



WHERE IS DANCE CURRENTLY OFFERED?

Dance is a hidden gem in Middlesbrough due to no organisation profiling or signposting where the activity is taking place.





STUDYING DANCE

Young people's appetite for dance is keener than ever and continues to grow. Wherever young people look and listen, dance is there – it's an essential part of their culture, especially through social media platforms like TikTok.

With the plethora of dance schools we know that dance is thriving amongst children and young people who can afford provision out of school. There are over 130 dance schools offering out-of-school provision across the Tees Valley. Middlesbrough has 39% of these schools delivering syllabus examinations and competitive activity (please refer to page 24). This estimates that 3,500 children and young people in Middlesbrough take part in weekly dance sessions beyond school and more, if you include in school settings. Dance is part of the National Curriculum in England and is included in the Early Years curriculum through Expressive Arts and Design and at Key Stage 1, 2, and 3 as part of the PE curriculum. Dance is present in Further Education through Middlesbrough College's BTEC Level 3 in Performing Arts, however this course is limited to the depth studied and is currently the only one career route in Middlesbrough as Teesside University no longer offers their dance degree programme (stopped in 2019).

For those who wish to pursue dance beyond either the curriculum or a private school setting, for example at University or a Conservatoire, they must look outside the region to find suitable provision. Without a visible, substantial and enticing offer for dance artists in Middlesbrough, many of our local and talented dance artists choose not to return to the region when qualified, instead developing their careers elsewhere in the UK and contributing their valuable skills into communities where investment in dance is higher.

SEEING DANCE

Middlesbrough Town Hall is one of the nine venues, part of the Made in the North East commission, who are working together on a three-year strategic dance audience development project, led by Dance City and made possible with generous funding support from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The aims of this commission for the partners, are to develop a better understanding and commitment to programming dance performances in the region. To achieve this the partners are participating in a collective process of development and training activities to best enable the production of new work and touring support through a consortium approach. This strategic partnership project gives partners the opportunity to share, diversify and develop the art of programming quality, professional dance into more places and spaces in the region, giving confidence and deeper insight for venues, audiences and artists about the process of producing touring dance productions.

The recent programme of dance includes known ballet and dance performances from popular shows like Strictly Come Dancing that have broad commercial appeal. Dance is also included as part of Middlesbrough Council events such as Orange Pip, Middlesbrough Mela and Christmas Events. They also deliver short one-off participation projects around a specific focus and aim. As part of our recommendations we would encourage venues to include work by local artists and work from different genres of dance as part of their programme offering.



JENNIFER ESSEX DANCE © PHIL HILL

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE IN 10 YEARS?

OUR VISION

By 2030, Middlesbrough will challenge perceptions of what dance looks like, who it's for and what it can achieve. This Vision is focused on the infrastructure needed to support dance and not about any particular genre of dance. This is in line with Arts Council England's *Let's Create Strategy 2020-2030* (2020), "in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences."

There will be a vibrant, diverse dance offer for the people of Middlesbrough to:

- ▶ Be taught and led by a confident, skilled dance workforce which is able to work in a range of settings, including engaging the disengaged
- ▶ Watch professional dance performances in different contexts and settings
- ▶ Take part in dance activity at different levels and in various genres in their communities, on a regular basis and near where they live
- ▶ Access high quality dance throughout their school career and have opportunities for progression routes
- ▶ Dance in spaces that meet health and safety requirements and are conducive to artistic and physical development
- ▶ Develop cultural, artistic, aesthetic and critical skills and sensibilities to create, perform and appreciate dance
- ▶ Be inspired by local practitioners who are championed and celebrated
- ▶ Be a member of a community based forum, to shape the dance provision in their communities and actively advocate and profile its benefits to others



THESE ARE THE PRIORITIES

To make the Vision happen by 2030, we need to address the following issues:

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ We have skilled expert practitioners and artists in Middlesbrough who can work locally given the opportunity.
- ▶ For large-scale strategic engagement, the number of skilled teachers, practitioners and artists working locally needs to be increased.
- ▶ Up-skilling the workforce through the availability of specialised training courses, continuous professional development and networking events.

