

# The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

## **A Northern Ballet School Project**

**Sponsored by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service**



# The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

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# **The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs**

## **Foreword and acknowledgements by Patricia Mc Donald**

As a Beacon School, our first priority for accessing and using sponsorship from the Quality Improvement Agency was to explore what constituted “quality” in dance preparation and training. This was an extremely valuable exercise and with help from the Council for Dance Education and Training, we shared our findings with most schools and providers operating in the sector last year. Following on from this, and now that we have been a Beacon school for over 2 years, we thought we should be looking at an area where our sector often faces its strongest challenges, and one where many colleagues find it difficult to understand the nature of the limited feedback available. We identified “the relevance and responsiveness of dance training and preparation” as possibly where the greatest challenges are levelled at schools in our sector. It is here, therefore, that we decided to try and understand more fully what was being said about the training and preparation and to discover to what extent any criticisms are justified. This will help us and other schools in the sector to understand and respond to any justified criticisms.

At Northern Ballet School, our aim is to prepare students to the best of our ability for professional careers. To get this right, we need to know that they are being prepared with the skills and knowledge that they will need to succeed in their future employment. To check this out we have used our team and consultants to check with a number of employers and industry bodies about their experience of employing graduate students. We have also looked into the published research to try and gain a better understanding of how well training is preparing young dancers for the world of employment.

I was delighted that the Quality Improvement Agency, now the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, agreed to sponsor our exercise. They provided support for the additional help and time that we needed to engage with our own staff and students and to exchange ideas with other schools and the experts. My thanks go to all of the employers, schools and students who kindly took part for their involvement and help with the project. This report records our findings and the conclusions from the project. We are grateful also to Martin Camillin and Liz O’Sullivan for their help with the exercise.

Our overriding aim is to continue to develop training for young dancers so that they are well equipped to meet the challenges that they will face when practicing their art after their training. I hope that this report will help others with the same goal.

**Patricia Mc Donald**

**Principal  
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### Summary; research

- 1) If there are employers who are dissatisfied with the training provided by the professional schools of dance and musical theatre, then those schools are unaware of the nature and extent of any dissatisfaction. Progression rates and individual relationships between schools and employers are working well.
- 2) There are valuable steers in Ofsted's materials which highlight effective industry links in terms of achievement and retention rates, standards of teaching and management. Specific inspection of the specialist dance schools shows high rates of progression to a varied range of prestigious and relevant employment.
- 3) The Government's own Dance and Drama Awards managed by LSC were reviewed in "The First 6 Years" report and showed strong evidence of progression, relevance, qualifications and curriculum designed in response to employers' needs, employer led review etc. This was further reinforced by evaluation of progression by the scheme's evaluators, The Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR) at Warwick, which found that the "independent sector successfully trains graduates for careers rather than jobs in the industry." A high proportion of those surveyed with the longest periods of employment (over 40 weeks compared to an average of only 18 weeks) in dance and drama came from the Dance and Drama Awards. Use of agents also influenced success in gaining longer assignments and higher pay.
- 4) Higher education publications stress the range and different nature of skills needed in the performing arts. These extend beyond performance skills, and include motivation, communications, business, marketing and self presentation.
- 5) It is important that employers build links with schools and vica versa. The best schools are well positioned in relation to market needs and they and their students are clear about intended employment destinations. Employers need to know where students are from and what they are prepared for.
- 6) The market for performers is highly segmented. The nature of dance and musical theatre varies considerably between different types of production and students training and talents are also differentiated. It is important that these are well matched. Schools and agents can help with this.
- 7) Dance and musical theatre are a very distinct segment of the wider creative and cultural skills sectors. Whilst the training for the former is vocationally orientated and work specific, many of the wider sector characteristics have a bearing on progression in dance and musical theatre; e.g. the huge reliance on human capital, the micro/organic nature of productions and the creativity and dynamic nature of enterprises. This has special implications for learning outcomes and processes. Levels of progression and satisfaction from employers of dance and musical theatre students is far higher than for employers operating in the creative and cultural sector at large.

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- 8) There has always been a degree of difficulty in defining responsiveness. LSC has tended to use quantitative measures for this in managing the Awards, and has delegated responsibility for selection, processes and progression to the schools. There has been little qualitative research, information or analysis; e.g. the types and nature of employment have not been codified. The schools' success has been much to do with their own positioning and dedication.
- 9) The Leitch Report on skills promotes "economically valuable skills." The dance and musical theatre training that we have looked at stacks up well against the need for demand led business and competitive skills recommendations in the report. However, questions were raised by the House of Commons Committee looking at the Report as to whether employers can always predict skill needs in changing markets.

### **Summary; the interviews**

- 10) The interviews painted a picture of global competition and national characteristics.
- 11) Progression rates and relations between the best schools and employers are well established. The best schools are well positioned in relation to employers, the market and preparing students for particular destinations.
- 12) Those interviewed placed great stress was placed on auditions, learning technique, the triple threat for musical theatre, the need for employers, schools and students to focus on respective skill requirements, the value of agents, etc. However, in cases where the triple threat and exceptional talent and skills were required, there were difficulties and some frustrations and costs to would be "engagers." These difficulties tended to be at the margins and employers were forced to meet their skill needs by opting for a mix of experience with talent and training. This is understandable and may have as much to do with expectations and brokerage as with the adequacy of training.
- 13) There are many employment opportunities that provide for ongoing development of skills or learning new disciplines in a supportive environment. These included both musical theatre and cruise lines. The latter are often providing a real substitute for new performers by offering an alternative to rep. The scale and nature of employment and development opportunities "on board" is often dismissed because of the old stigma that still attaches to some of the less professional entertainment on offer.
- 14) The range of non performance skills relating to self management and attitude and presentation were widely quoted by employers and others as critical to successful employment.
- 15) On balance and with minor reservations, many of those interviewed were content with the graduates that they employed and their training and preparation. A minority had higher expectations than the schools and their students could deliver at audition and in early engagements. Here relationships, feedback, agents, use of experience and development opportunities and managing expectations are all important to meeting the needs of the market and helping schools to be more responsive.

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### The project and our partners

16) We set out to improve the relevance and responsiveness of teaching and learning at Northern Ballet School and to engage other schools from across the sector in our learning. This will help employers and students to at the critical progression from learning to professional performance, and in so doing benefit the sector and the economy.

### Project summary

*“We will work with different employers in the performing arts, particularly dance, and training providers, schools, colleges and private institutions, to share ideas and to improve understanding and expectations of employers needs. We will challenge perceptions and identify and disseminate practical lessons for better employer engagement, greater responsiveness and progression.”<sup>1</sup>*

17) Our objectives include to:

- a) test perceptions of the relevance of dance and musical theatre training and preparation; and
- b) disseminate the findings of our work to others involved in training young performers; both in dance and musical theatre.

18) We are looking to achieve a “win-win” situation for training providers, employers and students, by:

- a) providing dance schools with better knowledge and understanding of employers' needs for skills;
- b) helping employers to better understand the training and preparation provided to students;
- c) engaging both employers and providers in an effective dialogue about what is, could and should be achieved in preparing young people to reach their potential in professional performance;
- d) improving the preparation for employment and the relevance and responsiveness of training;
- e) helping training providers to equip students for audition, learning and obtaining employment and working successfully; and
- f) securing better prepared employees for the benefits for the sector, the economy and our cultural activity.

19) We used a range of different approaches to achieve our objectives, including:

- i) Research; we undertook a literature survey against our subject and analysed existing publications from a range of sources..
- ii) Work by the steering group and consultants identifying key issues for discussion, see the discussion guide at annex 1 and analyses of findings.

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<sup>1</sup> ***Bold and italics are used throughout the report to emphasise key points and recommendations***

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- iii) Interviewing employers operating in different segments of the market for dance and musical theatre students.
  - iv) Seeking views from sector lead bodies including Creative and Cultural Skills Council, the Council for Dance Education and Training, and The National Council for Drama Training.
  - v) Dissemination of the draft project report to schools and bodies that we thought would also find the results helpful in raising the quality of their training.
  - vi) Following up via meetings and communications feedback from the dissemination. Using the outcomes of this to finalise and recirculate the report.
- 20) This project was devised and steered by Northern Ballet School. The Principal, Patricia McDonald, and her co-director Philip Radcliffe bid for funding for the project from the Quality Improvement Agency from its Beacon Innovation Fund. Patricia told us that: "Employer responsiveness is a top priority for our school and of great importance to other schools, colleges and private providers. Our role is to provide the standards, criteria and relevance necessary to meet students' and employers' needs for relevant and effective training and preparation for successful employment and careers in the sector." The rationale for employer responsiveness in training is set out in the Leitch Report and reflected in aim 2 of Pursuing Excellence. This is also stated as a major priority for Ministers, DCSF, LSC and the QIA in their own literature. The exercise responds to:
- 21) The QIA's Improvement Strategy Implementation Plan sets out a comprehensive list of improvement actions. The 12 most important actions are listed at: <http://www.qia.org.uk/pursuingexcellence/aims/priorityactions.html>
- i) Our project is designed to assist with the second National Improvement Strategy Objective;
  - ii) *the Leitch Recommendation: increase employer engagement and investment in skills....*
  - iii) *Aim 2:* ensure training provision meets employers' business needs and employers can recruit people with the vocational and employability skills needed to increase productivity.
- 22) **Our partners** We have involved a range of different employers and interested individuals in consultations and dissemination. Most of these have a particular involvement in dance or musical theatre recruitment. Some have danced or have professional experience with dance or acting companies.
- 23) Our consultants were Martin Camillin Associates Ltd. Martin set up and managed the national Dance and Drama Awards whilst working for DfES. He has since reviewed the first 6 years of the Awards amongst other things. Martin was assisted by Liz O'Sullivan who has danced and worked in the sector both at home and abroad.

### The report

- 24) The report is intended to be a reference document offering readers a range of different ideas and perspectives. The report consists of:

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- a) Research into published literature on dance, musical theatre and responsiveness to skill needs. We have analysed what we found against our findings and summarised the section.
- b) Interviews with a range of employers, agents, providers, skills council staff etc. Analysis of their perspectives. We have analysed what was said against our findings and summarised the section. We have also annexed a write up of our discussion, correspondence or in one case a question and answer session. These annexes provide a valuable set of different perspectives.
- c) Conclusions are drawn from the research, interviews and analysis. We have tried to establish to what extent employers are content with the training that students receive.
- d) Annexes are provided including:
  - i) our proforma covering the topics discussed in the interviews;
  - ii) the QIA topic that this exercise supports; and
  - iii) Ofsted inspection and a vocational courses press release.

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## RESEARCH

- 25) In this section we explore some of the current literature that relates to training and employer responsiveness. In particular we consider what key organisations and individuals have to say by way of published information on the relevance and responsive of dance and musical theatre training to employers needs. Our research included:
- a) Inspection, (Ofsted papers and reports);
  - b) The First Six Years, a Review of the Dance and Drama Awards. Review of the Department for Children Schools and Families and the Learning and Skills Council's Dance and Drama Awards. (Martin Camillin Associates Ltd);
  - c) Evaluation of the Dance and Drama Awards, (CEDAR at Warwick);
  - d) Higher education; various reports and publications over the past decade;
  - e) Creative and Cultural Skills Council; A Creative Blue print. This skills council is responsible for performing arts;
  - f) The LSC's Requirements for Dance and Drama providers under its prestigious awards scheme (Dance and Drama Awards) etc; and
  - g) The Leitch Review of Skills 2006.
- 26) **Inspection**
- 27) We considered what the national Ofsted Report, Inspection Framework and individual reports on a random selection of dance schools providing Awards under the Dance and Drama Awards told us about employer responsiveness.
- 28) The 2007-2008 national Ofsted Report has a section "Skills for working lives." This identifies key features found in the most successful learning including:
- a) strong links with employers greatly enhance the relevance of programmes; learners see this and their motivation is improved.
  - b) staff with the knowledge, skills and, in many cases, the professional experience outside education are able to teach work-related skills confidently.
  - c) clear and well understood aims, targets, assessment and monitoring procedures ensure that programmes produce tangible outcomes in terms of learners.
- 29) Annex 3 of this report includes extracts from Ofsted's press release "Vocational courses are bridging the skills gap to meet industry needs" and the Ofsted Framework 2005 for-the inspection of schools post 16 providers in England, (for the full document see [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/assets/Internet\\_Content/Shared\\_Content/IIFD/Files/schools\\_Framework/FrameworkForInspectionOfSchools.doc](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/assets/Internet_Content/Shared_Content/IIFD/Files/schools_Framework/FrameworkForInspectionOfSchools.doc) ) The press release highlights generic good practice for responsiveness and enabling progression into employment in further education across different sectors and skills. The release identifies key issues including:
- a) "The best colleges in each vocational area had common features. ***They all had strong links with industry and related classroom learning to the demands of the***

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- workplace. They worked hard to ensure high achievement and retention rates.* And continuous assessment of students ensured individuals were placed on the right courses, set appropriate targets, and identified for support when at risk of falling behind."
- b) The majority of the teachers were *subject specialists, with considerable industrial, technical and vocational experience*. This played a crucial role as teachers' first-hand knowledge helped students to apply theory to practice, develop technical and practical competences as well as the wider skills valued by employers.
  - c) Teachers' subject specialisms combined with *inspiring and engaging teaching were key factors in maintaining students' interest and progress*. Activities such as practical exercises and demonstrations, group work, talks by visiting speakers, industry visits and entry into skills competitions helped to motivate and encourage students and to raise standards.
  - d) Good leadership and management of the curriculum were evident in the best provision. Well led departments and day-to-day management of teaching, combined with a strong focus on students' achievement and effective self-assessment, helped to raise standards."
- 30) In order to see how dance schools were measuring up to the Ofsted principles, we looked at recent reports for 4 dance schools from the Ofsted Website and have extracted the sections on progression to employment below.

"Bird graduates are in regular employment and make very good progress within the industry. Students secure employment quickly; at the time of the inspection, 75% of 2007 graduates were already in work. Typically, former students will find themselves in cruise ships, national and international touring companies or West End productions. For example, past students have appeared in the West End shows Miss Saigon, Chicago and Starlight Express either as ensemble performers or in leading roles. Prepared especially well in ballet, Bird graduates have also been soloists in the world tours of the Royal Ballet, Scottish Ballet and the Birmingham Royal Ballet." (18 1 08)

"Few Elmhurst students fail to get work as dancers when they leave and well over half of those graduating in 2007 already have contracts. Employment records, which are much better than at the time of the last inspection, do not track students who left before 2004. However, since then the school claims an 'increase in numbers of students obtaining contracts with prestigious ballet companies'. Certainly, many more have been successful recently in this respect than in 2005. About half of those graduating in 2007 are now dancing with international ballet companies such as Ballet Ireland, Leipzig Ballet and the Vienna Festival Ballet; three recent leavers have contracts with Birmingham Royal Ballet." (7 3 08)

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"Almost all (Northern Ballet School) students gain employment in the performing arts profession when they leave, and a very large majority of those secure their first contract before they leave the school in July. Of those students graduating in 2005 and 2006, all but two had worked in a dance-related job by the time of the inspection, many continuously; of those who left in 2007, only one student had not yet worked in the profession. The school is highly successful in collecting and collating information from individual students about their employment histories, and their records are regularly updated by some students who left the school more than ten years ago and who have subsequently progressed to notable roles as dancers or choreographers. Typically, recent ex-students have joined dance companies on national and international tours, joined ballet companies in the UK and abroad, and worked on cruise ships and in commercial cabaret. Recent graduates have danced with New Adventures in Edward Scissorhands, the Jose Montes Ballet Company, sung and danced in Fame on a European tour and in Grease in the West End, and appeared as part of the Cirque du Soleil company." (7 6 08)

"Few Urdang students fail to get work in the industry. The academy estimates that about half of those graduating in 2007 already have contracts. Employment records, which are much better than at the time of the last inspection, are still being compiled. They show that former students will typically find themselves in pantomime, commercial entertainment, cruise ships or national or European touring companies. Of the 2007 cohort, one student is a principal dancer in The X Factor, one was in Carmen Jones at the Royal Festival Hall and one was in the film of Mama Mia. The academy points out that a number of past students have principal character roles in West End productions such as Mary Poppins, The Lion King and Hairspray. However, the academy recognises that improving the quality of students' employment must remain a priority." (25 1 08)

- 31) These extracts show a high propensity for the graduates from the professional dance schools to get work. Not only do they get work but they do so quickly either during or after training. It is also interesting to see the variety of different types of employment that they work in. This suggests that their training is designed to give them a flexible range of skills which will equip them for a variety of different performance settings. One point that the inspectors make in most reports is that the drive to ***follow up students' progression in employment has only been comprehensive and effective in recent years. Some see this as vital feedback in terms of responsiveness to both employers' and students' needs and a link to better understanding of how the training and preparation has equipped them for progression.***

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### Review of the First Six Years of the Dance and Drama Awards training

32) The performance of over 20 leading dance and drama schools was reviewed in "The First Six Years A Review of the Dance and Drama Awards (D&DAs)<sup>2</sup>. These schools are approved by Ofsted to provide dance and musical theatre training under the LSC's prestigious Dance and Drama Awards and in line with the Government's objectives for the scheme. The Review report puts the dance and drama schools involved in a favourable position relative to the Ofsted pointers. It found, amongst other things, that in relation to Government's Skills Strategy the training provided by these dance and drama schools is showing *strong evidence of*:

- a) *relevance to employer and sector needs, as well as to students;*
- b) *involving the trainers and employers in developing and using their own curriculum and qualifications;*
- c) *using employer-led review to manage development, the provider base, the range and mix of provision and allocations; and*
- d) *focusing on achieving skills and progression to relevant employment.*

33) The review assessed the provision against the Government's objective for improved preparation and training so that students can reach their potential and maximise their value as new entrants to the Performing Arts sector. The review found that:

- a) "Few Performing Arts departments in FE colleges achieve grade 1 in inspection. We know of only 2 in 2003/2004. This demonstrates the quality and standards of the D&DA schools, where 11 of the 21 schools are graded as outstanding for teaching and learning whilst preparing students for level 4 qualifications (now level 6).
- b) In addition to inspection, *the evaluation by CEDAR at the University of Warwick has identified best practice in making training responsive to students and industry needs and in supporting students for self-employment and progression. DfES and providers have taken up their recommendations for improvements in areas such as: access and auditions, training and progression to relevant employment. A survey by the evaluators revealed that the majority of students were pleased that they had chosen to undertake the training and most were satisfied with it. The graduates who were working in relevant occupations expressed the greatest satisfaction.*
- c) In the First Six Years Review, the standard of responsiveness in the D&DA schools was judged in terms of the delivery of: "A sustained number of trainees to enhance the pool of well prepared actors, dancers and stage managers to support the best performances in this fast growing sector." The Review report states progress against this objective as follows:
  - i) The Awards and their successor arrangements in higher education have provided training for an average of over 1000 students pa. This compares

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<sup>2</sup> (Council for Dance Education and Training, Confederation of Drama Schools and Martin Camillin Associates Ltd 2005/2006)

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favourably with the intake of 365 provided under the (former) failed IFS arrangements. *Over the (first) 6 years of the scheme this has provided a significant increase in talented graduates for the sector.*

- ii) The scheme has very high rates of occupancy, estimated at over 90%, and all students who complete their courses have achieved their level 4 Diplomas or level 3 certificates. This would indicate that the pool of labour from the Awards is adding significantly to the supply of employees for the sector.
  - iii) Reference to Ofsted and Adult Learning Inspectorate reports on schools reveals high rates of progression from learning to employment. DfES commissioned NCDT and CDET to collect and analyse comprehensive destination data from schools. They have now set up systems and contacted a limited number of students already. Their results based on this limited sample of graduates that responded to their initial approaches show that all have undertaken some relevant employment within a year of leaving. The evaluators are also looking into the nature and rates of progression, as these are the ultimate measure of the scheme's success."
- 34) This is an impressive set of findings against qualifications that were set in the light of employers' advice and met with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authorities stringent requirements for grading at level 4. However, these research findings tell us about the numbers entering training, the training "process" and progression rates to employment. They do not tell us about how employers regard graduates when they are working. In the second section of the report we ask employers and sector bodies to tell us of their experiences of employing graduates as performers.

