

Co Motion

2015 Performance Platform Evaluation Report



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1. Project overview

Hosted by The Greenwich Dance & Trinity Laban Partnership, the 2015 Co Motion performance platform brought together inclusive contemporary dance performances and newly-created dance films from a variety of mixed-ability dance groups and companies. Participating groups included Cando2, Magpie Dance, ImPULSE Youth Dance, Trinity Laban's Dance Ability groups and Youth Company, alongside participants from Charlton Park Academy and local Greenwich primary, Foxfield school. The platform included a number of new works specially commissioned by the partnership and the screening of two new dance films.

2. Participating dance groups and schools

Candoco Dance Company celebrates over 20 years challenging preconceptions about who can dance and what dance might be. The company has developed a bold concept of inclusion, which stems from a commitment to excellence in dance, making the company an international leader in working with disabled and non-disabled dancers at a professional level. **Cando2** is Candoco's youth dance performance company for disabled and non-disabled dancers aged 13-25. Cando2 provides young dancers with an opportunity to create high quality work with Candoco artists and guest choreographers and to perform at venues and festivals across the UK.

Corali is made up of performers with learning disabilities and artist collaborators and educationalists who do not. Corali exists to explore the unique creativity and expression of people with learning disabilities by putting on original performance works and by offering on-going professional development, training and education opportunities, including a youth company, **Kick Up: Corali Youth**.

Dance Ability is a Trinity Laban project for 5-12 year olds with physical and/or learning disabilities and their siblings to experience, explore and create movement and dance together in the Dance Faculty's safe and inclusive environment. Under the guidance of a specialist dance artist, support workers and a team of volunteers, the children engage in playful activities that support future functioning, learning and health.

ImPULSE Youth Dance is a creative contemporary dance group for young people with learning difficulties run by Harrow Association of Disabled People and Mala CHERGA Theatre. Young people work with experienced teachers, also professional dancers and choreographers, from Mala CHERGA Theatre in a safe and friendly environment with participant's development at the heart of the company's activities.

Founded in 1986, Bromley-based **Magpie Dance** is a contemporary dance company for learning disabled dance and has a national reputation for its exciting and inspiring

approach to inclusive and creative dance.

Foxfield Primary School is a community school located in the borough of Greenwich, London. The school takes children from 3 to 11 and has a nursery provision.

Charlton Park Academy is based in Greenwich and is directly funded by the Secretary of State for education as a Residential Special Academy. The Academy is a non-maintained Special School (ages 11–19) for students with low incidence special educational needs.

3. Evaluation approach

This report draws on a range of evaluative feedback, including:

- Questionnaires completed by participants at the end of the project;
- Questionnaires completed by school staff and participants' parents at the end of the project;
- Interviews with participants, with school and dance company staff, and with project facilitators on the performance day;
- Audience written feedback following the performance.

4. Project outcomes

Co Motion culminated in a performance given by 97 performers and the showing of two newly-created dance films, presented to an audience of 234 people at the Laban theatre.

Collaborations included a piece performed the Trinity Laban Youth Dance Company and Cando2, choreographed by Jamieson Dryburgh (Trinity Laban), a new dance film featuring Dance Ability called *Favourite Things* (by Roswitha Chesher with animation from Tom Lockwood) and a new film titled *Float* featuring participants from Charlton Park Academy by Sarah Blanc and film artist Samuel Morrison.

The project — encompassing both the weekly workshops and the performance platform itself — was found to support a number of positive outcomes for participants and their families as well as school staff, support workers and the ongoing work of the participating dance companies, including:

- Advocating the strong capacity of mixed-ability groups to achieve **high artistic standards** in creating and performing new dance works;
- Supporting a sense of **creative ownership** and **expression** among participants;
- Nurturing **transformational experiences** among participants (and audience members), enhancing feelings of **confidence**, **empowerment** and **well-being**;
- Building a powerful sense of **community** and **integration** among disabled and non-disabled participants within both rehearsal and performance settings;
- Feedback described the notably high quality of the **project's management** and **accompanying technical support**, suggesting the project stands as a successful organisational 'model' for potential replication in other settings.
- Demonstrating a strong desire among participants, participants' parents and school staff for **more such inclusive performance projects** in the future, and the power of the platform to support **progression** among project participants.