STRENGTHENING THE DANCE NETWORK

- ▶ Encourage dialogue with local government and relationship building with local businesses and community to develop mutually beneficial partnerships so that growth can be sustainable (Chung, et al. Growing the UK's Creative Industries, 2018).
- ▶ Acknowledge that freelancers need payment or a contribution or honorary fee to consultate, advocate, write funding bids and attend meetings to grow the dance infrastructure.

CHAMPIONING DANCE PRACTITIONERS

- ▶ Building reputation and profile is valuable for artists especially early on in their careers as this opens up opportunities for growth later on.
- ▶ Networking and word of mouth are often ways of obtaining work (Chung, et al. Growing the UK's Creative Industries, 2018).

RESTRICTED ACTIVITY

- ▶ A diverse programme of performances, events and festivals through making connections with programmers of festivals and cultural venues in Middlesbrough and champion dance to be included as part of their events and programme of work.
- ▶ Culture makes high streets more than places to spend money and – especially when deployed in effective partnership with other amenities – can retain local vibrancy, footfall, and pride (Todd, and Rowe. A High Street Renaissance, 2021).

FUNDING

- ▶ The dominant way to attract more funding and resources is to provide seed or match support as an initial investment and to strengthen bids, without this it's incredibly challenging, if not impossible, to develop and instigate new projects and work in the region.

LACK OF DANCE SPACE

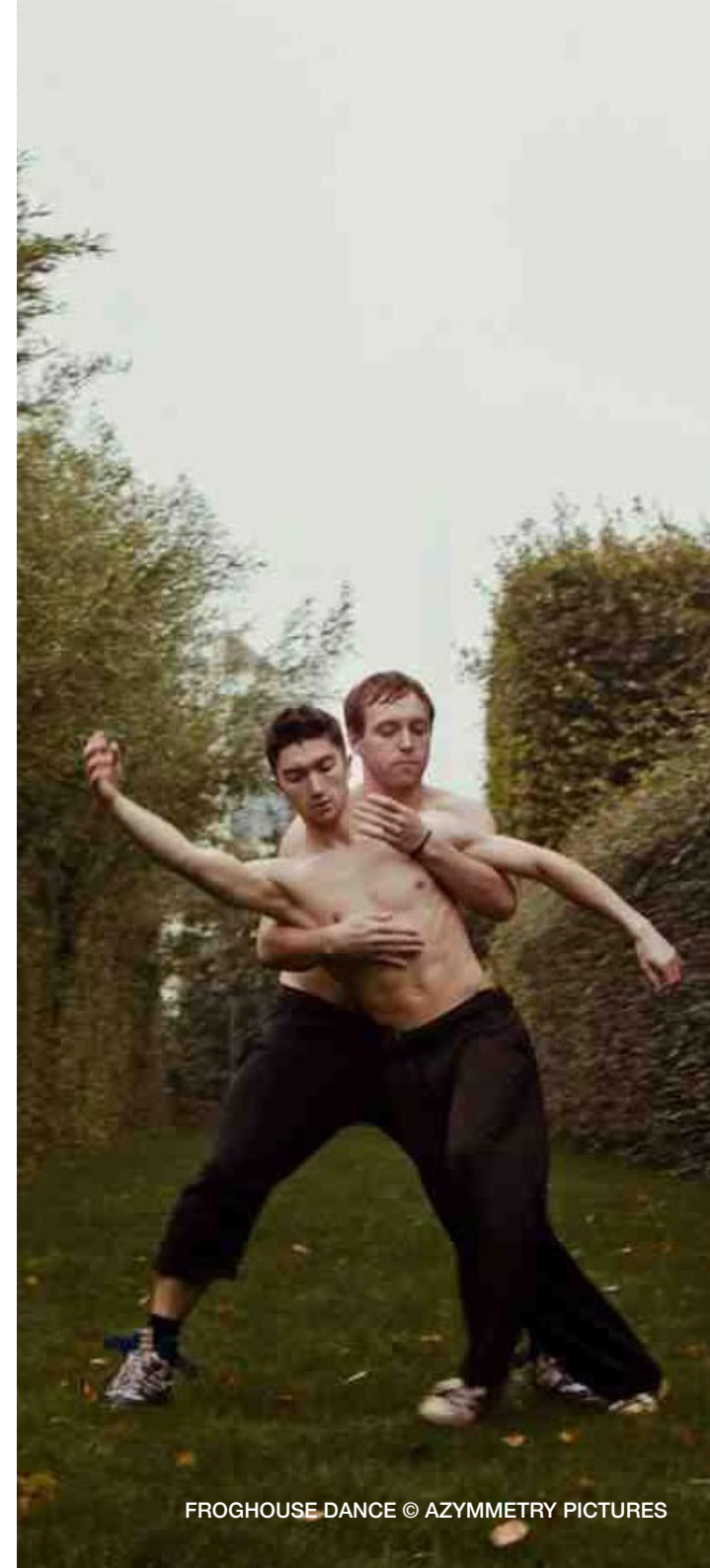
- ▶ Advocate for the need of a new bespoke dance space in Middlesbrough that is accessible, fit-for-purpose, meets health and safety requirements and inspires artistic and physical exploration.