### Evaluation of the Dance and Drama Awards

35) CEDAR at Warwick was engaged by the Department for Children Schools and Families to evaluate the outcomes of dance and drama training and the labour market in their review of the D&DA scheme in 2006. An extract from their final phase 2 evaluation in 2006 is included below. The evaluators used the limited data available from Equity and their own New Performers survey to obtain information about progression to professional performance as follows.

- a) *"The returns for both these surveys are significant but small..... We have also made comparisons with the Skillset 2005 Workforce Survey in the Performing Arts commissioned by Equity, based on a sample of 35% of Equity members. However, the Skillset survey does not include as many dance graduates as drama and also includes some graduates from the Music conservatoires.*
- b) ..... 66% of the Equity sample are aged over 30, whereas the New Performers sample has an average age of 23. However, the Equity survey provides an illustration of the employment characteristics of the workforce that providers aspire to train their graduates to join. **In general terms the results of the two surveys are remarkably consistent and this supports the judgment that providers are successful in preparing graduates for careers in the industry.**

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**Table 1: Comparison of Equity and New Performer Data**

	Equity Survey 2005	New Performers 2006
<b>Sample size and response rate</b>	8,377 (23%)	346 (18%)
<b>Employed in industry or teaching in the last twelve months:</b>	84%	72%
<b>Not employed in industry or teaching in last twelve months</b>	16%	28%
<b>Average weeks work in industry</b>	18 weeks	23 weeks
<b>Average income from industry</b>	£7,200 (16-24 years)	£6000 (23 years)
<b>Average weeks in other employment</b>	28 weeks	N/A (10-15 hours per week)
<b>Average with periods of unemployment</b>	60%	10%
<b>Ratio of women to men</b>	49%:51%	74%:26%

4.4 .....It is important to note that 20 of the top 25 institutions in terms of numbers of employed Equity members are or were providers in the DADA Awards scheme. There is additional evidence in the Equity survey that supports the providers' claims that the independent and accredited sector successfully trains graduates for careers rather than jobs in the industry. The difference being that providers are more interested in the long term sustainable development of graduates rather than in preparing them to secure one off successes after graduation. The Equity survey demonstrates that the average member worked for only 18 weeks, but that 12% of respondents had worked for over 40 weeks. Apart from a significant group of respondents trained in Opera and Music, a high proportion of this 12% were trained by DADA providers or the Conservatoire.....

4.5 The headline findings from both papers include:

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- 4.5.1 *Appendix Three, Table 3 shows that male dancers from the highest social groups with extensive prior training including a Diploma and a DADA Award are the most employed and highest earning group in the survey*
- 4.5.2 *A majority of respondents are generally satisfied with their careers, with three quarters of respondents indicating that, with the value of hindsight, they would have taken the same course at the same institution*
- 4.5.3 *Levels of career satisfaction were found to be higher among dance graduates compared to drama graduates. Levels of satisfaction were related to the length of time respondents had been engaged in performance activities.*
- 4.5.4 *The rate of employment within both performance related occupations and teaching occupations is higher among dance (compared to drama) graduates, graduates from higher social class backgrounds and graduates with a National Diploma (compared to a degree)*
- 4.5.5 *During the reference week of the survey, approximately 60% of respondents had secured the services of an agent. Among Dance graduates, those who had secured the services of an agent had gained 4 weeks longer in performance related employment than those without an agent. At the time of the survey, Dance graduates who had an agent earned on average £90 per week. More were in performance related employment than those without an agent. The advantages of securing an agent were less pronounced among Drama graduates. Among both Dance and Drama graduates, those with agents attend a greater number of auditions.*
- 4.5.6 *The ability to deal with auditions and to make one's way as a performer depends on not only talent and competence but also maturity and prior experience. Those beginning courses with D&DA awards include the 16 year old straight from GCSE, the 18 year old with A levels or equivalent qualification, and someone who already has a first degree (for instance in English and Drama). Alongside these are the occasional mature people who have given up previous careers to embark on training.*
- 4.5.7 *The need to develop strategies to sustain their professional identity and income through difficult times is recognised by providers as well as by new performers.*
- 4.5.8 *Recent graduates are still learning how to manage risk and vary in the degree to which they have developed their own patterns of earning income by alternative means. How broad-based their course was will be an issue for some, in enabling them to pursue opportunities in a range of media.*
- 4.5.9 *The attitudinal aspects of 'becoming a professional' were spelt out by interviewees. There is however no reliable way for the evaluation team to assess either qualitatively or quantitatively how far any individual*

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*respondent possesses these qualities. And while tutors can assess their promise as students, this can be affected by the realities of life after college: the potential of a student when starting a course may not always be an indicator of their likely success in employment."*

- 36) The findings from the CEDAR report show that the training of the dance and drama awards students tends to be more effective than others in getting students into employment that lasts. In particular:
- a) The Equity survey shows that the average graduate had secured 18 weeks work and 12% had achieved 40 weeks at the time of the surveys. The new performers' survey showed 23 weeks.
  - b) *Factors such as maturity, gender and ability to deal with auditions were important to success.*
  - c) *Graduates from the independent accredited sector are the most successful in gaining careers.*
  - d) *Rates of employment and career satisfaction were both higher for dancers than drama, music etc.*
  - e) *Those using agents had longer periods of employment than others and also tend to earn more.*

### Arts Council for England Strategy for Higher Education Funding Council

- 37) The Arts Council produced a strategy for Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE): "Arts, enterprise and excellence: strategy for higher education." Arts Council England, November 2006. This recognises the importance of:
- a) contributing to the creative economy by supporting enterprise and innovation
  - b) widening and diversifying participation in higher education.
- 38) Two of the strategic aims of HEFCE's strategic plan for 2006-2011 are: enhancing the contribution of HE to the economy and society, and widening participation and fair access. These overlap with Arts Council England's six priority areas for the arts:
- Taking part in the arts
  - Children and young people
  - **Creative economy**
  - Vibrant communities
  - Internationalism
  - Celebrating diversity.
- 39) These strategic priorities include our concerns in respect of the responsiveness of dance training to employers and the labour market. However, both organisations have wide ranging remits and their focus is quite properly much more widely cast with weight on supply driven, learning and community contexts.

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- 40) The most specific reference in the paper refers to the need for higher education to support progression to employment:  
*“Many higher education institutions support graduates with the transition into work, for example through providing incubator units, business start-up advice, and showcasing students’ work; some enable artists and companies to use their facilities and equipment. However, surveys suggest that graduates from arts and creative courses are the least likely to have had access to a work experience placement opportunity while at university or college. Such placements are very beneficial in developing the ability to survive and thrive in the world of work, especially in terms of creative entrepreneurship.”*
- 41) Mark Evans from Coventry University published some useful insights into HE performing arts graduates’ progress to employment and the self employment opportunities which are often overlooked (Palatine 2006):
- a) “a professional actor would typically be expected to be skilled in voice, movement, characterization, text analysis, rehearsal techniques, stage combat, social dance and perhaps singing. She would also be expected to be reliable, flexible, presentable, on time and able to learn lines. She would typically have to manage her own finances and market herself as a freelance artist. This is a complex and demanding set of skills and knowledge, traditionally associated with a conservatoire style training..”
  - b) “.....self-employment. As well as a grasp of relevant performance and employability skills, performing arts entrepreneurs would also be expected to demonstrate skills and knowledge in relation to the setting up of a new business, the identification of market opportunities, marketing strategies, communication skills, and the development of original ideas. Modes of behaviour associated with performing arts enterprise would include: high level of self-motivation, flexibility, risk-taking, self-confidence and endurance (Onstenck, 2003: 76).”
- 42) *These suggest the demands on performers go significantly beyond performance skills and technique. The range of skills, discipline and acumen can be daunting. More disappointing is the drop out from performance reported that some HE students experience in order to make ends meet.*
- 43) Susanne Burns (Entrepreneurship and Professional Practice Palatine Mapping Dance 2007) captures some of the flavour of employer and performer job search in terms of costs and effort as follows:  
*“Both employers and performers expend significant time and resources on job searching. Auditions are used for hiring and these are costly. Talent is rated more highly than training and agents and other mediators are important in job matching.”*
- 44) She quotes Birch, Jackson and Towse (1996) (1998) on the difficulties that students face in moving from HE training to employment:  
*‘Highly competent students who are ill-prepared for the reality of the industry can minimise their own employment prospects, thus reducing the pool of skills available to employers. Practical knowledge or understanding of: network structures, how each sector conducts its recruitment process, self-employment, tax systems and*

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*employment laws are proven to be imperative. The inclusion of business related and self management skills within training should equip and prepare a student with the necessary tools and understanding to withstand the pressures and demands of employment, particularly in the first year of seeking employment.'*

45) From the above one could infer that the supply of graduates from the HE sector, with the exception of the performance based schools in the HE Conservatoire/consortia and some very vocationally orientated higher and further education institutions have a less performance and professional employment related approach than some of the independent professional performance based schools providing exclusively for performers and associated employment. Their progression rates have been reported as considerably lower. *This is pertinent as employers will not always know the history and training experiences of those that they are interviewing. Those graduates auditioning to be new recruits as dancers and for musical theatre are not a homogenous group. Unless employers differentiate between those presenting at audition, they may have no perception of which routes individuals have travelled, or the institutions and courses attended.* As our interviews establish, auditions are competence based but also require thinking performers.

### **Creative and Cultural Skills Council; The Creative Blueprint**

46) The Sector Skills Council, Creative and Cultural Skills is the sector body responsible for skills in the wider creative and cultural sectors. Its responsibilities include the performing arts and in particular dance. In practice its analysis does not extend in any detail to dance and musical theatre as individual entities. However, its analysis of the wider group of creative arts provides an important context for comparison. The Council has produced a Creative Blueprint for the Creative Arts sector which covers a wide range of activity, in which dance and musical theatre are relatively very small entities. However, within this work we identified some pointers that help in gauging the relevance of general arts training and preparation for employment in the wider sector. Our first extract identifies a helpful and accurate set of principles that do relate to employer responsiveness:

- a) the relative size of the sector;
- b) *the nature of creativity, it is based on human capital* and, as such is different to some other sectors, and requires a different approach;
- c) *the micro/organic nature of the sector;*
- d) learning outcome quality criteria; and
- e) learning process quality criteria.

The Challenges deals with the positioning of the creative industries in the UK. They are accounted for in different ways by different agencies and departments.

“They broadly cover advertising, film and video, architecture, music, art and

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antiques markets, performing arts, computer and video games, publishing, crafts, software, design, television and radio, and designer fashion, a much wider remit than Creative & Cultural Skills are responsible for. The term creative industry provides a language which has focused the attention of many different countries towards supporting their own creative industries. In the UK, the creative industries have experienced a 46% employment growth and 136% output growth between 1995 and 2015 (Tims and Wright, 2007). In 2004 the UN estimated that creative industries account for 7% of global GDP. This has brought a focus onto policy-making for creativity, but the term is problematic, embedding assumptions about what creativity and culture are and how they can be supported.”

*There is an assumption that the creative industries are like any other industry. However, they are based on human capacity and use creativity, rather than a specific product or a process. This is what makes them different.* This leads to contradictory forms of accounting for and collecting data on the creative industries.

“Arguments over definitions and sub-categories are common place. **Boxing creativity into a process that can be governed and regulated like any other has meant that policy-makers often miss the way that creative activity and creative projects have the potential to change people, organisations and relationships.** To support creative and cultural organisations, innovation must be nurtured. To do this, policy makers must understand how the sector functions.

The sector is populated with small organisations. **There are asymmetries: a few very big players alongside a mass of micro-activity. They are project-led in general, producing unique outputs. The value of the industry is in its workforce and not the organisations that they work for. People in the creative industries are motivated by the desire to create original content and respond to emerging opportunities. All this is more at home in small organisations, which face fewer restrictions and are generally more dynamic.**”

### 3.3.2. Quality: What are employers looking for?

“This section looks specifically at two areas: outcome and process criteria. Outcome criteria relate to what the learner will achieve, while process criteria refers to how learners will achieve their goals.

#### Outcome Quality Criteria

- Courses must deliver skills that the individual employee can use.
- Employees’ progress is monitored over time, and skills that accumulate over time improve (e.g. presentation skills).
- Improvement in workplace performance and/or increased potential for success in their career.
- Creative spark, drawing, articulation, empathy and ready for work.
- Should embed a qualification when this does not interfere with keeping it contextual.
- Widens the participant’s perspective.

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- Participants enjoy the training and rate it positively.
- The individual must be able to use the training as a baseline from which to develop their own skills.

### Process Quality Criteria

- The course should be interactive with a high level of trainee participation.
- Trainees should have access to appropriate working space and facilities.
- Course tutors should be highly competent and very experienced in their discipline.
- The course should be delivered in short stages.
- Learning objectives should be clear from the outset.
- Includes best practice examples from outside the sector.
- There is consistent monitoring of curriculum relevance.
- Is sector focused, and therefore relevant?
- Is balanced between being transferable and being role specific – targeting job roles directly where possible.
- Is culturally diverse and appropriate.
- Is tailored to the needs of the target group, its benefit and purpose made clear, and the type of delivery reasoned out.
- Training incorporates different perspectives, and makes use of real world situations to help participants see the bigger picture.”

### 4.2.1. Entry to the Sectors

#### Overview of Issue

In the creative and cultural industries, gaining experience and learning through action is a fundamental principle. Few occupations in the sector are entered with a complete portfolio of skills. Consequently, many of the industries point out the value of work based learning, Continuing Professional Development and the provision of courses that provide a relevant skill set.....

#### Demand Side Evidence

- 56% of businesses facing recruitment difficulties said that applicants lacked the right skills for the job they were applying for.
- 33% of businesses facing recruitment difficulties said that applicants lacked experience.
- 11% of businesses facing recruitment difficulties said that applicants lacked the right qualifications.
  - \_ Creative roles lacked the most applicants with the right skills

### 5.14. Performing Arts Key Issues

#### 5.14.1. Entry to the Sector

##### Overview of Issue

In the performing arts gaining experience and learning through action is a fundamental principle. No occupations in the sector are entered with a complete

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portfolio of skills. Consequently, many of the industries point out the value of work based learning and the provision of courses for relevant skill sets. There is a lack of structured career paths and progression plus information for employers and individuals about the relevance and value of courses to enter into performing arts.

There is an oversupply of courses, providers and learners studying for a qualification in the sector for very few new jobs. On the other hand freelancing is a common and increasing, with demand for a wide range of skills. Experience is valued and can lead to a period of volunteering in order to gain entry into the sector. This is a barrier to developing a more diverse workforce.

### Demand Side Evidence

- Across the UK, 41% of performing arts organisations experiencing recruiting difficulties said that applicants lacked the skills they were looking for.
- 37% of businesses facing recruitment difficulties said that applicants lacked experience.
- 14% of businesses facing recruitment difficulties said that applicants lacked the right qualifications.
- Education, Creative, Management and Technical roles have the highest shortages.
- There is a need for transition skills from Higher Education to employment. Freelancing is increasing in an industry that already has a high proportion of self employed/freelance practitioners.

### Supply Side Evidence

In 2004/5 there were 20,731 courses in performing arts, 4,629 providers and over half a million students at FE and HE level studying in the sector.”

47) We looked at what the available literature tells us about the responsiveness of dance and musical theatre training to employers' needs from the available sources relating to education and skills. Whilst we would not claim that our search is exhaustive, we believe that it is representative. There is information from the further and higher education sectors, inspection and the sector skills council. The evaluation and reviews of the Dance and Drama Awards are familiar to us as our school has been an active provider under this scheme and its predecessors. Our consultant Martin Camillin was responsible for setting up the Government's awards scheme and managing the operation and evaluation of the scheme from its inception in 1999 until he left the DCSF in 2005. He reminds us that the Government's intervention was designed to secure training for professional performers and stage managers from providers who could meet the highest standards for:

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- a) access to the most talented students, irrespective of their ability to pay;
  - b) high quality training, based on objective inspection and qualifications external;
  - c) relevance to employers' and market needs; and
  - d) funding viability and proper systems for management of public funding.
- 48) The most problematic of these has been relevance. This is difficult to define and measure. Progress has been made through designing and pursuing qualifications and curricula for employers in the sector. In addition efforts have been increasingly focused on monitoring progression to relevant employment opportunities. Whilst difficult to secure, the evidence of progression is now better, as shown in the inspection reports above. The First 6 Years Review of the Awards also shows that training provided under the Awards is meeting many of the Government's Skills Strategy objectives.
- 49) **The Learning and Skills Council's Requirements for Providers 2008** and associated Service Specification require the collection of graduate destination data and:
- “will use this information when future allocations are made and prior to Ofsted inspection.” This is in evidence in the extracts from inspection reports above. They also state that:
- “The first and overriding criteria for allocation of Awards, is that students are judged at audition to have the most potential to succeed in the profession.”
- The only other reference that we could find that is relevant to meeting employers' needs is that:
- “The contractor will have to provide high quality and easily accessible information, advice and guidance in helping learners to understand the opportunities and support available to them about education, training and connected matters (including employment).”
- 50) These references confirm the difficulty that we face when trying to determine what relevance to employers is. LSC have made its Dance and Drama Awards providers responsible for:
- a) identifying employment potential at auditions for training places
  - b) giving information and advice;
  - c) measuring the quantitative progression of graduates to employment.
- 51) In his seminal **Review of Skills for the Government (2006)**, **Sandy Leitch** concludes that ‘Economically valuable skills’ is our mantra.” .... The report makes a priority of relevant, market based skills e.g.

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”There is a direct correlation between skills, productivity and employment. Unless the UK can build on reforms to schools, colleges and universities and make its skills base one of its strengths, UK businesses will find it increasingly difficult to compete.”

“focus on economically valuable skills. Skill developments must provide real returns for individuals, employers and society.”

“demand-led skills. The skills system must meet the needs of individuals and employers. Vocational skills must be demand-led rather than centrally planned;

- adapt and respond. No one can accurately predict future demand for particular skill types. The framework must adapt and respond to future market needs; and
- build on existing structures. Don't always chop and change. Instead, improve performance of current structures through simplification and rationalisation, stronger performance management and clearer remits. Continuity is important.”