4.1 Artistic Quality

Feedback highlighted the 'artistic excellence' of both the event's performance and its creative process. Staff from participating dance companies were particularly emphatic about this aspect of the platform, stating:

"**The quality of the work was extremely high** and we [were] honoured to have been a part of it." (Participation officer, participating dance company)

"It was a wonderful event to be part of and our Youth Group and their parents haven't stopped raving about it. Not only how much they enjoyed Magpie's involvement, but also what a **fantastic rich programme** the evening was." (Artistic Director, participating dance company)

"The parents and carers that came along on the day were **super impressed** with the programme of performances and was enjoyed by everyone." (Staff member, participating dance company)



Contacts at the participating dance companies also highlighted the **professional status** of the venue, noting how the high standard of production as facilitated by the staging/technical team proved to be key element of their groups' experience of the event:

"It's great because it's a platform for our guys - it gives them an opportunity to perform under stage lights and with wings - for it to be **professional**... all the gubbins! It's really, really great. And we'll be able to **move on from this project** knowing that **the piece they made got seen in a venue like this.**" (Staff member, participating dance company)

“It really was an amazing opportunity for our young dancers to perform on such a **prestigious stage** such as Laban Theatre and alongside some **amazing work** from other groups.” (Staff member, participating dance company)

One facilitator highlighted some challenges when working in a school where the idea of ‘quality’ proved somewhat ambiguous and thus posed a challenge to their work together:

“The TAs in the sessions asked on several occasions to teach the participants popular dance routines such as YMCA and The Macarena. This was quite challenging as the dance artists had to encourage them to believe that working in a creative, different way will enrich [participants] far more.” (Dance artist, working at participating school)

In general though, a shared understanding of and emphasis on “quality” infused the whole process. Facilitators working on the project were asked to rate the “overall quality of their experience” and **100%** of these facilitators rated their experience to be **excellent** (5*).

Audience feedback similarly rated the quality of Co Motion to be extremely high, with **84%** stating the event’s **quality** to be **excellent** and **16%** stating it to be **good**. More personal feedback from parents and audience members also noted the outstanding quality of the choreography, performances and films shared at the platform, celebrating the rich array of **talent** on display:

“The film and performance were **absolutely brilliant**. I was overwhelmingly proud of both K and H.” (Parent commentary)

“We loved the dance G was in, she has gained much from collaborating with Candoco... The performances were so strong. It was **on a par with professional dance performances** we have seen, **the standard was so high.**” (Parent commentary)

“Very good, funny and **skillful.**” (Audience feedback)

“What a wonderful array of different **talent.**” (Audience feedback)

“Lively, vibrant and **very well performed.**” (Audience feedback)

Love it. What **rare talent** these young people have.” (Audience feedback)

The value of this artistic excellence was also highlighted in commentary from staff and participants working on the project, who expressed how enriching the event proved as a **high-quality artistic learning experience** for facilitators and participants alike.

“It’s **great to watch other groups** - what they’re up to, the different age groups, the kind of work they’re creating, the ideas...” (Staff member, participating dance company)

“It was **wonderful to see the collaborations** that have taken place and see what other groups are producing.” (Staff member, participating dance company)

‘The **quality of the dance is very good**, of the groups that we saw. **It’s good for them** [the young people] **to see**, it really helps them.’ (Staff member, participating dance company)

“It feels really nice to see **all these other children dancing** and taking part.” (Staff member, participating school)

“**Eye-opening**; Unique; Good” (Participant commentary, describing their experience of Co Motion ‘in three words’)



4.2 Creative Ownership and Expression

This high level of artistic quality was supported by a strong sense of creative ownership across the platform. Commentary from Nick Kyprianou (Graduate Intern at Trinity Laban who supported the facilitation of Dance Ability groups) highlighted the role that participants' own creative ideas played in shaping Dance Ability's new pieces, and the pleasure and excitement this creative ownership elicited among participants.¹ A new dance film, *Favourite Things*, was premiered at Co Motion which supported participants

“to express their favourite things, from goblins and fairies to bubbles and superheroes! Dance Ability was able to watch the film ahead of the evening performance in the dress rehearsal. The children's faces simply lit up when they saw themselves projected large for everyone to see.”