FOCUSING ON THE LEAST ENGAGED

- ▶ Making sure that those people who face the most barriers to participation are reached with sustained consistent engagement.

RESTRICTED ACCESS TO DANCE IN AND BEYOND SCHOOLS

- ▶ All young people must have access to dance programmes so they can progress their interest to whatever level they wish and are able.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

- ▶ Set up a steering group in Middlesbrough made up of key stakeholders to discuss the Vision, its priorities, and to put together a funding application for a pilot project to start implementing the priorities.
- ▶ To establish a framework to measure and monitor activity with checkpoints over the next 10 years to ensure the Vision is met.
- ▶ Deliver a biannual meeting for the workforce with professional development and networking.
- ▶ Deliver a bimonthly professional class and networking opportunity for dance artists.
- ▶ Advocate to venues to programme local artists and increase their diverse offer of dance genres and its forms (i.e. South Asian, African, Hip Hop, Folk, site specific, screen dance etc).
- ▶ Advocate for support to those dance genres such as dance from the Indian Diaspora and African Diaspora that have not received significant support from previous initiatives for people to learn, participate and watch these practices.
- ▶ Establish relationships with dance studios to create a directory of spaces that can be used by dance artists.
- ▶ For TeesDance, as a newly established not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, to grow it's work as a neutral body in supporting the workforce and providing opportunities in response to the need, including:
 - MoveUP as an embedded progression route for young creatives
 - An annual festival to celebrate and profile dance locally and nationally
 - A support programme for emerging and established artists



***DANCE DEVELOPS
YOUNG PEOPLE'S
WELL-BEING
AND LIFE
OPPORTUNITIES.***

***EVERYONE CAN
DANCE BUT NOT
EVERYONE GETS
THE CHANCE.***





WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP US REALISE THIS VISION?

Do you want Middlesbrough to have a stronger, more vibrant dance offer? Where, everyone has access to consistent and comprehensive high quality dance experiences in the localities where they live?

HELP US ACHIEVE OUR GOAL

We would love your attendance at a round table discussion about this work very soon. You can get in touch by emailing info@teesdance.co.uk to contribute to this work.

Additionally, pledge your support for the future of dance by joining our mailing list. <https://bit.ly/3cGSm9v>

Have your say, receive regular updates on the developments of the Ten Year Vision and come along to exclusive events to network and share ideas.