“Rationalise existing bodies, strengthen the collective voice and better articulate employer views on skills by creating a new Commission for Employment and Skills, reporting to central Government and the devolved administrations. The Commission will manage employer influence on skills, within a national framework of individual rights and responsibilities;

- increase employer engagement and investment in skills. Reform, relicense and empower Sector Skills Councils (SSC). Deliver more economically valuable skills by only allowing public funding for vocational qualifications where the content has been approved by SSCs. Expand skills brokerage services for both small and large employers.”

### Research Summary

52) Our literature search shows that there has not been a great deal of research into the question of how effective dance and musical theatre training is to meeting employers' needs. What there is, tends to be quantitative and suggests that there are limits to the hard data on progression from training to employment. However, the data for vocational dance schools shows them as being particularly effective, relative to other forms of further and higher education for the performing arts and more generally. High occupancy, qualification rates and progression to employment were identified in the First Six Years Review of the schools involved in providing Dance and Drama Awards. We can look forward to improvements in the collection and our ability to evaluate information about graduate progression. This will tell us more about the numbers going from the professional schools into employment. It will not necessarily help with the qualitative side of how effective the training is in relation to employers' needs and graduates' career paths. Unfortunately, there is no automatic feedback loop for this between employers, graduates and schools, neither are we aware of any plans for this.

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- 53) Progression rates to employment of between 72% and 84% were identified by the CEDAR at Warwick evaluation. These were higher in dance. They also found that those in employment rated their training highly. Those using agents had secured more work and at higher rates. Readiness for auditions, maturity and experience did make a difference to employment prospects. Graduates from the independent sector were the most effective in the analysis of surveys.
- 54) The higher education sector appears to be less professional performance orientated in dance and musical theatre, with the exception of the conservatoire and other schools that had previously been part of the independent sector and funded under the Dance and Drama Awards. HE providers are subject to different inspection and reporting arrangements. Whilst we have no specific information from these schools, we would expect their performance to be at least on a par with the independent schools.
- 55) What was interesting about the HE publications was the emphasis on different forms of employment, self employment and enterprise. There was more of a mixed economy here with different types of employment and activity considered and presumably taken up by arts and creative graduates. This is in direct contrast to the nature and focus of the independent dance and musical theatre schools. Their whole emphasis is on performance and to some extent teaching as avenues for progression.
- 56) The HE literature is especially helpful in portraying the range of professional skills needed in acting and self employment. These both apply to dance and musical theatre also. The quotes from Mark Evans are particularly enlightening: business, marketing, communication and the development of ideas together with “motivation, flexibility, risk taking, self confidence and endurance,” are a formidable bundle. Some HE students are reported as dropping out in order to make ends meet.
- 57) Susanne Burns helps us to appreciate the different nature of employment and the high costs to both graduates and employers of job search. Auditions are expensive and agents and other mediators are important in matching.
- 58) Our research helped us to recognise the heterogeneous nature of both graduates and their employment prospects. Those who present as dancers or performers have different talents, background, training and attitudes. Different schools train for different outcomes and employment goals. There are different segments within the supply and demand for dancers and musical theatre performers. It is necessary for both auditioning performers and employers to recognise the nature and parameters of the employment and training respectively if they are appreciate what each has to offer. This explains why employers and agents frequently build relations and trust with particular schools and their students over time. It provides a useful short hand to the segment of the market that students have been trained in and the nature of employment on offer.
- 59) The Creative and Cultural Skills Council provides a scale and context for those researching the responsiveness of the performing arts. Their work helps us to understand the nature of creativity, human capital, the organic nature of the sector, learning outcomes and processes. Much of the micro activity in the arts is project led.

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- 60) Employers look for a baseline that they can develop using workplace performance. Creative spark and potential are required. Qualifications provide a useful basis but of themselves are not enough. Trainees need to have benefited from process qualities, e.g. working space and facilities, competent and experience staff, relevant curriculum, transferable and role specific skills, different perspectives, clear goals etc. Whilst written for the creative and cultural skills in the round, these indicators have a very close fit with our findings in relation to dance and musical theatre skills in particular. "Gaining experience and learning through action is a fundamental principle." Hence the importance of work based learning.
- 61) Interestingly, 56% of employers in the wider sector thought that applicants for employment lacked the right skills. This is a marked contrast to what we found in dance specific employment, where there is a vocational focus on particular forms and technique. This would provide a basis for further development as is suggested above. However, the nature of the sector is such that there will be particular skills and competences in demand which might not have been met in the training. This flows in part from the nature of this creative and dynamic sector. Perhaps, it would be an unrealistic for us to expect that employers would find their particular skill needs met in full by the training.
- 62) Where the research is re-assuring is that the Review of the Dance and Drama Awards finds that the curriculum, qualifications and design of the Awards was based on employers' specific needs in the suite of diploma courses that are funded, and the best students who present at audition are selected for courses. However, employer relevance is difficult to "nail" and maintain. A recent CBI survey following the Leitch Report queried employers' ability to identify future skill needs themselves. (House of Commons Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee Re-skilling for recovery: After Leitch, implementing skills and training policies. First Report of Session 2008–09.) We infer that the LSC's and Ofsted's approach to managing relevance in the Awards is to look backwards at what rates of progression have been achieved and to rely on inputs and processing by providers to secure relevance. Ofsted do, however, identify attributes in the learning processes that they associate with relevant and effective learning: effective relationships, competent and experienced staff and well managed and focused learning objectives.
- 63) LSC's reliance on providers selecting students, planning courses and measuring progression, presupposes that the focus of the training and preparation and progression to employment opportunities via the Awards is relevant to "appropriate" levels and sectors of the market and to young peoples' needs and aspirations. Whilst the Awards have been in operation for almost 10 years, our understanding of the changing market and what constitutes relevance in the scheme requirements remain far from clear. The precise employment destinations intended for Awards students have not been articulated, perhaps advisedly, as it is both a risky and difficult task. That is not to say that a valuable set of skills is not being delivered, albeit through the good judgement and dedication of providers.

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- 64) Given this approach to the specification of the scheme's employment objectives, it is not be surprising that graduates from this and other further and higher education providers have not been prepared to meet a particular set of employers' needs. The best schools decide exactly what their students are being prepared for and their training and preparation prepares students for successful audition and employment. A high percentage appear to progress to where these schools expect them to. The start of employment is only the beginning of graduates' on the job training.
- 65) In practice, Awards Graduates who have trained in dance and musical theatre could end up in international, national or regional dance and musical theatre productions. They could equally well be employed in the large and expanding cruise entertainment industry, which contains such a varied range of standards and professional performance opportunities. A significant proportion of graduates go on to teaching.
- 66) Leitch recommends a root and branch channelling of learning support through employers to improve relevant skill supply. He supports reform of existing structures rather than creating new ones. Better articulation and communication of needs are also recommended, as are improved employer engagement and investment using the skills councils. This approach was devised in a developing economy in 2006. The House of Commons Committee referred to above is now challenging whether this is right for our current economic recession. However, one could question whether and what employers would seek to arrange if they were given the purse strings for dance and musical theatre students. In practice, they have been greatly involved in developing the Trinity qualifications and curriculum, albeit a flexible basis for delivery.

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## INTERVIEWS & ANALYSIS

- 67) This second section of our report pulls together the interviews and exchanges that we undertook with different employers, sector bodies and others. We have attached full reports of these interviews and exchanges in the annexes. They provide different perspective of responsiveness from those involved. These are each very interesting to consider in their own right and also to compare and contrast with the other interviews and our research findings. That is the approach we have adopted below. We have also attempted to shed light on the central question in our study, whether new graduates are being adequately prepared for employment and whether they can meet employers' needs effectively. Responses to this from those interviewed are very interesting.
- 68) **Patricia McDonald** Principal of Northern Ballet School and our project leader (Interview 1) reported that our graduates have relatively high rates of employment and long lasting careers. Her feedback from employers was consistently positive in terms of graduates skills and knowledge, however, she rarely heard of any areas where the school could be more responsive to employers' needs. This concerned her, given more general reports of some employer disappointment. Hence this project.
- 69) Patricia thought that the standard of different cohorts of students does vary between years. Agents and employers rely to some extent on their knowledge of the standards and preparation provided by particular schools. The school has good relationship with many employers who return to take advantage of the standard of training and preparation that they know is provided.
- 70) She identified the need for students to recognise the importance of: international competitiveness, their appearance and presentation, use of DVDs, CDs, photographs, flexibility and ability to learn at auditions. Like others interviewed, she had heard students' reports of some contenders at audition being poorly prepared and not understanding the process. Dancers at the school are subject to continual assessment regular performance and feedback, which helps to prepare them for auditions and performance.
- 71) Patricia found students' own research into audition adverts on the internet and in publications a ready source of information about the number and nature of opportunities for graduates. This helped the school to keep abreast of employment opportunities and employers' needs.
- 72) Employers have little involvement in the training and preparation of students apart from occasional classes involving professionals. However, the Trinity qualifications and curriculum were based on employers' advice.
- 73) Occasionally, the choices employers make at audition may appear not to result in the selection of the most suitable student for a particular role.
- 74) Patricia hoped that employers would give new graduates chances to gain experience. Some classical companies demand experience, where it is not always necessary and this does make it difficult for some new graduates to get started.

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- 75) She recognised that the school does train dancers so that they can audition for a range of opportunities that may become available to them. Certain employers may feel that the training is not sufficiently tailored to meet their particular needs. *This is to some extent inevitable due to the highly segmented market for different skills which exists. Our interviews reinforce this. Different segments of the market for performers require different types and levels of skills.*
- 76) **Ian Kellgren** is an experienced and informed former theatre director and someone who has worked closely with employers in musical theatre and television (see Interview 2). He was concerned about whether the schools and perspective training are adequately “tuned” to the developing market and coverage of the “triple threat” and new technology. He also cited the preparation for audition and the way in which UK graduates auditioned relative to their US peers as important to progression. He thought that dancers tended to be better disciplined and therefore more flexible at learning new things at audition than those who had studied musical theatre.
- 77) Ian’s comments about broadcasters needing to respond to *audience ratings, the use of the webisodes and restructuring of drama courses in line with commercial/musical theatre focus are particularly interesting. He does not absolve the dance schools where their target audience is musical theatre, he stresses the need for the triple threat, rather than the “double and a half threat” which is more common.* He cites the need to deliver a monologue and learning new forms of dance, hip hop and circus skills as valuable, alongside more traditional forms of dance.
- 78) Ian also raises a further point about accessing and *responding to market signals. If schools merely train students for what they want, it is important that their choices are informed by a proper understanding of what employers require. In practice this is not always the case. Hence, his wish for better and up to date industry links that go beyond occasional master classes. He also felt that some historical traditions and existing structures for learning, whilst developed with and for employers, may fail to keep up with the market and could impede change and responsiveness. Hence the need for current performance practitioners.*
- 79) Ian’s wish was for better information about market needs and employer relevance for training providers to draw on and respond to over time.
- 80) **James Evans** heads up research at Creative and Cultural Skills. His views (Interview 3 attached) provide an important context to this debate. His job is to understand and inform others about the operation of the wider national context of cultural skills. Dance is a small subset of performing arts which sits within the wider sector. However, the wider sector research and intelligence provides some very interesting themes that can be considered in relation to dance training and its responsiveness to employers.
- 81) James makes clear the difference between specific and key skills, training and qualifications across the creative skills sector. The volumes of training, new employment and vacancies are significant. However, there is a gulf between what new entrants have by way of training, talent and ability and what they need in relation to work place skills and knowledge. There are also issues about talent and potential in

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relation to how far individuals can progress. Realism dictates that not all have the talent to reach the top. There are however many different needs within and associated to the different strands of employment which provide worthwhile opportunities for employment.

- 82) James confirms the existence of the view of employers that “there are lots of people coming into the sector and there is a lot of creative talent, but that new entrants require a lot of training because they lack the key skills to fulfil the jobs for which they are applying.” ***This is, however in relation to the wider creative and cultural skills job market, rather than to either performers or dance per se. However, there are some interesting analogies to the perceptions that we set out to test. Could it be that this is a phenomenon in the arts world or possibly that the expectations of those in the arts is for more than new recruits can provide?***
- 83) He goes on to compare employers' claims of lack of skills with the fact that 90% of entrants to employment have appropriate qualifications. If this applies equally to the relatively micro market for dance and musical theatre, then ***this suggests that either:***
- a) ***the qualifications are not well matched to employers' needs in general. This would be odd given the development of the popular Trinity College London Diplomas for dance and musical theatre in line with employers' advice;***
  - b) ***the skills and characteristics that employers are looking for are either not mainstream, i.e. they are required by a particular sector or employer;***
  - c) ***or these skills and characteristics are not appropriate to training, qualifications and preparation.*** They may well need to be learned on the job as part of the progression from training to employment.
- 84) Other issues that James identifies are:
- a) the relatively small numbers of employees in many cases;
  - b) students' expectations and providers' claims for their courses and progression;
  - c) potential for closer working between employers and providers;
  - d) the ability for entrants who are not necessarily the most gifted and talented to work at different levels and in different segments of the creative and cultural sector.
- 85) Focusing more narrowly on the dance market, James highlighted a situation where 300 young people may audition for a professional paid position in dance and 2-3 young people will secure employment. This is primarily because the successful candidates have had professional dance training. ***The schools are teaching specialist skills and the students are making huge personal sacrifices in order to perfect these skills. James said “if the school has the right teaching structure, how can they be getting it wrong?” James's perception is that there is a lack of connect between employers and the educational system. Looking at the quality in training and teaching on offer – research is showing that there aren't enough practitioners working in industry teaching and mentoring.***

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- 86) In Interview 3 attached James outlines some of the wider developments and activities designed to identify and share intelligence about the creative and cultural market for labour and skills. *He reminds us that the industry consists of many different markets/segments each with its own characteristics and needs. He also refers to qualifications as “brands” but points out that 9 out of 10 of those with these do not necessarily have the skills and attributes that employers want.*
- 87) **Bode Lawal** (Interview 4) Artistic Director of the Sakoba Dance Theatre, and renowned as one of the finest exponents of creative African dance, brought a different focus to our study. He teaches both in US and UK.
- 88) Bode stressed *the importance of technique and its importance to success in a dancer's career. Mastering technique, rather than routines, is the key to success.* This is a long term process, rather than a term's study. Studying ballet and contemporary dance provide the core. Many more modern techniques do not provide the depth or focus on which to develop. Bode stressed the importance of knowing the history, origin and ethos of the technique.
- 89) More commercial approaches are based on immediate gratification derived from *learning and replicating routines. This does not prepare the individual to be a dancer.*
- 90) He also felt that some of the younger dance teachers were not equipped to provide the technique that students need to develop as dance performers. However, some schools are successful and do teach technique.
- 91) Bode thought schools should provide:
- a) a knowledge of the history of dance and “why we are dancing”;
  - b) *students should be taught to embrace learning, build observational skills and be allowed to make mistakes. Learning takes time; and*
  - c) *schools should develop thinking dancers; i.e. with the time and framework to become interpretive performers.*
- 92) Other priorities include recruiting using a master class to inform selection and giving feedback, pre-audition preparation, *collaboration and critical friendship between schools and students and exposure to a range of performances and critical discourse.*  
*“You never stop learning – you must never stop learning.”*
- 93) **Hilary Strong** (Interview 5) provides a musical theatre perspective. The National Council for Drama Training (NCDT) is at the interface between schools and employers, theatre, broadcast and media industries and training providers. Hilary has worked in stage and theatre companies and as a director.
- 94) She drew our attention to the triple threat as the key to meeting the needs of the sector for performers who can act, sing and dance. That is the basis for accrediting learning. They draw heavily on employers in shaping accreditation standards. Use of directors, musical directors, choreographers and actors with a good record of experience brings rigor and relevance to the process.

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- 95) Use of professionals as part time teachers and working directors helps to bring relevance to learning. This is easier to arrange in London than the provinces.
- 96) NCDT assessments would suggest that *preparation for the triple threat is not achieved fully by schools in England.*
- 97) Hilary cited early identification and development of performers in the US as giving them a “readiness” to join the industry after training.
- 98) *She stressed the need for repertoire and knowledge of the history of art forms in schools. She cited a number of areas where graduates may not be ready for employment including the ability to sell themselves and to think independently. This may be exposed at interview/audition. Some graduates cannot articulate what they want to do in their careers. Thinking, communication and negotiating skills are valued by employers.*
- 99) Students often conform to a stereo type in terms of looks. However, talented and interesting individuals will have a better chance of succeeding, as do different socio economic groups and different ethnicity in some productions.
- 100) Hilary thought that employers' views of the responsiveness of schools would vary with the quality of the school's intake of students. She also stressed the different nature of dance training which is of itself a discipline and may restrain creativity relative to the broader musical theatre training.
- 101) She made some helpful insights into the *differing nature of employment in the sector:*
- a) a limited number of schools are more likely to produce graduates for lead roles in musical theatre
  - b) new shows require different skill sets to some of the more contemporary ones
  - c) different performance skills and types of show may not actually match what traditional theatre going audiences want; and
  - d) there is a need to help the sector to reduce costs of talent spotting and specialist training for particular productions, e.g. Billy Elliot, Lion King, Our House where non traditional needs in respect of ethnicity, child performers etc were needed.
- 102) *She reminded us that casting directors' try and limit the number of school shows that they will attend. They will often return to schools where they are more satisfied with the intake, training and preparation. We certainly came across employers who had developed a trust in particular schools and/or agents.*
- 103) Hilary stressed:
- a) *the importance of training prior to higher education*
  - b) *equality of opportunity for different socio-economic groups\_ industry approved FE is expensive*
  - c) *musical theatre training needs to start early, at 18 it may be too late for some*
  - d) *provision needs to support a wider group of people.*

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- 104) *Hilary was not convinced that employers are unhappy about the quality of graduates. She did however believe that schools are missing a huge opportunity by not being well enough connected with companies in the sector.*
- 105) **Janie Frazer** (Response 6). Janie's role as Casting Director at ITV makes her response particularly interesting. Although we did not manage to interview her, she did provide a response that helps with our analysis and is directly relevant to our review. She set out to find new talent. Auditioned 10 students from one of the schools. One was recalled for final audition but *did not have the acting skills required for the part*. This confirms the point made by Hilary in respect of the triple threat for musical theatre.
- 106) As a casting director she was looking to find some one "exceptional." It explains why experience post training is sometimes valued highly for developing talent, especially where the range of "triple threat" skills are required. A look at the show's website shows how performers must have the full range of skills developed to a high standard.
- 107) It is interesting to consider the suggestion that the bar may not be set high enough by some schools.
- 108) Janie reminds us of the importance of expectations. "The casting crew for Britannia High were originally looking for new talent, but ended up casting young performers with professional experience." It has to be asked whether the casting crew's original expectations were realistic. It may have been that in another year or at another school they may have been. In practice, casting directors cannot only recruit from the experienced market, but some roles may be best filled by experienced performers.
- 109) It may be that so many of our interviews have identified the triple threat as something difficult to find as it is both rare and difficult to develop; like finding a "four leafed clover." That is not to suggest that it is not achievable or that schools should not make every effort to help their students with the potential to get there.
- 110) **Judi Hayfield** (Interview/e-mail 7) consultant casting/business affairs at ITV provided a further insight into TV casting. She referred to a specific casting experience for September Song. This "end of pier" show had emphasis on acting, with song and dance. The dancers never got it quite right. Judi considered the following factors in relation to the study:
- a) the schools' *recruitment of students with sufficient potential*;
  - b) the need for *better feedback if employers were unhappy about preparation and auditions*; and
  - c) the current and previous experience of tutors in the industry.
- 111) She stressed the relative ease of assessing drama at shows but the *reliance on the capability and practice of tutors to impart the industry's particular needs*.