Dance Ability groups also co-created two new works for live performance at Co Motion, including a piece called *Shape Shakers* which explored a painting by Wassily Kandinsky and a second piece titled *Adventures with Mozart*, based on Mozart's *Horn Concerto No.4* (3rd Movement). For the latter choreography, the group began their creative process by listening to the BBC's "10 Pieces" of classical music, selecting this movement from Mozart's Horn Concerto as their favourite:

“We asked the group to storyboard their ideas from the music and how it made them feel, and they came up with different ways to travel, images of fairy princesses and dodging ducks – *Adventures with Mozart* was born. It was great to hear their thoughts and see it translated to movement. The group were able to choreograph most of the piece and the Dance Ability team guided and crafted the material.”



¹ Please see <https://trinitylaban.wordpress.com/2015/03/26/co-motion-inclusive-youth-dance-platform-an-outstanding-evening-of-creative-work/> for a reflective blog post by Nick Kyprianou about working towards Co Motion with Dance Ability.

An emphasis on facilitating creative ownership among participants was at the heart of many of the other performance pieces shared at Co Motion. A dance artist working with a participating school group noted:

“I really enjoyed working with this group. I enjoyed watching them grow and start to **take ownership of their own movement and work independently**. This was a massive aim for me with this group.” (Dance Artist working with participating school)

Parents also emphasised the value they perceived in these works performed being the **joint creation** of the participating young people:

“We thought it was the best dance performance she has ever been involved in and were **so impressed the group had devised it themselves**.” (Parent commentary)



4.3 Celebrating Inclusivity and Integration

Feedback from participants, dance artists, managerial staff and parents all emphatically celebrated the highly **inclusive** nature of this event, from its **artistic vision** to its **organisation**.

Parents were among the most vocal about the value of this sense of integration, offering particularly heartfelt feedback about the significant impact this feeling of being welcome and ‘belonging’ offered their families:

“A big thank you to ALL of you for the lead up to the performance last night! Our kids LOVE coming to Dance Ability and your **warmth, kindness, and support** are greatly appreciated **in a world where a lot of places we don’t quite fit in.**” (Parent commentary)

“Laban is such a **positive place** to dance at and we **love the inclusive attitude**, where **everyone is a star.**” (Parent commentary)



Participants also stressed the value they derived from the platform’s sense of inclusion:

“Working with new people in a collaboration was fun and exciting” (Participant commentary)

“I feel happy coming every week. I’ve made friends. **We know each other when we’re busy dancing.**” (Participant commentary)

The importance of the event having such strong artistic value (as discussed in 3.1) was also noted **in relation to heightened feelings of inclusivity** by both participants and parents.

“They were proud of themselves, **they knew they achieved something special**, a feeling that D does not often have the opportunity to feel, you all gave her that opportunity on Tuesday and I am very grateful!” (Parent commentary)

Some participants and parents also stressed the **particular artistic value sparked by this kind of inclusive collaboration**:

“I’ve not had any experiences like this [working in a mixed-ability group]. It was so **amazing** to work with such a big variety [of abilities]. It just **opens your eyes so much** because **it shows you a load more different kinds of creativity**. People move in ways that you might not have considered: and you’re like: ‘wow, that’s a completely different style or movement that I would never have been able to come up with myself!” (Participant commentary, Laban Youth Company)

“The performances were so strong. You could not tell it was two groups merged together, it was as if they had **always danced together as one**. It was **on a par with professional dance performances** we have seen, the standard was so high.” (Parent commentary)

These positive experiences of collaboration and integration were also clearly **communicated** to the audience through the performance. This was evidenced by audience feedback which registered a strong feeling of inclusion and community, inspired and nurtured through dance:

“Such a joyous event, celebrating youth dance **regardless of ability**, so positive. Thank you.” (Audience feedback)

“**Range of ability molded together**, very inspiring.” (Audience feedback)