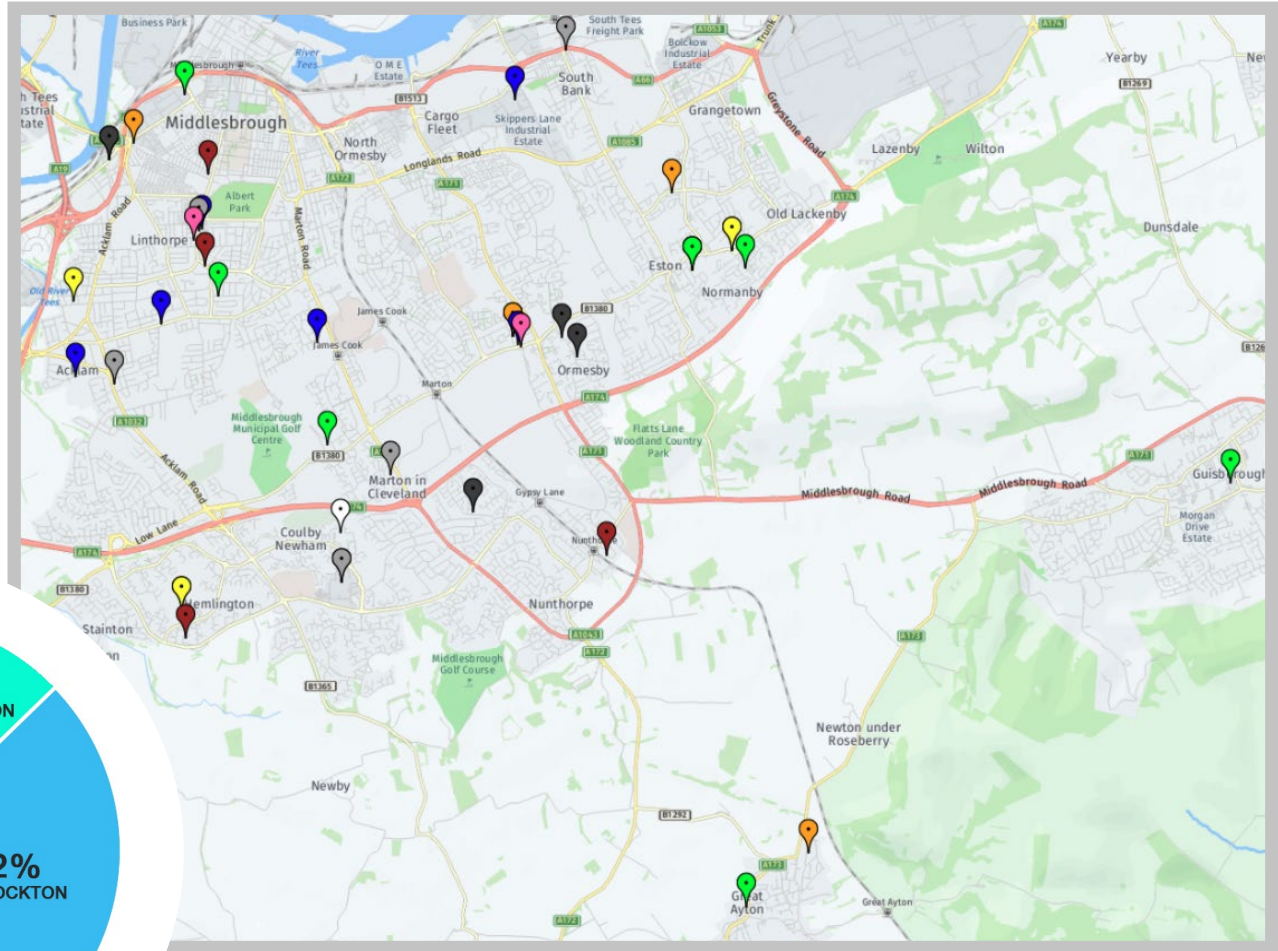
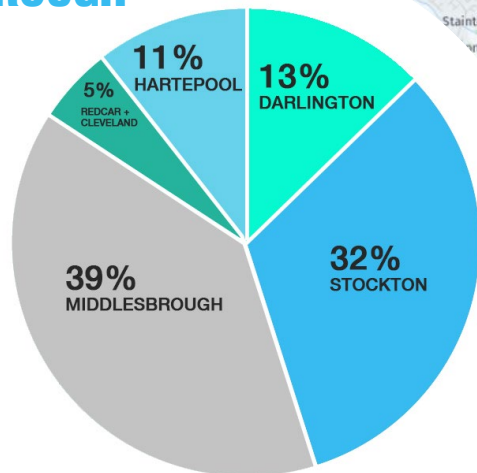
DANCE IN NUMBERS