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- 112) **Sean Williams and Liz Dale** the Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET) Interview 8. This interview covered a lot of ground. It is not surprising as Sean the Chief Executive has long regarded the industrial responsiveness of the schools as very important and inspired Northern Ballet School to consider this theme as a Beacon Quality Initiative.
- 113) Sean and Liz reinforce the points made by Bode Lawal in respect of technique, tradition, creativity and thinking/interpretation, rather than merely learning routines. In addition they refer to the *intense international competition for dance engagements. The latter combined with a different approach to presentation by US dancers at audition cannot be overlooked in deciding whether employers are genuinely looking for more from UK graduates.*
- 114) Sean's points about how you judge "thinking acumen" at audition and whether the student's talent or the school's value added are the constraints on performers are interesting insights.
- 115) Employers and their agents act as "engagers" at audition and decide on the relative quality of the performer. Once they have engaged they critically assess their performer's skills, relative to their perceptions and subjective standards. Engagers must be discerning in accessing graduates as their success depends to a significant extent on this. Their assessment has a special currency. In a perfect world, this would act as a proxy for how the audience will ultimately judge the performance. However, this may not be the case in reality!
- 116) Sean reminds us of the trust and reliance that engagers place on schools. We were told by many different schools and individuals that some agents will only attend performances in certain schools or single out alumni in open auditions. This can work both as an efficient route to sourcing tried and tested performers, or to limit the range and effectiveness of the process.
- 117) Sean's makes a useful reference to Alberto Bonilla and his particular gloss on the triple threat:
- a) the triple threat itself as we know it;
  - b) management of self; and
  - c) management of career.
- 118) This reflects the views given by Hilary Strong and Ian Kellgren as well as the research publications about the non performance skills needed for managing careers in the arts and creative endeavours. An individual with "exceptional talent" in dancing, acting and singing but who cannot meet the demands of successful presentation, audition, life and business skills, will be at risk. To have one set of skills but not those needed for presentation and management would be a most disappointing scenario. Agents and others can help with latter.
- 119) Liz made a helpful contrast between the need for "engagers" to give new graduates a chance and for new graduates to continually improve, particularly, in initial engagements. Apart from the most gifted, most students benefit from continued

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learning and experience post graduation. Older dancers get work on the basis of both maturity and experience. That engagers would opt for a mix of training and experience is hardly surprising, as most of us would not necessarily choose a brilliant but inexperienced consultant to operate on us!

- 120) Sean also made a point that came out strongly in our last Beacon study, “Excellence in Training for the Performing Arts Northern Ballet School 2007,” i.e. schools must position themselves in the market and ensure that students and employers are aware of what the training provided is designed to achieve in terms of progression for employment and careers. This will provide a basis for building relationships and trust.
- 121) In the full interview at Interview 8 attached, Sean provides some helpful examples of how schools can make effective relationships with employers. These can be either:
- a) built on demand and supply for a particular set of skills: with particular employers and schools building trust and students progressing to audition and employment where appropriate; or
  - b) symbiotic: the school and employer are linked and the school is the natural source of dancers for the company.
- 122) Some weaknesses in training identified include:
- a) limited feedback on the quality of graduates who progress to employment;
  - b) schools over protecting students, rather than making them self-reliant;
  - c) too many unregulated vocational schools without reliable assessment and inspection;
  - d) funding linked to attendance rather than excellence; and
  - e) the need for tutors with sufficient or current professional experience.
- 123) On the positive side they praised the passion and commitment of schools, and the willingness of managers and staff to listen and learn. They saw opportunities in terms of better links between academic and vocational learning and the ability of all to learn from exposure to a wide range of different performance.
- 124) **Janet Pharaoh** Maîtresse de Ballet Moulin Rouge (MR) (Interview 9) was very clear about her recruitment needs. Paraphrasing, it was essential people came with *technique, ability to interpret the look and with the attitude that defines the MR*. There was no compromise on these essentials. The standard is high and competition for dancers is global. However, those with potential to “fit the mould” at audition were encouraged to go away and to address any outstanding issues, e.g. training, their size and shape etc and then to return. There was also an element of pastoral care; MR look after the personal and social wellbeing of young dancers in the company and help with their life skills and domestic needs.
- 125) Janet was able to articulate precisely her *audition criteria down to posture, dress, make up, attitude and smile*. She is looking to recruit performers who will please the MR’s audience. There are opportunities at MR and more widely for suitable

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candidates. New graduates are welcomed but their training and ability to learn new routines comes at a cost.

- 126) Janet identified *a definite improvement in standards and preparation for audition over the last 5 years from UK schools. There was a definite trust and rapport between MR and some of the UK schools. However, Australian dancers had created a real impression in her mind. When selecting dancers, Janet is comparing standards both over time and between 10 different countries.*
- 127) Her comments chimed in with those of Sean Williams on the need for UK dancers to demonstrate *a positive attitude and dance from the heart*. The company does not recruit “shrinking violets!”
- 128) Janet welcomed the schools taking the trouble to listen to employers and hoped that they would continue to prepare and put forward those that met her specification.
- 129) **Simon Griffiths** Production Manager Carnival Cruise Line (Interview 10) explained how *the cruise lines employ significant numbers of dancers and offer great opportunities to gain experience whilst working abroad*. The size and nature of the sector with its audiences, training and facilities makes one question the stigma that some English critics attach to this important avenue for employment and progression. The average rate of turnover is higher and the length of stay shorter than in many industries, but typical for performance engagements.
- 130) *Many of our interviewees identified the need for dancers to gain work experience following their training; the cruise lines provide opportunities for this and a valuable stepping stone or medium term career option for many dancers.*
- 131) Simon takes a global perspective and *rates the training received in English schools highly relative to US training. Interesting too, he is not obsessed by the triple threat or musical theatre. The nature of the cruise show is high energy dance and singers tend to have had specialist training. This may be attractive to those who perhaps feel more comfortable with a more limited skill set.*
- 132) As with others interviewed, Simon values experience as well as training. However, *the cruise line is sufficiently resourced to support additional training and rehearsals to support individuals with potential. This provides a good deal for graduates and a good investment for the sector.*
- 133) Simon stresses *the importance of non dance skills and characteristics. Attitude and presentation are important as is personality*. One imagines that the cultural diversity and travel offered will support younger students in developing independence and life skills.
- 134) It is *great to see a significant employer welcoming diversity in terms of physical appearance and characteristics not found in some more traditional dance employment settings.*
- 135) There is *a different feel to the approach that Simon and others in the cruise sector apply to their evaluation of the responsiveness of schools to their needs. They expect graduates to continue to learn and grow in a professional but supportive*

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*environment. This felt markedly different to the market for lead performers and the triple threat in more classical dance and musical theatre. These differences are legitimate in their separate contexts. There is a danger of treating the demand for and supply of dancers as a homogenous, rather than the highly differentiated market place. We would also challenge any general suggestion that dancers as a whole are not meeting employers' needs.*

- 136) Simon recognises the importance of filling vacancies with the highest standards of dancers that they can recruit. However, he wants “dancers that you cannot take your eyes off rather than those who are technically highly proficient but not very exciting.”
- 137) **Janette Williams** of Dancers International Agency (Interview 11) gives an important perspective based on the agent's role as broker between dancers and employers. She is well placed to judge the matching process.
- 138) She offers a professional brokerage/intermediary role which both employers and individuals select and continue to use based on their experience. Hundreds of individuals use the service successfully each year. The information arising from this is therefore of interest to us in considering whether employers are satisfied with their new recruits.
- 139) Janette either pre-selects or actually recruits for the employer. She is clear about *what is required. She cites: technique, shape and personality as key strengths together with motivation, strength and the ability to work with others.* This aligns well with other views.
- 140) Janette confirms:
- a) *the possibility of some UK dancers being a bit timid;*
  - b) *the need for smiling faces not concern at auditions;*
  - c) *good personal motivation, disposition and interpersonal skills;*
  - d) *cross referenced CVs and pictures; and*
  - e) *tall boys with “6 packs.”*
- 141) *She is proof that an agent can filter students to appropriate employers and engagements, so that experience need not be an issue. This also supports the fact that there could be problems at audition and in employment if inappropriate auditions and employment are pursued.*
- 142) *It is reassuring to hear that it is dancers' ability to learn and get on with the show that matters to employers; though here too an effective filtering by the agent can avoid some unfortunate engagements and unhappiness for both employers and dancers.*
- 143) *On balance Janette finds that the schools do prepare young dancers well. Employers are generally happy although, some do moan on occasion. However, she does emphasise the importance of having “the right “attitude and above all points to the joys of working in dance.*

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- 144) **David Grindrod** freelance casting director (Interview/Q&A 12) confirmed what many of our musical theatre interviews had found. The size and nature of current successful productions is built to a large extent on the “triple threat.” If you want to be in musical theatre, then singing and acting do matter. There are also new areas to challenge and develop performers for new projects. Those who can respond effectively and flexibly will do well. Having the confidence to work outside your normal comfort zone matters; albeit learning circus skills or sight reading.
- 145) There are different routes to get to successful performance. Individuals may need help to develop in some areas, and this is possible, where you have sufficiently met the requirements for a role. David was used to seeing and referring people with development/learning needs in singing and acting. The “look” matters. Some parameters will be fixed; e.g. dwarfs are small!
- 146) It was good to hear the credit given to those who had walked the boards on cruise liners. They demonstrated something akin to the old rep. This is valued and could be interpreted as doing applied work experience in a commercial situation.
- 147) Having a variety of material, ready to go at audition might sound obvious but in practice people don't always. The same applies to: communications, presentation, interpersonal skills, photos and contact details on CVs.
- 148) We are reminded again that auditions cost a lot and it is not necessary to watch long performances to spot talent. People need to take time to prepare and to collect themselves at audition. However, be prepared to present comprehensively. You need to be able to demonstrate a range of competences and a variety of work at audition. People want to know about you as well as what you can do.

### Summary of Interviews and Analyses

- 149) It is interesting that there is a perception attributed to employers about their finding something lacking in dance training by English schools. However, there is a lack of understanding and appreciation by schools about the type of employment, employers and what is missing. The evidence of high rates of progression from the independent professional training schools to employment does raise questions about the basis of any such criticisms. It is important however to remember that it is an increasingly small world and auditions and engagements are often international. There were definite strengths associated with different national traditions, albeit US confidence and presentation, e.g. the track record and vitality of Australian dancers.
- 150) There are noticeable fluctuations in the standards achieved by different cohorts of students over time. Significant stress was placed by those interviewed on the importance of audition preparation and technique. The audition experience is similar in many ways to an auction or market place. Individuals' experiences at audition are used to provide feedback between employers, individuals and schools. Selection at audition is an art not a science and there is an element of subjectivity involved.
- 151) “Engagers,” employers, casting, agents etc, are the gatekeepers to employment. They may have preferences in terms of the mix of training and experience that they need. They are responsible for giving feedback to applicants and trainers, without this

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there may continue to be unmet expectations and frustrations. The mechanisms for this are a bit "hit and miss." This comes back to the general involvement of engagers and trainers; a golden but frequently underused opportunity by both schools and employers. As the process depends on busy people making time to do this, it does not happen as often and effectively as it should. Where people are responsible for judgements and processes there may also be an element of prejudice alongside sound and commercial judgement. "Some employers like to have a moan!" Auditions and talent spotting at shows, together with travel and board are expensive and must be justified.

- 152) Dance and MT are creative art forms. There are many micro/organic markets operating under the umbrella of dance and musical theatre. It is a mistake to see these as heterogeneous. One production's skill needs may not be suitable for another production. One graduate of school "X" may have a completely different skill set, standard and aspirations to another. That is not to say that we should discount well founded generalisations where they exist. There are however dangers of busy engagers: not researching the market, building relationships with schools and agents on whom they can rely, or "fishing in the wrong pond." Likewise schools and students do need to listen, respond, prepare and encourage the best candidates to go for engagements.
- 153) The "triple threat" was a frequently cited requirement for musical theatre engagements; this was an area where those interviewed did identify problems. There are not enough graduates with all three competences at a suitable standard; not all of the stools have 3 legs. Some have only 2 or 2.5. Where particular roles need to be present from the outset, there is a real problem. This sometimes rules out new graduates. In other cases there is an opportunity for further training in a less exposed and supportive environment. However, the employers who need the full package should not be auditioning individuals who do not have it. Adverts and communications, recommendations and intermediaries in the schools and agents can help to narrow the search and save money, time and frustration.
- 154) It is more difficult to manage expectations; employers, schools and students must be realistic and honest in assessing skill standards. Where self assessment is involved it is difficult for individuals and schools to be entirely objective. Training and preparation are important to developing skills and self knowledge. Dancers tend to be more disciplined and flexible at learning new things, providing that they have the necessary ability and potential to learn the required skills. Sometimes experience will be necessary to learn skills or recruit at the appropriate level. It can be argued that schools could have identified training needs and met them during the course, however, there are limits to the amount of progress than can reasonably be expected, and the training will provide a foundation for some students to build on in their careers. This applies in most disciplines and subjects taught across further and higher education including in vocational subjects.
- 155) It is refreshing to hear that dancers need not be multi-skilled as required by the triple threat, for all engagements. Some employers and agents are interested in dance alone. This is an important discipline in its own right. Our exercise did, however,

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shed light on the real divide that exists between dancing and musical theatre. The range of skills involved is markedly different.

- 156) Cruise liners prefer to take dancers and singers from specialist schools. They also have a less defined set of restrictions in relation to size and diversity than some more traditional avenues of employment. There is more emphasis on entertainment than technique.
- 157) Many of those interviewed stressed the importance of better school and industry links, market intelligence and feedback.
- 158) It was apparent that dance and musical theatre specialist schools out perform the wider creative and cultural skills sector in terms of preparing students and progression to employment. However, the nature of most employment in creative and cultural areas is micro/organic in nature. There is sometimes a trade-off between talent and skills when new graduates enter employment. There are both costs and benefits to this. Much of the marrying up of qualifications, curriculum and employers needs, identified as wider cultural and creative sector needs, has already been completed for dance and musical theatre in the Trinity College Diplomas, which CDET initially developed in response to industry needs.
- 159) The need to learn technique rather than routines came up several times as a key ingredient to success. This investment provides a basis on which to develop and build. It requires experienced teachers with relevant skills and knowledge. Use of directors, actors, choreographers with appropriate experience brings rigor and relevance to learning. Ballet and contemporary dance provide an essential core. Dancers need to develop their thinking and learning skills.
- 160) Experience in repertoire and understanding the history of different art forms provides essential experience and knowledge. Presentation skills are needed for individuals to sell themselves. Different shows require different skills and attributes; some can be learned others such as size, shape, age etc are given. It was encouraging to see that some cruise liners are providing a replacement for rep and a real opportunity for improving, development, progression and employment. The size and nature of the latter must be appreciated. It is no longer realistic to apply the stigma that grew from some poor practice in smaller less professional lines to this massive and growing sector.
- 161) Very high level skills across the triple threat and exceptional recruits are by definition difficult to find. It may not be possible to secure these gifts from new graduates and even those with experience. When looking for such levels of talent there will inevitably need to be some compromise, costs and competition. In fairness to the schools, they can only recruit from the potential students that are out there. We know that most schools do attempt to interest and find new talent, and offer tasters and courses to get the most talented into training.
- 162) Employers also stressed the importance of audience awareness, smiling and demeanour; "dance from the heart." The list of non performance skills and attributes looked for is, as we found in our research, nothing short of daunting. The more we specify the blend of: performance, enterprise, presentation, motivation and

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management skills the less likely people are to have them. That is not to say some do not and others can develop some of these.

- 163) Schools and students need to know what they are aiming for from the outset. The best schools position their courses and preparation relative to progression and employment. They will develop lasting relationships and trust with engagers which will benefit employers, students and the staff.
- 164) Most employers that we spoke to had policies of identifying talent and either helping individuals with shortcomings to develop their skills or characteristics, or sending them away with feedback and advice on what to do. Many follow this and return to the employer.
- 165) There are real benefits arising from the use of “good” agents. They open the doors to auditions, filter or select for employers and can help clients obtain longer and better paid work. They have a realistic view of what many employers want and who is most appropriate. They see so many dancers and employers that they can take an objective view. Not all agents are up to the standards of the best, and we heard that some do nothing for some clients.
- 166) We did hear a range of views on our question about whether employers were satisfied with the training and preparation. The balance of these suggested that employers are content with minor reservations. However, in certain sectors and levels there is a gap between what engagers are looking for and what is on offer particularly from new graduates. Here the triple threat, ability to learn new skills in new settings, someone to play lead roles, and the need to meet specific requirements tended to feature most commonly. There are also many skills e.g. presentation and audition and characteristics, e.g. height, shape physical characteristics and those associated with self management and non performance skills that new graduates lack to differing degrees.

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### Conclusion

- 167) We set out to determine whether the training and preparation of dancers and those destined for musical theatre was meeting employers' needs. It has been reported that some employers find inadequacies in the training and preparation of new graduates. We set out to establish to what extent these reports are based on "perception, prejudice or reality," and what can be done about it.
- 168) Our research shows that rates of progression are better for dancers than other performers, and far better than those reported for the rest of the cultural and creative sector.
- 169) Different engagers have different experience of the skills of new graduates. These vary between:
- a) the many different and varied segments of the market for dance and musical theatre; and
  - b) particular performance requirements, levels and specialisms, e.g. whether the triple threat, lead roles or special skills or characteristics are required.
- 170) Dance is of course different to musical theatre and the latter does focus much more on the "triple threat" rather than say a particular dance technique. Whilst the threat is something that the industry requires, it is difficult to find high level competences across all three disciplines. It is not easy to find in the newest graduates who may have the talent but not well honed skills. Sometimes, perhaps often, the "two and half" threat is the reality. Preparation is no substitute for talent or experience.
- 171) It is good that we have a definition of what works in musical theatre. However, the demand and supply of these skills may not be in equilibrium. This is a cause of dissatisfaction for those seeking to recruit for certain specific roles. The real question is to what extent this is a failure of the schools who train in dance and musical theatre? The problem appears to be more one for musical theatre auditions than dance per se.
- 172) Changes in the nature of the market for performers with greater emphasis on different media including TV and web-based activity, does require a different emphasis and coverage. The market is not static and a dynamic and interactive approach is needed from those doing the training if they are to provide a foundation for the changing market.
- 173) As the research shows, a high percentage of graduates do gain relevant employment and employers are generally very pleased with the standard of preparation. However, where high profile or lead roles are being considered, the level and range of skills available from new recruits are not always meeting expectations. Exceptional talent is in short supply and the competition for it is great.
- 174) As with any market analysis there are segments where the demand and supply of particular highly skilled or "exceptional" individuals will be difficult to satisfy. Here there are issues that relate not only to the existence of sufficiently talented individuals and their preparation and experience; there are also issues about the operation of the

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market itself. The information about individuals and roles needs to be effective and issues of objectivity and perception, as well as performance on the day etc can influence the market.