“An opportunity to **showcase** dance in an **original** and **inclusive** way.” (Audience feedback)

“It is great that young people of **all abilities** have the opportunity to perform at a top-class venue.” (Audience feedback)

“A great opportunity to see on a professional stage. **What a wonderful thing children and young people can do with dance, and what dance can do for everyone - performers and audience alike.**” (Audience feedback)

4.4 Transformational Experiences: Confidence, Empowerment and Well-being

Feedback highlighted the platform's capacity to enhance individuals' **confidence** and **belief in their own abilities**. Staff working with participants from Charlton Park Academy emphasised the impact that creating an 'end product' had on individuals' sense of self within the school community:

"Co-Motion gave Charlton Park Academy students an opportunity to work towards a project with **an end product of seeing themselves in the film *Float***. All students really loved being part of the project with the film **being shared around the school via classes and screens** - that has made the participants **minor celebrities** within the school." (Director, ActivKids South East Ltd)

Participants expressed the increase in confidence they felt from performing successfully in front of family, friends and 'the public', also noting the boost that performing on Laban's professional stage gave them.

"I found some of it quite tricky but I had some support. I nearly fell but I was brave. It's hard for me to do it, but **if I get support I can do it: I can be brave**. I've so enjoyed it today. **What I like about this is that parents and the people who came and saw us in this project - they're so impressed with us!**" (Participant commentary)

"I liked the lighting. I liked the dancing. I liked being in the show because **it is excitable** [sic] and **good to show off your moves**." (Participant commentary)

"The building is amazing - I love it. It **feels really special on the stage**. I love all the fame!" (Participant commentary)

"It was wonderful to see so many children & young adults enjoying dance, we certainly enjoyed all the performances. I hope all the dancers have awoken this morning **feeling proud** and a little bit **more confident** as a result of taking part." (Parent commentary)

'I enjoyed dancing on a stage **for my family**. I loved it!' (Participant commentary)

"I felt a bit nervous but it was pretty amazing. **I was amazed at what we did!**" (Participant commentary)



One interesting comment from a Laban Youth Company participant highlighted how the feeling of **community** that the platform engendered had supported her to overcome her nerves in performing:

“It feels very *not* intimidating! [being on the Laban stage]. It’s so friendly... I feel like I’m not nervous but I’m nervous enough to work with the adrenaline. **I feel like I’m surrounded by people who want us to do well**, so I’m not worried.”
(Participant commentary)

In tandem with the theme of confidence and empowerment, feedback highlighted how the platform facilitated some particularly **enriching personal experiences** for individuals in terms of **personal well-being**.

Participants recorded high levels of enjoyment of the project, with **97%** giving rating the experience as **4*/5*** in enjoyment.



Participant commentary also highlighted the impact that participating in Co Motion’s preparation and performance event held for them in terms of **quality of life**:

“When I first came to this place it felt weird, but now I learned loads of dances and songs and I think the **dancing makes us all feel better. If we have problems, we feel better when we come here.**” (Participant commentary)

“When I’m dancing, **it make me so free - it’s the best feeling ever.** It’s my passion.” (Participant commentary)

‘It’s been **the best ever day.** It’s been perfect. I’m triple-excited for the performance.” (Participant commentary)

Parents also stressed the importance of participating in Co Motion in terms of individuals’ well-being:

“I wasn’t able to be there myself but I know Sidney had a **wonderful experience** performing on the stage. Dance ability has been **a great addition to his life!**” (Parent commentary)



This sense of the platform being a particularly personally enriching experience was closely mirrored in audience feedback, which highlighted how **uplifting** and **joyful** it was to attend the event as an **audience member**.