133

DANCE SCHOOLS*
IN TEES VALLEY

52

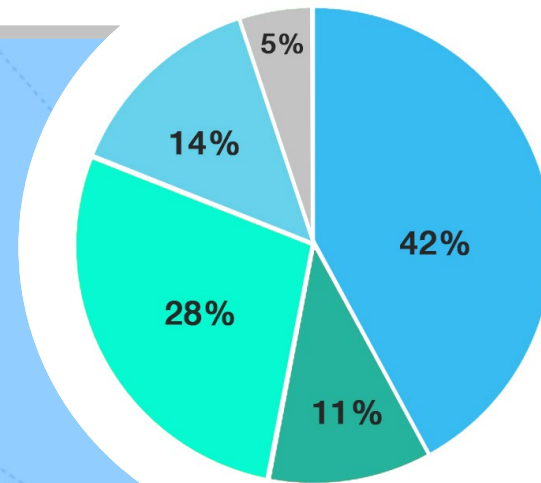
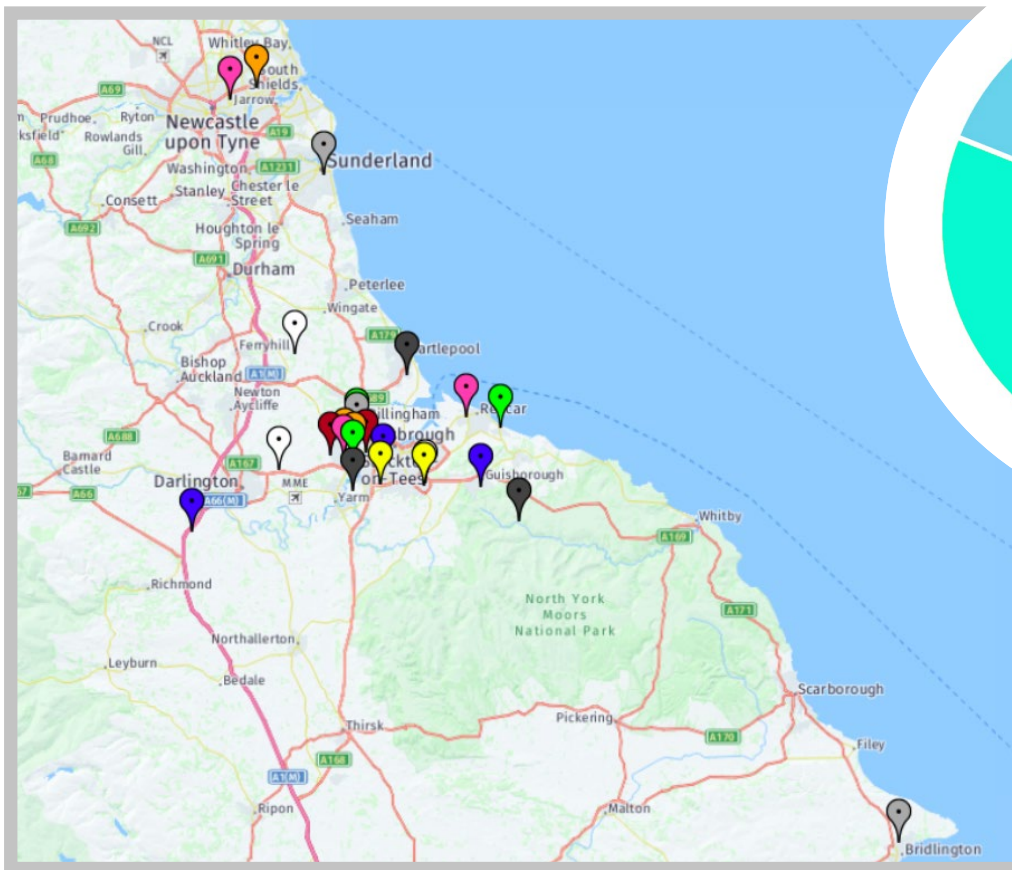
DANCE SCHOOLS IN
MIDDLESBROUGH



* offering regular weekly provision, but does not including dance fitness sessions in gym settings such as Zumba

SURVEY DATA

POSTCODES OF WHO TOOK PART IN THE SURVEY



Tees Valley has an estimated dance workforce of 250 teachers, fitness professionals and teaching assistants.