- 175) A study of labour market economics helps to understand these issues rather better. We do not always realise that the aggregate demand and supply for say performers is made up of many individual micro markets. It is possible that the overall demand and supply for performers may appear to be in equilibrium, both supply and demand met, whilst some of the micro markets that go towards the macro supply and demand curves are not at equilibrium. This goes a long way to help in understanding what is happening in the market for performers.
- 176) We have what appears to be a market at national and international level where overall there would appear to be an excess of supply over demand. As an economist once asked, "why are we training performers when there are already so many "resting?" At the same time as having an apparent oversupply in aggregate markets, we have reported shortages in particular segments of the market; e.g. those from particular ethnic groups, young men, overweight boys, those who fit particular costumes etc. There is of course a separate market for the triple threat, and indeed micro markets at different skill levels within it.
- 177) The answer to our central question is that there may well be some employer dissatisfaction in terms of recruitment at the margin. Certainly we have come across some particular expectations that have not been met. At a macro level, however, the demand and supply for skills and talent is largely in equilibrium. Employers are recruiting new and experienced performers, schools have high employment rates. However, the more defined the demand and standard, the more likely the answer to the question is likely to be no, we are not providing the skills or characteristics required. Perhaps we are asking the wrong questions. Better questions may be about:
- a) the size of the market for the triple threat. How many exceptional or lead performers do we need and how can we get them?
  - b) is it reasonable to expect graduates to achieve all round competences following their courses from 16-19? Are we using all of the avenues for continued training? Are employers' expectations reasonable?
  - c) are there some students for whom no amount of training will provide the rounded set of skills needed for particular casting requirements?
  - d) should some schools train fewer students to higher levels, and should the learning be more focused?
  - e) is there sufficient feedback, employer engagement and positioning of schools in the sector?
- 178) Our project has covered considerable ground and highlighted many areas where feedback, training, preparation, auditions, development opportunities can be more fully exploited. Some schools are already on top of their game. We hope that the research, interviews and analysis above will provide ideas and challenges that will

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help all readers to better understand the nature of responsiveness to employers and to continue to improve their contribution and involvement.

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## Interview 1

### Discussion with Patricia Mc Donald, Principal Northern Ballet School 14 May 2008

- 1) Patricia is leading this project but agreed to be interviewed along with other schools, lead bodies and employers. Her response to the pro forma questions at annex 1 are set out below.
- 2) Northern Ballet School has a combined focus on ballet and jazz based dance. Both dance forms require a high level of talent: classical ballet requires good physique; and jazz draws on a wider range of competences. ***Levels of talent at auditions for entry to training vary markedly from year to year.*** “Like wine, all years are good; some are better!”
- 3) Most jobs in the sector are filled via auditions. The training prepares students for this. Some long running musicals will call “would be” performers direct for employment, based on their knowledge of the individual and their skills and experience.
- 4) Auditions are held at the school for third year students in their final term. There is a core of employers who come to the school on a regular basis; new ones are always welcomed. Some attend the school’s shows, occasionally spotting people while they are watching. Students also attend open auditions.
- 5) Students are encouraged to build up a “war chest” to fund trips to different locations. They may have to: travel, stop over, send DVD’s/CDs, photographs etc. Those seeking work may well be looking at international engagements; e.g: London, Berlin, Prague, France, Switzerland, etc.
- 6) Agents are keen to sign up talented students. They may have existing jobs to offer, or use students’ details to canvass employment. For some employment opportunities, access is limited to those sent by agents; i.e. at closed auditions. Photographs are important in the process. Some new students are able to obtain employment without the help of agents and may save on fees. Students are responsible for paying agents fees.
- 7) ***It is interesting that those employers who audition regularly and take students from the school will usually be highly complimentary. They do not give negative feedback and it is therefore difficult for schools to learn about any areas where the preparation could have been more responsive to their needs. Employers and schools build an understanding and long term relationship that is based on trust. Employers are reported to value<sup>3</sup>:***
  - a) *working with known and trusted contacts*
  - b) *discipline in the school that students follow*
  - c) *well groomed individuals; and*
  - d) *ability to learn.*

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<sup>3</sup> Italics are used for key findings and recommendations.

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- 8) *Patricia thought that the “acid test” was that employers recruit from the school on a regular basis. They come for performers and if they engage after careful audition and assessment, then they will have confidence that they have met their needs to a large extent. The fact that they come back is a testament to their satisfaction.*
- 9) At external auditions students compete with a range of different experience and talent. Some applicants may have had little or poor training; that does not mean that they are not talented or have great potential. Individuals sometimes regard their auditions as a “free lesson”. Like taking a driving test, you may learn a great deal. This may be good for the “would be” performers, but some employers may be forced to see very many candidates. *Schools can allow time and provide training to aid progression; employers need recruits who are ready to perform. It is most unlikely that employers will provide any feedback as it is just not possible given numbers and timing. Some who are short listed may be lucky if time allows for them to ask questions or for employers to comment. This makes self assessment really important for students to try and derive benefit from their experience.*
- 10) *Patricia stressed the importance of students ensuring that they are seen and present themselves well. The old hands are pushy and know how to thrust themselves forward. Stories abound about some candidates appearing more than once!*
- 11) Patricia thought that employers, students and schools need each other:
- employers need trained dancers;
  - students need training and employment; and
  - schools need students and employment opportunities.
- 12) As with our study of quality issues in training, Patricia found the students an excellent source of feedback. *Students report that some candidates that they had watched at audition were not prepared and did not understand the process.* Unfortunately, employers will not always know where candidates are from. Some will ask for students from certain known schools first, as they know their pedigree and have expectations. Students from schools with a reputation for quality are rightly proud of their preparation and profile. *Students are also good at obtaining information about auditions and following them up. This helps the school with its management information about employers and their needs. They follow up adverts and study the Stage. Equity’s Spot Light is aimed at actors and musical theatre.*
- 13) The training prepares students for auditions. They are subject to ongoing assessment, regular performance and feedback. Some get physically sick before auditions, most are apprehensive. The adrenaline can work for you. The important thing to remember is that unlike written tests, the audition process is instant and visible. What you do is seen at once. You need to get it right and take things up rapidly or the next candidate will be in before you know it!
- 14) Employers and agents have little involvement in the training process. On odd occasions, a classical ballet master may take a class.

### Strengths and weaknesses at audition

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

15) Patricia thought that:

- a) students need to be physically appropriate to the part/role. Sometimes the student has to fit the costume;
- b) *students need to be clever in terms of:***
  - i) *talented***
  - ii) *trained in the technique***
  - iii) *versatile***
  - iv) *quick***
  - v) *able to learn; and***
  - vi) *master the art of being selected at audition.***

16) Things that can go wrong with the audition process are:

- a) employers chose the wrong student; one who cannot adapt or learn;
- b) individuals have “rebel” characteristics and no discipline; they go wild; and
- c) injuries can and do cause problems; dancers need to be “match fit” and to make every effort to look after themselves. Most learn the life style needed to stay fit and safe. However, things can and do go wrong.

### **Wish list**

17) Patricia would like to see high standards and employers seeing and being open to taking on more new graduate students. Some of the bigger employers are not willing to see new graduates. Their demands for experience are not always appropriate. New and experienced dancers audition together, and yet classical companies are reluctant to take new recruits. It is different where companies and schools are linked and are less open to outsiders. This is because they train in their own tradition and get what they want. This suggests that employers should have a greater influence during the training if graduates are to be more responsive to their needs.

### **Employer perceptions**

- 18) Schools train for different segments of the market and not all students will meet different employers' needs. This can lead to disappointment when expectations are not met.
- 19) There are disappointing years; and the quality of those entering and leaving training does vary. All students are individuals and you cannot look at graduates as a homogenous group; some will be excellent and much sort after. Employers may make sweeping generalised statements about the preparation of individuals for employment as they do see some “horrors”.
- 20) It is rare that employers cannot find someone that meets their needs. Dance evolves over time; technique improves, diet, health and understanding are improving. However, we cannot afford to miss any opportunities to identify areas where it is

## **The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs**

possible to be more responsive to employers' and the industry's needs, we owe this to our students.

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### Interview 2

#### Discussion with Ian Kellgren, Independent Theatre Director, 18 June 2008

- 1) Ian is the former Director of the National Council for Drama Training, an independent theatre director, as well as a freelance consultant working within the spheres of theatre, musical theatre, neighbourhood television and new media. He is also currently engaged in leading a research project for Arts Ed seeking employer views on industry readiness of new entrants into the sector.
- 2) Through Ian's Arts Education (Arts Ed) research, he conducted numerous interviews in TV Drama, acknowledging that the major drama schools and musical theatre schools are the feeder system to the industry. Industry (employers) had a collective view that none of the major drama schools are preparing new entrants effectively for recorded media, and worse, that they are not sufficiently preparing new entrants for "the business" – this is with specific regard to interviews. Ian acknowledged that this industry opinion does not only relate to "straight" drama, but to musical theatre as well.
- 3) The National Council for Drama Training worked with Trevor Jackson (Producer, Cameron Mackintosh) and Jane Deitch (former Head of Casting for the BBC and newly-appointed Chief Executive of TheatreCares) to review the criteria for accreditation for musical theatre courses and schools. *The schools which consistently rate well – both in the eyes of industry and within the criteria set out by NCDT are those who train in the "triple threat" – acting, singing and dancing.*
- 4) Dance and Drama schools who train in musical theatre are, indicatively, turning out students at "2 ½ threats" out of the "triple threat." Performers must show promise in all three of the triple threat. *With new musicals coming into favour, such as Mamma Mia, the triple threat has never been more needed – at audition performers have to dance, sing and do a monologue.*
- 5) New musical theatre entrants' *preparedness for auditions* was a substantial concern for Ian. This concern has also been echoed through Ian's research findings at Arts Ed. There is a general lack of confidence in those coming to audition, which translates into a general lack of knowing what to expect at an audition. He recounted a wonderful story of a major UK talent agency taking on a new client and sending him to an audition. Because of the agent's "clout", he could ring and find out how the young auditioner fared. The hiring company replied "weird – as he walked in, he took his shoes and socks off..." When the agent asked the young performer about it, the performer replied, "Yeah – that's what we did at drama school."
- 6) There is a palpable difference between the UK and America with regard to new entrants' preparedness for auditions. Usually American performers go along to the audition in character and, perhaps going so far as to dress in character, and enter the room and process with confidence and have well-researched the part, the producer, the director, and the process as a whole.

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

- 7) Agents consistently “moan” about new entrants going into the audition room with chewing gum, bottled water and a general state of “unpreparedness”.
- 8) Dancers and the “dance world” as a whole are more disciplined with regard to professional practice and preparedness for auditions. “The key to preparedness is knowing what is required of you and ensuring that you have researched the people who you are going to see.”
- 9) The professional career lifespan of a dancer is foreshortened in comparison to other aspects of performing where dance is a part of the skill base. Ian thinks this may be a contributing factor to why dancers are usually better prepared for going into a career as a new entrant than those who are entering into musical theatre or straight drama. ***Dancers usually have worked with a training regime where they are used to being told what to do and under, sometimes severe, scrutiny with regard to weight and other physical proficiencies.***
- 10) When discussing the quality of school contact with industry, Ian had some valuable insight. Looking at the big picture, the theatre profession (including musical theatre) has changed enormously, particularly within the last 30 years. Television and other major broadcasters are under huge pressure to get audience ratings – this is the same for the theatre goers. Sometimes producers are paying up to 50% of their budgets to big named stars to pull in audiences.
- 11) Another shift in industry which ***schools will need to respond to is the increased utilisation of digital technology on the dissemination of art. Andrew Lloyd Webber says that the next wave of musical theatre will be showing short musical theatre pieces on the web (c. 20 mins) and on mobile phones (c. 2 minutes). Already two or three minute regular production son the web are available, known as “webisodes.” This insight may manifest itself as a self-auditioning tool for performers, cutting out the agent’s role, or as a platform for performance, thus shifting the technological landscape for producing dance and theatre. If this is used as an independent auditioning tool, then the level of professionalism and preparedness for the performer is paramount, because they performer will need a “hook” to encourage those watching to call back/shortlist/hire.***
- 12) Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA) is a good example of education responsiveness to industry. They are planning to change their dance department structure and strategy from a contemporary dance and choreography focus to a more commercial/musical theatre focus. They recognise that the dancer/performer needs to be able to move and sing on the web/television format. ***They have focused on musical theatre because they see the bottom line is they are preparing young people for a career – one that has a longer lifespan than that of a “straight” dancer.*** This means a wider and broader skills base which embraces the advent of ever-increasing technology as part of its ecology.
- 13) Ian identified strengths and weaknesses of education provision (and skills provision) in the following ways:

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

- a. schools are providing students with a strong skills base, but not necessarily the correct skills needed for industry or assisting them in identifying their particular strengths that sit outside their course of study
- b. dancers are being trained in a set suite of skills (ballet/jazz/contemporary) but, increasingly, the professional dance and musical theatre world is also embracing new forms of dance such as hip-hop and utilising circus skills.
- c. *schools are being responsive to what the students want to be taught, but there is a downside that the students do not have a real understanding of the world that they are going into.***
- d. *increasingly there is an appreciation of the need for “triple threat” provision – particularly in musical theatre. Ian recognised that there are “vogue shifts” within the industry. Acting is becoming ever-more important within the triple threat education provision, but the weakness is that students are still not strong enough in the acting element of the triple threat for a chance at a successful career.***

### Wish list

- 14) Ian would like to see schools have a better understanding of where they want their students to go and a better understanding of the industry. Ian acknowledged that technology plays a large part in the education provision and how it bears relevance to a fast-paced and evolving industry. He related the issues with media courses – schools and curricula, in general, are very slow to change and this is due to the bureaucratic nature of the education system as a whole. Whereas the students are learning skills and those skills are valuable skills to learn, they may not be the most up-to-date and relevant skills when they enter the job market. This would not be out of the realm of need for dancers and musical theatre young professionals as well. The educational institution needs systems and methods of understanding what new industry opportunities are and must be responsive to that for the benefit of their students.
- 15) ***Ian identified that schools need a substantial and coherent link with industry and this goes beyond the intermittent provision of guest master classes. Taking this back to basics within the harsh world of dance training, schools must equip the students with basic skills and added-value skills which are need for industry as it is now, and how it is going to be.***
- 16) ***There was also a wish for schools to have the flexibility or openness to allow students to realise what their particular skills are – someone may be brilliant at hip hop or at circus skills, but they don't necessarily know it. The room to explore within an industry-relevant framework is desired.***

### Conclusions

## **The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs**

- 17) *Frameworks for responsiveness were the emerging themes in Ian's interview. There is an inherent problem with curriculum reform – exacerbated by strict frameworks such as the D&DA scheme or other HE formats – meaning that to change programmes of study takes time.***
- 18) *Flexibility of organisations is another substantial factor in industry responsiveness. It is all-too-easy to become complacent on trading on a school's past track record when industry wants and trends are ever changing.***
- 19) *There is also a desire to address the balance of people who are working in dance and drama schools who are no longer practitioners. They may be excellent teachers, but there is also a question of industry relevance if frameworks aren't there (or there isn't a personal desire) to identify shifting industry trends.***

***The perfect world scenario for Ian would be for longitudinal data to be available where dance and drama schools could interrogate and analyse and to develop a mechanism whereby schools can look at how they can modify what they are doing or, more importantly, to assist in developing lateral ways of thinking of addressing current and emerging industry needs***

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

Interview 3

Discussion with James Evans, Research Manager, Creative & Cultural Skills, 23 May 2008

- 1) James is the Research Manager at Creative & Cultural Skills (CCS), the sector skills council for the creative industries. As the recently formed sector skills council, a requisite deliverable as part of their license is to conduct a comprehensive research project called the Sector Skills Agreement. This agreement (operating under the brand name, Creative Blueprint) comprises labour market intelligence and employer insight as to the skills needs and wants of the sub-sectors for whom they are responsible: performing arts, visual arts, literary arts, cultural heritage, design, music, advertising and craft.
- 2) James clarified that the scope of their own research is at a high level, with no specific insight cited for dance per se – but that dance falls under the heading of performing arts and a representative sample of dance employers took part in the research.
- 3) When asked about employers' responses on training practices, with specific regard to the performing arts, James replied that there is a common theme across all the creative and cultural industries (CCIs) where employers say *there are lots of people coming into the sector and there is a lot of creative talent, but there that new entrants require a lot of training because they lack some key skills to fulfil the jobs for which they are applying.*
- 4) CCS' research has highlighted that, across the CCIs, *over half of the respondents said new recruits coming into the industry lack skills required for the jobs for which they are applying. The same businesses said 90% of the entrants had appropriate qualifications.* Therefore, applicants are studying, highly qualified, and relevantly qualified, but still lacking the skills. There is a disjuncture between what education system provides and what industry thinks they should be providing.
- 5) There is a concern that the majority of businesses in the CCIs are micro-firms with 85% of these businesses employing less than 5 people. Many are freelance or sole traders. In that context it is difficult to let employers release people for training to address skills gaps that they have recruited for in the first instance. There are also a high proportion of freelancers and sole traders comprising today's CCI workforce.
- 6) James offered some pertinent statistics about the education feeder system to industry and the population of creative and cultural industries education participants: At any one time, there are ¾ million students enrolled on a creative and cultural industries course in the UK. There are currently c. 180,000 courses specifically pertaining to the CCIs being offered by just over 30,000 providers. The providers include further education, higher education and work-based

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- learning opportunities. Regardless of whether the students are in education with a future career in the creative or cultural industries or studying for the experience within education, the fact still remains that industry has an issue about the mediocrity of skills. The specific issue revolves around what is being taught and how the subject material applies to contemporary practice.
- 7) There is a further issue about what it is that individuals expect when they take a specific course and qualification. This is directly related to the provider's claims about what they provide for their students. On the whole creative skills and craft-based skills are less problematic to employers than other skills, such as management and leadership, IT skills and general business skills.
  - 8) There are 6,000 new vacancies pa in the creative industries. Industry has also identified that the well-rounded graduate should have a grounded understanding of finance, management and leadership as part of their skill set.
  - 9) James acknowledged that there is an academic bias within the CCIs, but countered that with employer insight that illustrates that getting a qualification is not always the "be all and end all" to success.
  - 10) In that, James relayed that there is a lack of connect between employers and education on the whole. ***The links between employers, business, courses and providers are not as strong as they could be. There is a gap between the provision of knowledge and the provision of skills which needs to be addressed.***
  - 11) Employer insight at CCS has concluded that there is an assumption that people who want to work in the CCIs may not be able to become "top class" but can still have a fulfilling career in the CCIs. This is where the broadening of the specialism is important for people to go into the industry in alternative ways.
  - 12) The new 14-19 Creative & Media Diploma will be made available England-wide beginning academic year 2009. James offered his opinion as to the impact that this new offering will have on the sector as a whole: There are "*Pros and cons*" to this offering. *The key "Pro" is choice.* However, there are concerns in that progression routes into the CCIs are opaque – it is difficult to know exactly at 14 what one needs to do to get into the sector. "Is it a realistic dream if you don't have the networks in that field?"
  - 13) James highlighted a situation where 300 young people may audition for a professional paid position in dance and 2-3 young people will secure employment. This is primarily because they have come out of professional dance training. ***The schools are teaching specialist skills and the students are making huge personal sacrifices in order to perfect these skills. James said "if the school has the right teaching structure, how can they be getting it wrong?" James felt that perception is the lack of connect between employers and the educational system. Looking at the quality in training and teaching on offer – research is showing***