“A **joyful expression** of movement and **life**.” (Audience feedback)

“Last night’s show was such a **joyous event**.” (Parent commentary)

“**Uplifting** in the way it shows the **joy** [that] **dance** and **involvement** brings.”
(Audience feedback)

“It seemed **hugely important** and **enriching** for the performers.” (Audience feedback)

“Delighted to see so many children/young people **having fun** with dance and behaving well.” (Audience feedback)

4.5 Organisation and Support

Participants, dance artists, other supporting staff, and parents were all keen to stress how well the platform had been organised, suggesting the model Co Motion has developed functions particularly successfully. Feedback emphasised the powerful impact this sense of support and nurture had on everyone involved in terms of their groups' enjoyment:

“Our facilitators and myself were amazed by how smoothly the day had run with great attention to detail from the running round of the volunteers to the extremely helpful staff doing the technical. This gave us and our dancers **the most pleasurable experience.**” (Participation officer at participating dance company)

‘It’s been really well organised. The fact that we’ve been taken up and down [to the stage to rehearse] - we haven’t felt lost and the timing has been spot on. The experience of coming to Laban is of course fantastic - but alongside that, **the organisation of has been amazing.**’ (Dance artist)

Feedback also highlighted how such sensitive planning and careful organisation meant each group felt their needs were met (particularly in terms of being given sufficient time to rehearse), which in turn contributed directly to the **quality** of these performances.



“**Super organised**, we knew exactly what was happening and when. We were allowed enough time for everything - very inclusive.” (Dance artist)

“The event was **extremely well run**. We felt like we had all the time we needed to **feel prepared** and we felt **well supported.**” (Artistic Director of participating dance company)

“A big thanks to the artists and the team from Greenwich Dance & Trinity Laban for **making this possible.**’ (Staff member participating school)

Some feedback highlighted the challenges of “waiting around” for groups that inevitably come with a shared performance and a couple of supporting staff suggested that having two days of rehearsals at Laban was a little “too much” for some participants.

4.6 Progression & the Desire for More

Responses to the project highlighted a clear **demand for further such inclusive learning and performance opportunities**. Staff from participating dance groups firmly emphasised the value of the event and their desire to take part in such platforms more regularly:

“In case you are putting [on] other children's and young people's events **in the future... we would love to take part.**” (Artistic director, participating dance company)

“Count us in for the next one!!” (Staff member, participating dance company)

This was mirrored by the response from participating school groups:

“Can't wait until the next show! **Would love it to be an annual show.** Kids get soo [sic] much out of it.” (Staff member, participating school)

Parents were also extremely positive about the project, urging for more:

“There was so much to take in, we wanted to watch it all over again straight away.” (Parent commentary)

For one dance artist working with a school group only for the duration of this particular project, this ‘desire for more’ was particularly heartfelt and highlighted the sense of **progression** she felt was **implicitly embedded in the platform**:

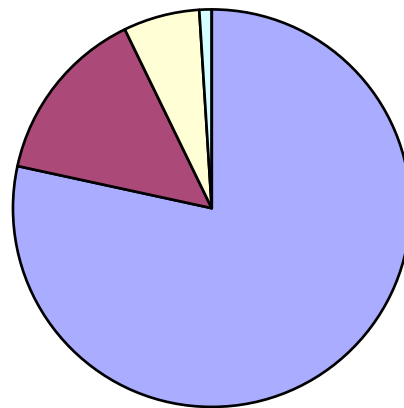
“I am sad the sessions are not continuing as I felt **our journey had only just begun.**” (Dance Artist working with participating school)

The sense of Co Motion acting as a springboard for progression was also strongly highlighted by one staff member from a participating dance company:

“We have the main company and this is the youth company, so it can be a little bit like talent spotting: You go ‘ooo, I’ll keep an eye on that dancer.’ So it’s great to see people interested in dance who are part of groups who are **getting skills who might want to carry on into the main companies.**” (Staff member, participating dance company)

Audience feedback also highlighted the value of Co Motion in terms of **prompting audience members to attend other such events**, with the following findings:

How likely are you to attend a similar performance as a result of seeing this?



- Very Likely (79%)
- Likely (14%)
- Don't know (6%)
- Not very likely (1%)
- Not likely at all (0%)

Feedback from the audience also stressed the **wider value** of the event. When asked 'how important' is it to hold events showcasing children & young people's work, audience feedback saw **95%** of attendees state '**very important**' and 5% state '**important.**'

"This event highlights **everything that is important about dance and performance.**" (Audience feedback)

"Thank you! More, more, more!" (Audience feedback)