- ▶ 42% Work in Middlesbrough
- ▶ 11% Live and work in Middlesbrough
- ▶ 28% Have worked in Middlesbrough
- ▶ 14% would like to work in Middlesbrough
- ▶ 5% Born in Middlesbrough



ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND & THE TEES VALLEY

Arts Council England has identified 54 places across England in which their investment and engagement is too low. They are prioritising working with these areas from 2021 to 2024.

TEES VALLEY HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS ONE OF THESE PRIORITY PLACES.

Within each area every local authority was given a score for need and opportunity. Need was defined by engagement and investment levels, plus other data sources, and opportunity (the capacity and ambition at this moment in time to increase engagement) was defined by a scored set of prompts. (Arts Council England, Delivery Plan: Methodology for identifying priority places, 2021).

ACE INVESTMENT

£7m will go to projects in the North, £5.8m in the Midlands, £5.7m in the South East, £3.2m in London; and £1.2m in the South West of England.

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND NATIONAL LOTTERY PROJECT GRANTS FOR DANCE IN THE TEES VALLEY

▶ 2018 - 2019

Jennifer Essex: Humpty Dumpty: My Life In Pieces - £14,500

Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance: Ikebana, the Journey - £60,000

▶ 2019 - 2020

Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance: Follow Your Dreams - £65,000

Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance: The Two Fridas - £15,000

Patricia Verity: La Llorona R&D - £7,662

Jennifer Essex: How Long is a Piece of String? - £15,000

Debbie Harbin: HEDGE Regional Tour - £35,313

▶ 2020 - 2021

Lorraine Smith: You Can Take Me Home Toni - £14,716

Patricia Verity Suarez: La Llorona Development - £14,871

Jennifer Essex: How Long is a Piece of String? - £31,042

Amy Swalwell: MoveUp - £14,802

▶ OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

Middlesbrough Mela is an example of a festival where dance is programmed through a more diverse range of income streams such as Arts Council England, Here for Culture, Middlesbrough Council, Tees Valley Combined Authority and ticket sales.

Dance City has recognised artistic talent in Middlesbrough through a number of recent commissions that has provided vital funds enabling local artists (Patricia Verity Suarez, Jennifer Essex and Lorraine Smith) to access Arts Council England's Project Grants as identified above.





APPENDIX A

TEESDANCE FESTIVAL 2020 STATISTICS

TeesDance Festival 2020 took place online during the Covid-19 global pandemic to celebrate and profile the dance workforce in the Tees Valley through a variety of content over 14 days.

- ▶ Over 860 individual Instagram users engaged in the festival
- ▶ Over 80,000 impressions (the total number of times users saw posts / stories during the festival)
- ▶ Over 2,300 interactions (likes, shares and comments)
- ▶ Over 2 hours' worth of Instagram Stories across the two weeks, each post is 15 seconds long
- ▶ Over 3 hours' of LIVE sessions consisting of workshops, career talks, marketing support and performances
- ▶ 360 new followers
- ▶ 210 posts on the main grid

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

Stockton-on-Tees • Darlington • Hartlepool • Redcar • Saltburn • Billingham • Middlesbrough

APPENDIX B

ROUTES INTO DANCE

STARTING POINT

SCHOOL

As part of the curriculum, out-of-hours activity, clubs, etc.

COMMUNITY

Classes, creative and performance projects provided by local dance agencies, dance companies, theatres, arts organisations, and local authorities.

PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

SCHOOL

Auditioned dance groups/companies, GCSE; GCE A and AS examinations; accredited courses - Dance can also be delivered through Arts Award, Dance Leadership Award, Sports Leaders Award.

LOCAL DANCE SCHOOL

Regular classes, graded examinations, performances, and competitions in particular dance forms/styles.

INDIVIDUAL

Inspired by seeing a dance performance, participating in a project, social enjoyment, or peer-group.

BEYOND SCHOOL

Advanced classes, creative and performance projects; Performing in local, regional, national platforms; Selected performance companies/Youth Dance Companies; Associate / Scholar programmes offered by independent teaching associations; Centres for Advanced Training (CATs); Specialist residential schools; National Youth Dance Company.