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

*that there aren't enough practitioners working in industry teaching and mentoring.*

- 14) Diversity: Across the whole of the performing arts, there are issues of volunteering in low-paid environments. There is also an issue of what a career entrant needs to know in order to become successful in "X". In that context, it comes down to cultural capital, knowing how the education system works, what qualifications are important to industry and knowing what kind of training is important. Research shows that it is difficult to know these things when coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds because their situation precludes what one needs to know. There is a disjoint between the quality of opportunity and the quality of provision.
- 15) A key deliverable which is a prerequisite for Sector Skills Councils attaining their license from Government is the research and delivery of a document called the Sector Skills Agreement. Creative & Cultural Skills have branded this document (or series of documents) as *The Creative Blueprint*. Creative & Cultural Skills supports businesses – in that context the sole trader is considered a business and this is also part of CCS' remit. They are looking at skills and workforce development and, by looking at this, the assumption is that those businesses have a repertoire of skills they need to be successful to negotiate through a work environment.
- 16) In order to assess the sector, the Council has spent the last 3 years speaking with industry and the feeder system to industry on the following themes from the *Creative Blueprint*:
- a. What skills are needed within the sector
  - b. What skills will be needed within the sector over the next 5-10 years
  - c. What skills are lacking in the industry
  - d. What kind of people are coming into the industry
- 17) The *Creative Blueprint* has involved the six sub-sectors of the creative industries: music, design, advertising, cultural heritage, craft alongside the performing, visual and literary arts. In the last category, which comprises 3 "sub sub-sectors", there are multiple "sub sub-sectors" such as dance within performing arts or sculpture within visual arts, which are not specified, but rather operate under the sub-sector umbrella. Within the performing arts, where dance "sits", 20,000 employers have been interviewed and surveyed to produce the data which appears in the published *Creative Blueprint*.
- 18) Across all the sub sectors, six major points have been highlighted where Creative & Cultural Skills has the license to develop programmes and frameworks to address such issues. These include:
- a. Entry into the sector – difficult if you are of a specific socioeconomic background

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

- b. Difficult to set up a business – difficult to grow a business (music)
  - c. Management and leadership skills: small businesses. 1-2-3 people need to fulfil a vast number of roles and difficult to grow and how to manage networking, communications.
  - d. Business and enterprise: difficult for small-medium enterprises (SMEs) to take the next step. “Where is the support needed to know about filling in tax forms? Also about innovation: small businesses are more likely to innovate. CCIs are more likely to innovate than other businesses. Therefore the conditions for CCIs to innovate more than any other. Skills and development of skills drives the productivity of the business... and that innovation is a bi-product of those particular skills
  - e. Diversity: 95% is white – doesn't differ among sectors or regions. Male dominated.
  - f. Qualification reform: rationalising the qualifications system making it simpler and easier to understand to broaden the opportunity for people who want to do vocational training
    - a. *An interesting point surfaced about qualifications in relation to dance. James highlighted that “a qualification is a brand and gives employers confidence that you can do something based on this brand.” However, employer research has highlighted that, across the sub-sectors, “nine times out of ten they (the young entrants) have qualifications and they don't have the skills.”*
    - b. *There is also a need to get employers more involved in the dialogue with projects and research to help broker learning needs.*
- 19) A new offering from Creative & Cultural Skills is a website, “Creative Choices” [www.creative-choices.co.uk](http://www.creative-choices.co.uk), which is a portal with multiple uses for individuals and institutions can gauge industry views on pathways into careers, salary expectations, perceptions on quality of training and offers from institutions alongside blogs for engaging in dialogue with industry professionals.

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

### Interview 4

#### Discussion with Bode Lawal, Founder and Artistic Director, Sakoba Dance Theatre, 4 July 2008

- 20) Bode Lawal is the founder and Artistic Director of Sakoba Dance Theatre, based in Newcastle upon Tyne. Sakoba Dance Theatre, the first post-traditional dance company was founded in 1987. It is a national touring company and has been funded by Arts Council England and the Northern Rock Foundation as its principal benefactors.
- 21) Bode Lawal is hailed as one of the finest exponents of creative African dance now working in Britain. He studied dance, choreography and drama before being invited to join the Nigerian national dance troupe with whom he toured internationally, winning the Ministry of Culture's Dancer of the Year award in 1985. Bode Lawal is the only black choreographer to have received the Arts Council England Dance Fellowship Award (Men of Merits) for contribution to British dance alongside four other highly respected ballet/contemporary choreographers in the UK.
- 22) Bode, on behalf of Sakoba Dance Theatre and its sister company, Sakobode (based in Los Angeles, CA), diversifies his portfolio as a teacher and residency tutor in Universities across the UK and the US. Bode's responses throughout the interview highlighted issues with dance specialist schools in both countries, offering first-hand experience of the similarities and differences of the school approach alongside the student approach to preparing young people for careers in professional dance.
- 23) *The main focus of Bode's interview focused on the importance of technique which pervades every aspect of a dancer's ability to have a chance at a sustainable career in professional dance. On the whole, he rated technique – both in the quality of teaching and the young dancer's commitment to perfecting technique – as the key to success.*
- 24) Bode felt that young people in professional dance training, whether at the conservatoire or in other specialist HE institutions, that *students had a strong desire to learn routines, rather than seeking a deep understanding of technique as a key performance indicator for the individual.*
- 25) He added that it is not uncommon for students to spend a term of study focusing on one technique (Limon, Graham, Cunningham, etc) and after a 10 week study, that they felt as though they were "qualified" in that technique. This is an area where Bode strongly disagrees with student perception, thus affecting the dance industry as a whole. *His views on learning technique is one that should reflect the "apprentice" model from former times – that one should spend years studying technique – and follow that teaching and body language as the bedrock of their practice.*

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

- 26) Bode's views on the schools offering a multitude of techniques as part of the curriculum was not beneficial to the contemporary dance industry. *The delivery of units such as hip-hop and other popular forms of dance did not add value to the student coming out of school, because the time would have been better spent on the development and strengthening of technique that comes from core ballet and contemporary (modern technique) teaching. His issue is not questioning the validity of the dance form (such as hip-hop), but that the offer did not focus deeply enough on the technique of the dance form, but more on the learning routines aspect of the study.*
- 27) Bode was concerned about the eligibility criteria for acceptance to dance schools – specifically that students entering this level of training are not appropriately asked about why they want to pursue dance as a career. He felt that, on the whole, students do not know enough about the history of dance. In order for good technique to be developed, it is more than the physical body positioning and acumen, but that the technique should be understood in relation to its origin and ethos in order for it to manifest itself at expert level. *The career dancer needs to be a 'thinking dancer' and an interpretive dancer rather than a 'learning dance sequences and performing them dancer'. If the initial interview process included gauging student expectations, then there would be a better match between the student and the institution and, thus, a better product for industry to work with.*
- 28) Bode remarked that the commercial dance video is having a large impact on young dancers entering the industry. Primarily in the fact that *young dancers are more interested in the swift gratification of exposure and learning and replicating routines. He added that young dancers do not like the "process" of learning how to be a dancer. In his view, proper dance theatre looks at exploration of dance with the major focus on developing good technique.*
- 29) Bode also voiced concern about the quality of dance instructors in the dance schools – this comment focused on the *young dance instructors who, in some cases, have do not have grounded technique, thus not being appropriate to teach technique to students who are being prepared for careers in dance as performers.*
- 30) Saying this, Bode singled out Laban and Millenium as two schools who have a strong focus on technique, and are preparing young dancers for future careers. Each of the aforementioned schools focus on the technique and spirituality of dance. Those coming out of those schools have a passion for dance and understand why they are dancing and a spiritual understanding what their dance means.
- 31) Another school that Bode rated highly was Calderdale College Dance Academy in Halifax (West Yorkshire). He felt that the students there were motivated and their performance skills were incredible. He said "they were like professionals, whether dancing ballet, jazz, contemporary or dance theatre." He had

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- conversations with the principal, Peter Coenen, and was reassured that the quality of the teaching was of the highest calibre. He thought the education, motivation and energy level of the school was “fantastic.” He went on to say that on observing the dance students, there was “joy in the dance – it came from the inside and it was grounded in the technique.”
- 32) When asked what Bode’s wish list would be for dance schools and students, he was very clear with three priority areas. *That schools:*
- e. emphasise the importance of and that students have a better understanding of the history of dance – “why are we dancing?”*
  - f. emphasise the importance of, and students should embrace, the process of learning. It is important for young dancers to build their observation skills and be allowed to make mistakes. In turn, schools should not drop dancers who aren’t necessarily “good”, because he believes that the learning process through grounded technique takes time and should be nurtured.*
  - g. should commit to developing thinking dancers. Sadly, present-day, young dancers are like “sheep.” They need the time and framework to become unique interpretive dancers. Today’s young dancers coming out of dance education have no depth.*
- 33) Bode’s approach to recruiting dancers is quite specific. He is adamant that those who desire to audition for Sakoba Dance Company must attend a master class before being considered. There are calls for dancers which appear in such publications as The Stage, Dance UK and other trade magazines/outlets. A CV and/or DVD of the dancer is submitted, and those short listed are invited to the studio. The unsuccessful applicants are given feedback from Bode, and he acknowledged that the young perspective dancers are consistently grateful for this. *Bode’s response linked in with Ian Kellgren’s insight that the dance/musical theatre industry is becoming more and more of a “NEXT...” environment at the audition phase.*
- 34) *Bode also said that as part of the audition, the dancers are introduced to “Mr Lawal, Artistic Director” – and that some of the young dancers look as though it is the first time that they have ever experienced anything like that. He questioned the preparedness of students for professional auditions, and equally whether schools are preparing students for auditions.*
- 35) *Bode felt very strongly that dance schools should work closer together to collectively raise the game for industry. He also said that young dancers should be going and seeing as many professional dance companies as possible – and that they should be writing about the shows. Critical discourse is also an essential element of professionalism and a KPI for a career in dance. He sees great value in young dancers being able to speak with other dancers and*

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*choreographers because “it’s not just about the dance – but about the insight and where the movement comes from.”*

*36) Bode went on to say that for universities and colleges that major in dance, there is a need for those institutions to facilitate the dance faculty to meet with each other – such as a forum for dance or an inter-school festival to see each other’s work and students. This would provide an ideal framework for critical discussion through critical friendship.*

*37) Bode is one of the most passionate individuals about his practice that the interviewer has ever met. He lives only to dance and to share dance with others at the height of professionalism. He finished the interview with this quote: “I have studied African dance all my life, and I still study it. You never stop learning – you must never stop learning.”*

## **The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs**

### **Discussion with Hilary Strong, Director, National Council for Drama Training, 18 June 2008**

(NB Some of the views expressed in the interview follow NCDT's line, but others are based on Hilary's own experience in training and development.)

- 1) The National Council for Drama Training (NCDT) is a partnership of employers in theatre, broadcast and media industries, employee representatives and training providers.
- 2) The aim of NCDT is to act as a champion for the drama industry, working to optimise support for professional drama training and education, embracing change and development.
- 3) NCDT accredits drama training (including musical theatre which would fall under the "triple-threat" – acting, singing, + dancing) through rigorous policies and procedures that industry has been actively involved in developing through bespoke working parties and their board. Employer engagement is the cornerstone of their practice, in that the accreditation and assessment panel are comprised of industry experts, and more importantly, those who are still active as practitioners within industry.
- 4) The accreditation process for schools occurs on a 6-year cycle, providing the most intensive view of how the schools is measured against the accreditation standards agreed by NCDT as the accrediting body.
- 5) Assessors also go and see 3<sup>rd</sup> year shows, not too unlike the Arts Council review of shows) and the assessors comprise directors, musical directors, choreographers and actors. Hilary stressed that NCDT employer engagement ensures relevance to industry because the employers have direct say in the standards and the practices are reviewed by committee. To be eligible for being an assessor, one must be a working professional and have steady work over the last 5 years. Hilary's view was that NCDT's management of assessors is good, competitive and current.
- 6) When asked about the quality of link between employers and schools, Hilary confirmed that part-time teachers are engaged by the schools and they regularly bring in working directors to direct shows. Hilary acknowledged that some are more successful than others, and NCDT have highlighted this as an issue to be discussed with the appropriate working party appointed by the Board.
- 7) Geographically, NCDT has found that it is easy to get industry employers to work in and around London, but can find that is more difficult to get such employers to travel to Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds.
- 8) Hilary acknowledged the difference between NCDT and CDET accreditation – in that CDET criteria is more dance based, whereas NCDT accreditation criteria embraces the skill-set and delivery of "triple threat" provision: dancing, singing and acting.

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- 9) NCDT musical theatre criteria is a very challenging standard to reach and there is a view that very few schools in England achieve the triple threat – England was specified due to the fact that in Scotland, there is a Glasgow-based FE college which is very good, but not accredited by NCDT.
- 10) Hilary mentioned the HE institutions that have ambitions to make triple threat training the norm (GSA, Mountview and Arts Ed) – however, on the whole, musical theatre training is still in need of improvement and development in relation to the triple threat.
- 11) The interviewer would like to note the repeat topic (also brought up from CDET and Ian Kellgren) that there is a vast difference between American-trained performers and UK-based performers – with particular reference to “readiness” for the industry upon leaving school. A specific example was the American Musical Theatre Academy, a performing arts high school providing free tuition and education with arts education in the afternoon. The children are picked at age 11-12 and work intensively between the ages of 11-16.
- 12) Hilary highlighted the Sylvia Young School as a model stage school providing a broad standard of skills. This is one English institution which also programmes academic work in the morning and performance practice in the afternoon.
- 13) Musical theatre schools will achieve a more successful formula for triple threat provision if entrants can enter the education with singing and dancing skills already.
- 14) Hilary felt that there is a general lack of knowledge of repertoire and other general history of art forms in schools today.
- 15) With regard to professional practice skills and preparedness for auditions, there were many points where she felt that new entrants are lacking.
  - a. Drama schools are not always teaching young people how to sell themselves.
  - b. It is not uncommon for employers to require an interview and an audition.
  - c. Employers value a targeted and passionate answer (at interview) when asked the usual suspect question: “What do you want to do with your career?” It is not uncommon to hear answers that go along the lines of “Ahhh...I want to do everything.” This does not help the candidate reveal their personality.
- 16) Employers value soft skills that the individual can apply diligently – this includes thinking communication and negotiation skills.
- 17) When discussing issues of diversity in the sector – with specific focus on gender – it is not uncommon for those who can afford private tuition (and have the requisite talent needed for consideration) to be white, middle-class females. Young men are

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more successful in accessing scholarships and bursaries. This is particularly true in musical theatre and dance.

- 18) On the whole employers are focused on talent of individuals wanting to enter the sector, but “interesting” people may have a higher chance of gaining work if their casting type is rarer. Hilary gave the example of Kathy Burke “types” versus tall, blond and thin females.
- 19) Exploring cultural diversity within the sector, Hilary explained that employers are always looking for young talent from other socio-economic groups and/or ethnic backgrounds. Positive action pervades the hiring strategies of the industry. She gave the example of casting for Cinderella. If a casting director desires a “non-white” female, they can go to Spotlight and search for 20 such candidates.
- 20) Hilary discussed issues of disability within the musical theatre and dance sector. She explained that Candoco have lost their Learning & Skills Council funding due to policy changes which now fund access initiatives in schools rather than specific courses.
- 21) When asked if confident that schools are giving employers what they want, Hilary replied that industry would say, probably, out of 20 schools, some would achieve better graduate destinations than others. A factor of this is directly proportionate to the quality of students going into the schools. NCDT gives advice to students on their prospect of a successful career in relation to the number of acceptances to drama schools (based on 5 applications and merely an estimate):
  - a. 1/5: difficult career
  - b. 2/5: part time career
  - c. 5/5: expect a full return on investment
- 22) Hilary gave her observations on strengths in the industry:
  - Reality TV shows like Britain’s Got Talent open the doors for more performers to air their talent. Do not underestimate the power of the amateur dramatics sector.
  - Creative & Media Diploma (14-19), part of the new policy change in the education system in England with a focus on vocational (workplace based training or industry-delivered training): The key to this success will be the FE sector forging partnerships with voluntary organisations to deliver training.
- 23) The overall “wish list” for improvements to the sector in relation to preparing young people for careers in dance and musical theatre:
  - More high-standard pre-HE training. FE is limited because training is usually limited to 15-20 hours/week.
  - Investment needs to be focused at 14-18 year olds – if you are beginning vocational training at 18, it’s too late.

## **The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs**

- 24) Finally, Hilary gave her views on the generalisation, “employers think provision is insufficient.”
- she does not necessarily believe that this is true, however;
  - schools are not connected well enough with companies and this is “huge” missed opportunity.

## **The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs**

### **Interview 6**

#### **Notes of email exchange with Janie Frazer, Casting Director, at ITV, 13 June 2008**

- 1) Liz O'Sullivan, member of the research team, asked select industry professionals in the TV/Film industry to respond to the employer responsiveness exercise. Janie Frazer responded with a brief email, and at the time of writing (5 July) Liz O'Sullivan has requested a further telephone interview.
- 2) Janie Frazer has had first hand experience of students auditioning from schools as part of the initial trawl for a series.
- 3) Janie said that the students were well-prepared in that they had rehearsed the scenes beforehand and had learned them. Janie's view was the triple threat criticism, but in reverse. Janie acknowledged that dance schools specialise but that acting is part of the curriculum. In the end, one actress was called back to be seen by the casting panel. Her strengths were in dance, however her acting skills were not considered good enough to secure the part.
- 4) The show was hoping to capture the audience in the same way that Disney's High School Musical has. Janie's views during the auditioning process were that the bar may not be set high enough by all of the schools. Casting directors are looking for "not just 'good' or 'very good' but 'exceptional'."
- 5) It is also interesting to note that the casting crew were originally looking for new talent, but ended up casting young performers with professional experience. The new talent without that professional experience were not skilled enough.

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

Interview/e-mail 7

### Notes of email exchange from Judi Hayfield, Consultant Casting/Business Affairs at ITV, 13 June 2008

- 6) Liz O'Sullivan, member of the research team, asked select industry professionals in the TV/Film industry to respond to the employer responsiveness exercise. Judi Hayfield responded with a brief response, and at the time of writing (5 July) Liz O'Sullivan has requested a further telephone interview.
- 7) Judi had a specific example of auditioning actors who could dance and act as part of the casting process for September Song. This show was an "end of pier" show with the emphasis on acting. However, the premise of the show was based on comedy and the dancers and the fact that the dancers never got it quite right.
- 8) Just as it is difficult for the trained singer to sing "off-key" on purpose, it is difficult for trained dancers to mess up steps. Saying this, Judi found it difficult to find a group who could "manage" to deliver the lines and dance at the same time. There was an overall feeling that the bar isn't high enough for training providers who are considered to be the feeder system to industry.
- 9) Judi expressed this may be down to the schools needing to fill places in order to be eligible for funding, which so many schools are critically dependent upon to survive.
- 10) Regarding the auditions process and employers' views on student levels of preparedness, Judi felt that if employers are concerned about student preparedness, then they should bring it up with the school as a feedback measure. Judi feels strongly that the audition process "is one that needs to be thoroughly prepared for and worries from employers should be raised at the time and the school try to address to improve student skills."
- 11) Judi also highlighted the reliance upon the quality of the specialist skills teachers/tutors to provide adequate preparation for careers in the industry. Casting Directors have a good chance of finding good acting talent, because they have the opportunity to go and see shows. In the specialist areas, the casting directors are reliant upon the understanding of the specialist tutors to understand industry's brief. Judi expressed her concern over the number of specialist skills tutors who are not currently working in industry, particularly in London schools.

**From:** Hayfield, Judi  
**Sent:** 13 June 2008 16:09  
**To:** West, June ; Walker, Maureen  
**Subject:** RE: Northern Ballet Research Programme

Haven't auditioned at the NBS – my only experience of auditioning for actors who could dance and act was for SEPTEMBER SONG – as it was an "end of pier" show the acting was primary as part of the comedy was that the dancers never got it quite right! More difficult than it sounds;

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24 March 2009

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however it was a struggle to get a half decent group who could manage to deliver the lines and dance – would agree with June and indeed with Janie that the bar doesn't seem to be as high as it should. This I suspect all to do with funding and filling the places?

Looking at Liz's comments re the auditions – if employers do have an issue at that stage it would be more useful to address it directly to the school. The audition process is one that needs to be thoroughly prepared for and worries from employers should be raised at the time and the school try to address to improve student skills.

The time element when casting means that you do have to rely on the tutors in the specialist skills area particularly – unlike drama where we have a fighting chance of seeing students work.

What you have no way of knowing is that the tutor has the right understanding – many tutors are not currently working within the industry which is the problem within a number of the London schools.

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

Interview 8

### Discussion with Sean Williams, Chief Executive; and Liz Dale, Head of Education and Training; Council for Dance Education & Training, 23 May 2008

- 1) The interview began with Sean discussing the debate at CDET's 2007 annual conference - *Raising the barre*. It is important to note that the comments are unattributed (at CDET's request). *Raising the barre* brought senior officers of the major vocational training Providers, Dance Awarding Bodies and Employers together to discuss issues of common priority. Throughout the conference there was unanimous agreement that
  - Young dancers need an understanding of dance history and tradition. Students need to understand the revolutions of the past to understand the needs of the future.
  - Graduate dance students also need an understanding of the fuller art world and need to keep abreast of trends and movements in all arts fields; students need to be regular visitors to art galleries, concerts and performances in styles of theatre other than those in which they are training.
  - Clearly young dancers need excellent technique; the teaching of technique in vocational schools needs to be of the highest calibre.
  - Students also need an understanding of the full role of the dancer and have the opportunity to work with musical theatre directors during vocational training.
  - Young dancers need to be highly proficient in all styles of dance and vocational training needs to acknowledge trends in relation to company repertoire. Companies and choreographers are increasingly crossing styles in their work.
  - Triple threat (acting, singing, dancing) is an important element of well-rounded musical theatre training. The notion of triple threat is rapidly changing, however, and is now likely to be "9-10 threat" because of the breadth of disciplines within acting, singing and dancing.
  - It is important that vocational training produces the thinking dancer. The artistic director of one of Europe's leading dance/physical theatre companies said: "Trained dancers can usually do everything I tell them to do but I want more than that, I want them to tell ME what to do."
  - The founder/director of a leading ballet company said he would like to see greater dialogue between vocational trainers throughout the world. He believed "all methods to have contributions to make to each other's development."
- 2) Sean felt there were inherent challenges in traditional audition procedures. How, for example, does one measure thinking acumen in an audition? Employers have expectations of graduates of dance schools.
- 3) Sean endorsed the quality of training at CDET accredited schools. CDET personnel spend a great deal of time visiting schools, speaking to dance students and he felt it likely that much of what passed for vocational training at non-accredited musical

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24 March 2009

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

theatre schools amounted to little more than the rote learning of a collection of dance routines and songs.

- 4) He thought it an interesting exercise to go through the programmes of West End theatres to see where performers had been trained. Accredited vocational schools establish strong relationships with agents and casting directors who visit showcases and performances. Schools associated with specific dance companies benefited from similar relationships.
- 5) It is important that training also addresses issues such as personal presentation at audition and casting sessions. It is important that dancers present themselves confidently; the unconfident candidate is unlikely to create a strong impression in casting.
- 6) Sean had attended a recent conference at which an American director/actor had talked of a new 'triple threat' the first part of which was triple threat in the traditional sense, the second was management of self and the third was management of career. Sean and Liz Dale (Head of Education and Training at CDET) agreed that self and career management were essential elements of current vocational training and crucial to an artist's professional survival.
- 7) The industry looks for maturity in graduates entering the profession and employers often appear to prefer working with dancers of age 30+. Liz wanted to see employers giving more new graduates a chance, though this meant accepting that recent graduates don't know everything but have potential that needs further development throughout their careers.
- 8) Liz also felt that graduates themselves need to understand that they don't come out of training fully formed and must consider themselves as constant improvers. Dancers have to be prepared to go to auditions time and time again and develop a resilience which is vital for survival in dance and musical theatre.
- 9) Sean and Liz described the ways in which schools manage students' expectations in relation to specialisms and career paths; accredited vocational schools understand the career markets for which they are training students. It is important that schools encourage students to develop a strong sense of their own career destinations.
- 10) Asked about the relationships between employers and training schools in relation to the design of programmes of study, Sean said that employer involvement in course design was very important. Employers sit on the Boards of many accredited vocational schools and advise on the general strategic direction in which a school is moving. Sean thought this a critical means of developing the relationship between trainer and employer.
- 11) Both Sean and Liz had heard of a suggestion to re-label employers as "engagers." Employer carries the implicit status of one who pays the dancer/performer, but there are a number of people who interface with young entrants to the sector

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(choreographer, directors, lighting designers, costume designers) – perhaps the opportunity to place “Engager panels” with schools would be a positive move for the industry as a whole. Both Sean and Liz felt this fell into the “A rose by any other name...” category and thought its impact on anything at all would be minimal.

- 12) Continuing with the relationship between vocational schools and employers, Sean gave examples of the relationships accredited schools have with the industry:
  - All recognise the importance of this relationship with particular regard to identifying the market they serve. In turn, CDET accredited schools are well respected within the industry
  - Relationships such as those between major companies and their associate schools are symbiotic.
  - On the whole schools that do not maintain good relationships with industry jeopardise their graduates' chances of success.
  - It is difficult to speak generally of employer engagement in relation to vocational schools because the breadth and quality of engagement varies considerably.
- 13) CDET collects graduate destination data regarding dancers and dance artists graduating from CDET accredited schools. The data shows c. 86% of students enter the industry with a near 100% progression rate. There are limitations to the data in that there is no filtering system to distinguish between a dancer who gets 2 weeks' work and a dancer who gets 6-9 month's work. CDET is to break down graduate first destination data further so that it may be even more informative and useful.
- 14) Both Sean and Liz felt that spoon-feeding students ultimately does them a disservice. The development of independence is an important outcome of vocational training. Accredited vocational training recognises that and prioritises it.
- 15) There was discussion as to the extent to which industry bodies such as CDET affect the provision of training. Sean noted that employers and employers' representatives are heavily represented on CDET's committees and boards with most committees requiring a majority of employer representation. TMA/SOLT together with major dance and musical theatre employers constitute CDET's Board membership and CDET is confident in its endorsement of its accredited schools.
- 16) He commented on the key weakness of dance and musical theatre training in the UK– too many unaccredited, unregulated vocational schools. Even one non-accredited school is too many. This state of affairs is even more critical in countries where there is no recognised system of accreditation.
- 17) There is an undoubted shortage of public funding available to the private dance sector. The dance industry makes a huge and critical contribution to the cultural and financial economies of this country yet the training of those who directly make this

## **The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs**

contribution is heavily subsidised by the private sector, which receives minimal recompense.

- 18) Sean also commented on the strength of the dance education and training sector. The first and most obvious strength was the passion of the teachers and the very high level of care in relation to their students. Accredited vocational schools deliver a huge remit. Sean also commented on the accredited sector's preparedness to reflect on its practice and its desire to deliver the highest possible quality of provision to those it teaches.
- 19) When Sean was asked what he would do if given a 'magic wand', he replied that he would wish for additional public funding for accredited private dance training. He and Liz felt that accredited vocational dance schools and dance teachers in general are frequently expected to subsidise training.
- 20) There was also a desire to see academic programmes running alongside vocational programmes. A dual-track of provision would foster skills development to enable young people to be creators and interpreters of meaning.
- 21) Finally, Sean expressed a sincere desire for the industry and employers to work ever closer together. It is a source of great disappointment that the country's major dance and musical theatre producers rarely offer support to the education and training sector on whose talents, commitment and good will they so heavily depend.

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

### Discussion with Janet Pharaoh Maîtresse de Ballet Moulin Rouge (MR) Interview 9

- 1) Janet thought that some UK schools were better at preparing their students for employment than others; this was evident at auditions. Laine Theatre School students were usually smart. Every choreographer is looking for something different. Students have to realise that people have their own styles and they must adapt to them. Choreographers may struggle to find the time to teach style.
- 2) Employers attend auditions to recruit not teach. Commercial routines need to be learnt in a day, different classes are available to help dancers. There are 60 dancers at the Moulin Rouge. The school takes students young and finishes their training. They cannot be too sexy at 16, their learning continues beyond 18. It takes 2 years to become a soloist. MR takes new graduates with technique and works with them to train them in the choreographer's style.
- 3) There are many domestic-related issues for young dancers working away from home. Dancing is usually less of a problem than helping to sort out rent, phone bills, cooking, cleaning, and life and money management! As the school helps to find accommodation, it relies on students paying regularly to maintain their contacts and reputation.
- 4) Students often don't know how to smile. The MR advert for dancers and the briefing for the audition says bring a smile. The company requires more than technique; performance, character, presence on stage. Dancers need to be entertainers who will make clients feel happy. Over-smiling is also a problem. It is important for dancers to be able to assess the mood and respond to it. They must go with the choreography, respond to it in acting the part and animating the face; dancing with feeling.
- 5) Discipline has to be strict. Dancers must "toe the line." They tend to get naughtier as they get older. It is necessary to weed out the "bad apples." Most of the talented ones get along fine. Some auditioners are not sufficiently trained to learn the Can-Can, the best ones who are not yet ready are sent off to school to train and then come back again.
- 6) Suitable boys are rarer; they need to be able to do high kicks and jumps. They must look good, do double pirouettes, and have a six pack. There are 16 at the MR.
- 7) Audition criteria include:
  - a) presentation
  - b) dress well no jogging clothes
  - c) show legs off
  - d) need to show hair (also important in photos)
  - e) make up preferred, avoid over made up vampire look, must know how to make up
  - f) posture is important, as costumes are difficult and can hurt your back
  - g) must be the right shape or will be knocked out
  - h) minimum height 5' 8".

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

- 8) Those who have potential but issues to address e.g. over weight are invited to return when they have addressed their problem. Schools are expected to help students to address their posture prior to audition.
- 9) The company auditions in Italy, France, UK (London, Northern Ballet School, Leeds) US. The UK gave a poor performance at audition 5 years ago but is getting better. The schools are “waking up” to what is needed. The US dancers audition in G strings not jogging bottoms. Australian dancers are spic and span. They are stealing the show. Auditions are held in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth. Employers are getting better at saying what they want and the schools are starting to listen.
- 10) It can be easier and quicker to recruit experienced dancers. There is less rehearsal time; 10 days rather than 20. Time costs money both rehearsal fees and hotels etc. There is a lot to learn with the Can-Can which can take 3 weeks.
- 11) Janet expects the schools to provide:
  - a) good basic all round training and technique;
  - b) good discipline and politeness; and
  - c) enthusiasm.
- 12) Shrinking violets or lack of enthusiasm are weaknesses.
- 13) Janet prefers to see dancers rather than to rely on photos. DVDs can be good, e.g. you may spot a talented boy. She prefers to hire and fire herself, rather than to rely on others.
- 14) Janet would like to see:
  - a) a positive approach; and
  - b) more girls who: are supple, can do high kicks, smile and express themselves\_ their inner feelings need to be conveyed to the audience.
- 15) She was pleased that schools are bothering to listen to what employers want. There is plenty of work for good dancers. There needs to be more performance in preparation.

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### Simon Griffiths Production Manager Carnival Cruise Line Interview 10

- 1) Simon explained that employers want professional training and work experience when recruiting. The best employers want “the cream of the crop.” However, he understood that everyone must start from somewhere! A good percentage of the Line’s recruits have no commercial experience. He also explained that dancers/performers have a relatively short life span in the industry. Contracts are renewable subject to mutual consent.
- 2) They cast for 22 ships with 5 male and 11 females on 6 month contracts. *They recruit some 600 dancers pa. Singers are recruited from specialist schools as well as open call auditions. They are not looking for “Jack of all trades.” A liner may well have 4,000 guests and 1,5000 crew; a floating island. This is a safe environment with good security. There is some stigma attached to working on cruise ships in England. This is odd given the size of the audience and the facilities for performance.* Different liners attract different clientele. There is now significant competition between lines which forces competition and standards ever higher.
- 3) Their website has a helpful section for would be entertainment staff. An extract sets out some context:

“Cruise lines hire staff all year round. They are looking for highly motivated, energetic, outgoing, friendly and professional employees with a positive attitude and strong commitment to customer service excellence. Contract durations vary between 3 and 9 months and in most cases you have the option to extend the contract. It is quite likely that a job that you have worked in the past will give you enough experience to perform various cruise line jobs. Almost every hospitality related job or job that you worked with customers or clients should give you enough experience and a serious chance to get hired for a number of cruise line job positions. Compared to other industries, cruise lines have a much higher employee turnover rate. Most people do not consider cruise line jobs as life-long cruise ship career, some crew members get promoted, change ships or cruise lines, go on vacation, return to school, or just settle down back on land. For that and many other reasons cruise lines are ALWAYS HIRING and looking for new personnel. There are cruise line jobs for just about everyone. Cruise lines hire applicants from almost every country in the world. Many entry-level positions are also available. Regardless of your nationality or previous employment experience there is a job for you aboard the hundreds of cruise ships operating worldwide.
- 4) Simon recruits internationally; including in Canada, Australia, US, England. The specialist schools in England are seen as a great thing. US turn out and training not so appropriate. The company uses “open call” auditions in London. 300 turn up at a time. You may be lucky to find 65 successful dancers at audition. Recruits are split up into mixed nationality groups. Their close quarters can be a mixed blessing. Drop out occurs for a variety of reasons. There is limited homesickness and injuries.

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

- 5) *England trains many performers for the whole world. People undergo comprehensive 9-5pm training. In the US smaller schools tend to train for Broadway, films and some minor dance. They are less focused on professional dance training. The quality of English training is meeting needs. Of course, everyone would like more professionalism and expertise.*
- 6) At audition the recruiters start with an open mind. *They look for quality, technical ability is important. They rely on English schools, however, the standards vary from year to year.*
- 7) A minority of people at audition do appear to have little or no training. Competitions and reality shows have made many more people interested in performing. *Boys are looked on more favourably in relation to their potential* possibly starting on more high profile ships. Their health and safety is always considered carefully.
- 8) Private auditions with school groups of 20 – 30 allow dancers to present in their own environment and comfort zone. They don't necessarily focus style and presentation as in open auditions as they may be self conscious when performing amongst their peers.
- 9) Dancers sell themselves and their personality. They must have technique but a personality check is important. *The company likes diversity. It does not impose strict physical restrictions. However, the team are recruiting for high energy shows, and recruits will need a high level of energy to succeed. They recruit dancers rather than musical theatre performers. They particularly like rhythm and blues routines. The auditions are designed to spot potential. They are performance orientated.*
- 10) Many recruits are "improvers" when working with the company. Training and choreography are taught. Some of the teachers think that young people do not "know the ropes!" There are 4-6 week intensive rehearsals and 2-4 productions per day.
- 11) Northern Ballet School presents very clean cut students, they are good dancers and their appearance is good. Sometimes it would be good to see more personality. The company recruit direct from the school and have a standing relationship. The company has no big problems with students at audition. They know what auditions are all about. They are ready to work.
- 12) Students from Laine Theatre Arts are well prepared; strong performers and ready to go with bite.

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

### Janette Williams Dancers International Agency

### Interview 11

- 1) Janette gave us an agent's view of the responsiveness of schools and their pupils to employers' needs. She casts for her clients, undertakes auditions and refers clients to employers. As the Dancers Pro website states:  

“Welcome to Dancers Pro, the online directory of professional dancers, choreographers, dance companies and dance teachers. Whatever you are skilled in: ballroom & ballet, hip-hop, street dance, classical and contemporary, tango or tap, Dancers Pro is here to help.”
- 2) She looks for: rounded dancers of 5' 7" or over ideally, but dancers of all heights are employed. They need to be pretty, good at their craft and strong.. They need a work ethic with motivation. They need to be good team players. Key strengths are:
  - *technique*
  - *figure; and*
  - *personality.*
- 3) ***UK students can be timid. The agency leaves it to schools to help students to prepare. If the agency is advertising it will advice on make up, clothes and presentation.***
- 4) Engagements include: cruises, casinos, shows, hotels, theatre and corporate events etc.
- 5) Frustrations in arranging auditions include: late comers, no CVs and pictures and lack of cross references on pictures to link them to CVs. 6 out of 7 who auditioned from one school had to be chased up for their CVs and or pictures.
- 6) At auditions people tend not to perform well with their faces; they clench and concentrate hard which can come across as aggression or frowning. ***They must learn to smile and to coordinate that with kicks etc. This is important to clients and will be a factor to consider in employment.***
- 7) ***Girls need to be slim and toned; big bottoms and thighs are not good. Body shape is a key requirement and needs to be shown on photos.*** Leotards and tights are good for this. These are common knockout factors at audition.
- 8) ***Standards of dance and technique are fine in the vocational schools.*** All dancers could be employed, though some of the boys could struggle. 3 year trained college dancers do well.
- 9) Not all boys need to have a 6 pack, but it's a bonus if they are toned and in good shape. They cannot be fat or overweight. ***Boys need to be tall. Girls can use heels. They must be able to do a pas de deux.***
- 10) ***Janette thought that employers do generally get what they want.*** There are of course odd hiccups. Not everyone will take to cruising. When this happens you have to get them home, and find someone suitable to replace them. There are also occasional bullying or emotional issues that have to be addressed.