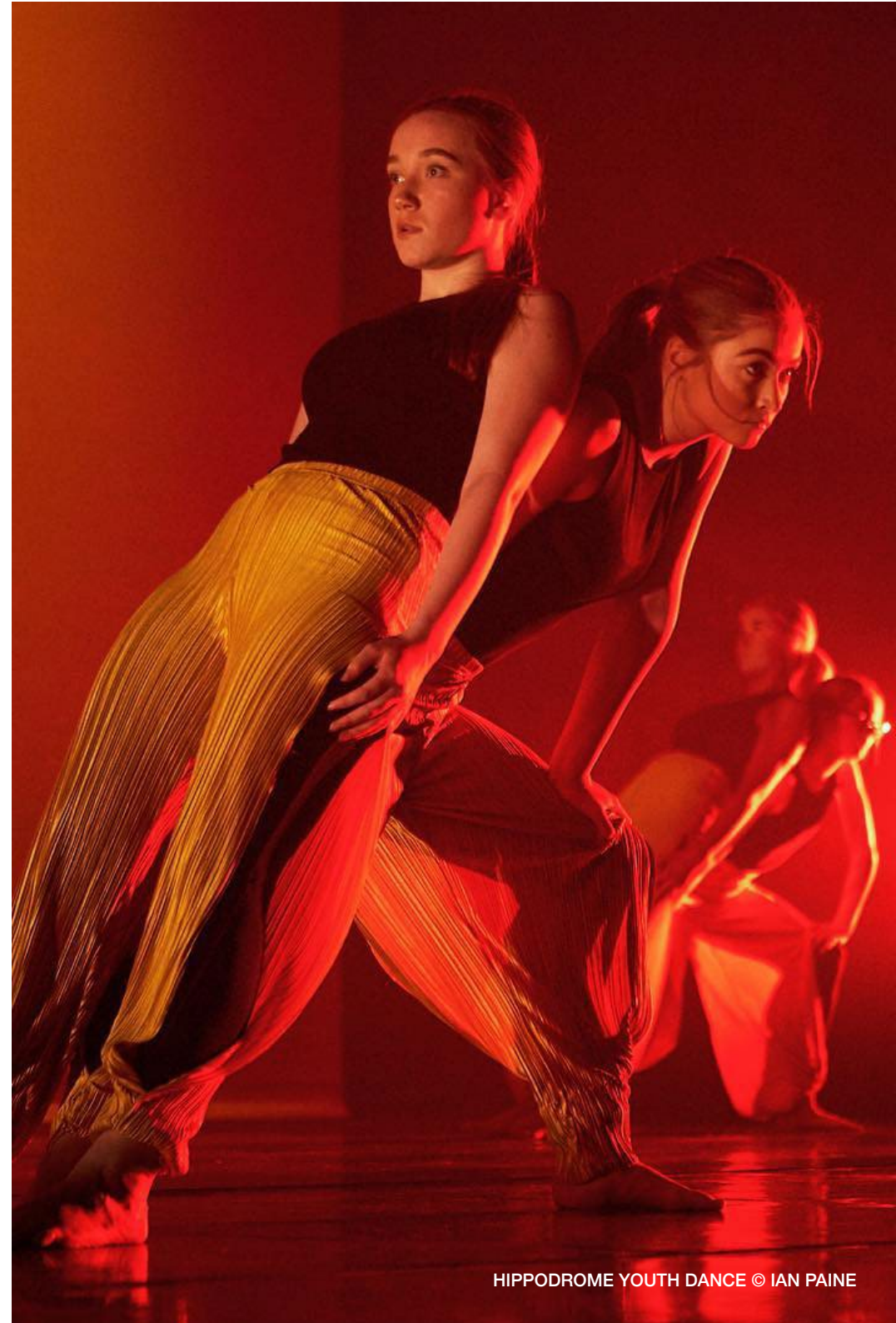
BEYOND

FURTHER + HIGHER EDUCATION

Undergraduate and Postgraduate degrees in dance;
Professional dance training / degrees; accredited courses.

CAREERS

Dancing, teaching, creating, producing, management,
policy-making, etc.



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Lorraine Smith



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Moving Art
Management