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

- 11) The agency fills hundreds of jobs each year. They keep clients happy as they rely on repeat business. Therefore they will not send unsuitable applicants in respect of:
  - a) weight
  - b) behaviour
  - c) manners
  - d) dance technique
  - e) nightmare/complainers
  - f) or those who pull others down.
- 12) Drop out rates are low; limited to injuries, accidents on or off stage and other domestic issues.
- 13) The agency *does not find employers overly concerned about whether selected dancers are new recruits or old hands. The main requirement is that they learn the part and get on with it. However, it is necessary to be careful who you send to different clients. Some benefit from experienced dancers; e.g. tricky staff, fiery bosses, the need to learn quickly or make changes would not be fair placements for new recruits. Other jobs benefit from fresh and enthusiastic recruits. All of the jobs are lovely work.*
- 14) Janette will visit schools and watch shows. This takes time and involves travel and overnight stays. She prefers auditions as individuals self-select for engagements. This provides a basis for identifying dancers that the agency can work with. These will be signed up and displayed on the agency's website.
- 15) Rates are advertised less the 10% fees so that dancers know what they will receive.
- 16) The agency enjoys good relations with employers. These are based on trust. Sometimes employers will leave the agency to hire and fire.
- 17) *“Some employers do like to have a little moan. However, most vacancies are filled, so there cannot be too many real problems. For some assignments attitude is more important than technique. No one wants to pay for a poor attitude. After all what could be nicer than working for to 1 to 2 hours dancing in Portugal a night or on a Cruise?”*

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

### Question and Answers; David Grindrod, Freelance Casting Director 25 Nov 08

Philip Radcliffe (Director Northern Ballet School) kindly produced this note. Philip is a member of our steering group and co hosts our Beacon project.

- 1) David is a freelance casting agent with Andrew Lloyd Webber. He ran auditions for Hairspray, Lord of the Rings, Sound Of Music, Spamalot, Chicago, Mamma Mia, Carousel etc. He attended a meeting at the Council for Dance education and Training and agreed that we might draw from his Q&A session with colleagues in our study. The session was a big hit and we have included it in full as it is a great source of feedback for the sector.
- 2) David is always looking for talent. He reminded us that musicals have changed; the big Rogers and Hammerstein shows have been largely replaced by smaller shows like Mamma Mia, in which *dancers have to sing and speak*. In recruiting for reality TV he thought that those who have had good training will come through; "the cream will always rise to the top." We are looking for the 'triple threat.' Singers must be able to hold a tune and 'blend' without a mike, rather than just belt it out. Recruits can understudy to improve. In Carousel, there were 8 girl dancers originally; they are now singing complex harmonies.
- 3) Dancers need to be well trained to do shows like Chicago. The new thing is acting; *performers must have confidence to work outside of their comfort zone. They must be relaxed about trying something new and not be thrown by sight reading etc.*
- 4) Circus skills were needed for Lord of the Rings; the guys had to do flips and aerial work. They must want to be there and enjoy it.

### Q&A

- 5) Q How far do you take those who cannot yet act?
- 6) A We may give them second cover – something to work at.
- 7) Q Do you change the look?
- 8) A Yes, if Director wants to – Americans have a tick list – but I find that approach rather depressing. Sometimes you have to go with the parameters, e.g. the height limits for goblins at 5' 4."
- 9) Q Do you favour any particular background?
- 10) A *Cruise ships have come to the fore. Their performers will have done three or four sets of shows in a three month tour. I give them a tick for this*; it is the new rep; there is no rep training any more. Things are better in the States, where there are more openings and different entry routes.
- 11) Q Why are college leavers given swing roles?
- 12) A Because established performers will not do it. Some people fall at the first fence and have to be removed.
- 13) Q How many songs should a student have ready for audition?

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

- 14) A In the States they have a book – about 5 or 6 really good numbers; well rehearsed. But sometimes auditioners are totally thrown when asked ‘have you got anything else?’ You must sell yourself, nobody else will. Be prepared; on the ball; ready to work. If those auditioning only have 2 songs, make sure they really know them. Nerves take over, the left leg has a mind of its own, when in from of a room full of people.
- 15) Q Do you expect good standards of relationships in companies?
- 16) A Yes, in producer and casting roles we speak to each other. We will discuss whether we have employed so and so. If yes, OK; our colleagues will give them the benefit of the doubt. We also like to see performers pick their costumes up, dressers are not servants. We like the company to be nice to assistant stage managers too.
- 17) Q Why do they teach dancers in the States but here we teach ballet dancers, contemporary etc?
- 18) A In Carousel we had major ballet girls, but they all had to sing, with voices that blend and on key! ***They must be able to do it all if they want to go into musicals.*** In the States they are very slick (but stereotyped?) Here we produce more characters. Auditions for the Abba show in the States were all too slick to begin with. We want kids off the street – that’s what we love. When we did Chicago here we had four principals from the States and our kids upped the gears and transformed – they got there.
- 19) Q Why don’t you do auditions up north?
- 20) A We have done in the past, but basically, ***open calls cost thousands in terms of studios, hotels, travel etc.*** Management ask how many will you get; answer – don’t know – so they won’t spend the money. TV Reality stuff is different – TV publicity locally etc. the kids turn up in droves.
- 21) Q Do you audition fantastic dancers if they only have moderate voice?
- 22) A Yes, we say go away and work on this, that or the other and then come back.
- 23) Q Do you give feed-back to individuals or agent?
- 24) A Yes, as I said, we do give feedback. There are not the open calls, but there are so many agents, 200 – 300 with 2 spots. There are terrible agents as well, who do nothing for people on their books. We look at CVs to see where they trained. ***Agents do have the keys to unlock the doors to audition.***
- 25) Q Are our schools doing a good job?
- 26) A Yes, of course some people are better than others, but you can only do your best to train students.
- 27) Q What sort of photos do you want? CVs etc.
- 28) A Photos, 10 x 8 – must look like them! Don’t let them choose their own - they have their own image ideas. Also, don’t let them claim special skills if they don’t have them. Amazing how many CVs have no phone number. They must provide the basic information and contacts.

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At audition they should not rush – *take a moment to prepare themselves – make sure the music is prepared, sellotaped and deletions etc. are clear – don't learn the song the day before. They must talk to us – we want to learn about them.*

- 29) Q Do you want photos in colour or black and white?
- 30) A Colour is increasingly popular – but I prefer black and white – colour doesn't always show skin texture etc. Also no poses with hands framing face or under chin etc. – just a clear shot to show you like you are.
- 31) Q Do you go to college showcases?
- 32) A Yes, if we can, and not only in London.
- 33) Q Do you like to see the natural self at audition; a blank canvas?
- 34) A We may ask them to do all sorts – come back in a collar and tie, put your hair up; sing a song. Some auditioners for say, a Rogers and Hammerstein, will sing a Sondheim. Fit the occasion if you can, but have a selection: a comic speech, some Shakespeare, a good belt-it number – also pointe shoes, tap shoes; take everything with you.
- 35) Q Spotlight offers a good deal to college graduates but the take-up is disappointing because Spotlight is good to CDET schools. Do you use the Spotlight listings?
- 36) A Yes, we do use Spotlight.
- 37) Q What is your ideal showcase?
- 38) A For starters, don't make it 2 hours long. We can get to what we want very quickly normally. Keep students out of the audience – the screams of support are great for their mates on stage but are infuriating for us. Make sure everyone on show moves, dances, sings and speaks.
- 39) Q What about microphones?
- A A Good question – at a recent audition for Sister Act, The director wanted to hear voices on 'mikes', but it is not always necessary. A good sound engineer at audition will know how voice will come over when amplified. Better to have a blending voice than the loudest.

# The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

## 18) Pro forma: Issues for discussion with employers and individuals

Annex 1

### 1) General Issues

From your experience, how do you judge:

- a) employer/agent/casting person involvement in training and preparation. What do they do and when, how effective is it? Employers' expectations and satisfaction with graduate trainees and their preparation, general/specific, readiness to undertake professional work. How many graduate students do they employ, how easily can students manage the transition from learner to performer and learn new routines?
- b) schools appreciation and understanding of what employers/employment means. How do they keep abreast of trends, the market recruitment, standards etc
- c) students' expectations and preparedness for audition, dance or musical theatre work after training. How ready, willing and able are they? Do they meet the standards needed for professional performance?
- d) progression from training to relevant employment for dancers and musical theatre; rates of progression and any qualitative feedback?
- e) on-going liaison between employers and schools for communication, additional training and development needs, feedback on graduates and training
- f) disability issues. To what extent are employers and schools aware of these and collaborating to be inclusive
- g) the extent to which sector bodies, e.g. Creative and Cultural Skills and Council for Dance Education and Training, Trinity College London and Ofsted influence the perception of training in the eyes of employers.

### 2) Employer/ Agent issues

#### The learning

- a) access to schools and students during training and preparation
- b) involvement in training and prior to professional audition
- c) contacts and liaison with schools and students for audition
- d) relevance and appropriateness of preparation:
  - i) knowledge of schools and courses
  - ii) course coverage and level
  - iii) knowledge of the industry
  - iv) readiness and performance at audition
  - v) favourite schools and why

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- vi) usefulness of qualifications?
  - e) retention of new employees/drop out; reasons for turnover
  - f) level of inclusiveness for individuals with disabilities and learning difficulties.
- 3) **Agents/Casting**
- a) Role of agent in relation to understanding and perception between employers and schools:
    - i) value added for schools, employers students
    - ii) during training
    - iii) pre audition
    - iv) assessment of training and preparation
    - v) key issues in recruitment/casting that reflect on students preparation
    - vi) involvement in employer : school interaction
    - vii) relative employer : school perceptions. To what extent are these justified.
    - viii) usefulness of in house agencies
    - ix) experience of students with disabilities
- 4) **The students**
- a) their perception of the readiness of graduate students for employment:
    - i) professional competence; core skills for dance
    - ii) pace
    - iii) ability to learn and interpret
    - iv) presentation, knowledge of wardrobe, make up etc.
    - v) interpersonal skills/attitude
    - vi) professionalism
    - vii) flexibility/responsiveness to employment needs; vis times, places, rehearsal
    - viii) missing skills and knowledge
    - ix) talent and star quality of graduates from schools
    - x) standards relative to:
      - experienced candidates
      - national and
      - international comparisons
- 5) **Schools**
- a) Approach to employers and preparation for professional employment in respect of:

## **The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs**

- i) involvement in governance,
  - ii) plans
  - iii) learning, curriculum, depth and coverage
  - iv) use of professional performers in training
  - v) responsiveness to knowledge and skills needs
  - vi) audition
  - vii) progression
- 6) **Auditions**
- a) Importance of:
  - b) contact and liaison during training
  - c) presentation
  - d) performance skills
  - e) ability to learn and adapt routines
  - f) attitude
  - g) appearance
  - h) other key issues
- 7) **Key strengths and weaknesses (What works best, what doesn't, pet hates, what makes it all worthwhile?)**
- a) 3 key strengths of schools, students and potential for employment
  - b) 3 weaknesses; areas where expectations not met
- 8) **Wish list to improve training and preparation. What would they like to see change and how?**
- 9) **To what extent are their perceptions well based and balanced?**

# Aims, objectives and implementation plans

## Implementation plan to ensure training provision meets employers' business needs

**Aim 2:** training provision meets employers' business needs and employers can recruit people with the vocational and employability skills needed to increase productivity.

**By employers** we mean people running businesses, voluntary and public sector organisations who want to increase their productivity and competitiveness and who want to ensure that new and returning entrants to the labour market have the skills for the jobs that are available.

Reference	Actions and tasks showing how the above objectives will be taken forward	Owner(s)	Date to be achieved
2.1	<b>Employers increasingly become strategic partners of colleges and providers to ensure that their skills and training needs are met</b>		
2.1.1	Those colleges and providers who have identified that employer engagement is relevant to their missions will set out in their plans how they will respond to employer needs, including (but not only) those identified in Sector Skills Agreements, in regional statements of skills priorities and through their own knowledge of their local market. For LSC-funded providers, this will inform the development of the 'responsiveness to employers' key performance indicator (KPI) within the Framework for Excellence. Set up a steering group to include the SSCs and employer representative organisations to ensure that the implementation of the National Improvement Strategy and the development of improvement support	Colleges and providers working with LSC	September 2008
2.1.2		QIA working with LLUK, CEL, LSC and DWP/JCP	From April 2007

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Reference	Actions and tasks showing how the above objectives will be taken forward	Owner(s)	Date to be achieved
2.1.3	services are informed by the needs of employers. Engage the Commission for Employment and Skills in the Implementation of the Strategy. QIA will work with Working Ventures UK (WVUK) to explore how support can be provided to voluntary sector providers in the area of employer engagement.	QIA working with WVUK	September 2007
2.2	<b>Standards for excellence in employer engagement are rationalised so that colleges and providers are clear what is expected of them and employers can choose provision that suits their needs</b>		
2.2.1	The new standard for employer responsiveness and vocational excellence will provide employers with a clear mark of quality provision that is responsive, of high quality and flexible in nature and which will inform the development of the 'responsiveness to employers' KPI within the Framework for Excellence.	LSC in consultation with SSCs, colleges and providers and employers	Roll-out from February 2007
2.2.2	Through their Sector Skills Agreements, SSCs will increasingly identify developments needed in the provision for their sectors and ensure any excellence accreditation they provide is consistent with and complementary to other standards intended to provide guidance for employers on quality provision.	SSCs working with employers and the further education system	Ongoing
2.3	<b>National partners work together through the Sector Skills Agreements, with employers and their representatives and with colleges and providers, to support colleges and providers deliver provision to meet the needs articulated by employers</b>		
2.3.1	The Development Programme for Train to Gain, which is a national programme delivered regionally, will work with providers to develop high-quality, responsive provision which meets employers' needs. The programme will target providers with current Train to Gain contracts but will also be open to all providers wishing to improve the	QIA working with LSC, colleges and providers and employers and their representative bodies	Launched from September 2006

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Reference	Actions and tasks showing how the above objectives will be taken forward	Owner(s)	Date to be achieved
2.3.2	<p>quality and responsiveness of their work with employers. There will be targeted activity to meet the needs of different groups of staff - senior managers, delivery staff and administrative and support staff - and to provide development opportunities for organisations with a great deal of expertise in this area of the work and for those who are at an early stage of development.</p> <p>Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs) who have developed the content of the first phase of 14-19 Diplomas, will represent the employers' voice and be responsible for ensuring that the Diplomas meet the needs of employers and provide the opportunity for employers to be actively engaged with the Diplomas' curriculum development and delivery. QIA, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), LLUK and CEL will continue to work closely with the DDPs, through an agreed protocol, to develop the content of the support programmes. At the same time, 14-19 partnerships will identify how they can most effectively engage directly with employers to provide high-quality work-related learning, including relevant work experience.</p>	SSCs have set them up under lead from QCA and DfES. QIA is working with the DDPs. DDPs are working closely with 14-19 partnerships and colleges and providers.	November 2006
2.3.4	<p>Effective practice guidance on employer engagement, based on existing effective practice already in the further education system and on the needs of employers, will be launched.</p>	QIA working closely with the further education system and employers	December 2007
2.3.7	<p>Work with specialist networks (including National Skills Academies, New Standard providers, next generation CoVEs and other specialist</p>	QIA working with colleges and providers	From April 2007 onwards

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Reference	Actions and tasks showing how the above objectives will be taken forward	Owner(s)	Date to be achieved
2.3.8	<p>providers) to ensure that good practice developed by them is shared throughout the sector.</p> <p>Develop the 'Business Interchange' programme to offer teachers, tutors and trainees structured experience and training in relevant business sectors and create parallel opportunities for industry experts to give time to local colleges and providers.</p>	<p>LLUK with QIA and LSC and staff in the further education system</p>	<p>From 2008</p>
2.3.9	<p>The CEL/AoC work-shadowing scheme will continue to enable sector leaders to broaden their experience and skills through working with leaders in other sectors, thereby giving them the opportunity to gain insights into those sectors and organisations and providing them with what they need from the sector and its learners.</p>	<p>CEL, AoC and Leaders in the further education system</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
2.3.10	<p>Ensure the Qualifications and Credit Framework reflects employers' needs in the revised qualifications.</p> <p>QIA will develop support programmes for colleges and providers to implement the new Framework.</p>	<p>QCA, SSCs and LSC working with employers</p>	<p>Roll-out from September 2008</p>

# The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

## Ofsted Vocational Courses and skills gaps and inspection framework Annex 3

### Vocational courses are bridging the skills gap to meet industry needs

Ref No: NR- 2008-03

Date: 24 Jan 2008

Inspectors made over 100 visits to colleges to identify good practice in vocational education and training. The vocational areas that were surveyed comprised business, administration and law; science; engineering and manufacturing technologies; construction, planning and the built environment; and agriculture, horticulture and animal care.

Christine Gilbert, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education, Children's Services and Skills, said:

"Ofsted's surveys of good practice in post-16 education and training highlight and share the very best in a vocational area. These reports provide examples of varied and effective ways of focusing on raising standards in education and training, and enabling progression into employment.

"The best colleges in each vocational area had common features. They all had strong links with industry and related classroom learning to the demands of the workplace. They worked hard to ensure high achievement and retention rates. And continuous assessment of students ensured individuals were placed on the right courses, set appropriate targets, and identified for support when at risk of falling behind."

The majority of the teachers were subject specialists, with considerable industrial, technical and vocational experience. This played a crucial role as teachers' first-hand knowledge helped students to apply theory to practice, develop technical and practical competences as well as the wider skills valued by employers.

Teachers' subject specialisms combined with inspiring and engaging teaching were key factors in maintaining students' interest and progress. Activities such as practical exercises and demonstrations, group work, talks by visiting speakers, industry visits and entry into skills competitions helped to motivate and encourage students and raise standards.

Collaboration with employers and businesses also helped colleges to gain sponsorships or donations of products, tools, equipment and the use of workshops.

Some colleges went further to tailor their provision to meet the needs of employers by providing training on company premises, broadening the curriculum to offer additional vocational qualifications relevant to students' future employability or providing courses in specialist areas.

In all of the colleges surveyed, good or excellent resources and facilities were provided. This enabled students to gain practical experience in using the latest industry standard equipment.

Good leadership and management of the curriculum were evident in the best provision. Well led departments and day-to-day management of teaching, combined with a strong focus on students' achievement and effective self-assessment, helped to raise standards.

The reports, however, also revealed that in the majority of vocational courses, information technology was not used sufficiently well to enhance learning.

## The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs

Extract from Ofsted Inspection Framework 2005

### Overall effectiveness

**How effective and efficient are the provision and related services in meeting the full range of learners' needs and why?**<sup>4</sup>

**What steps need to be taken to improve the provision further?**

Inspectors should evaluate:

- the overall effectiveness of the provision, including any specialist provision and extended services, and its main strengths and weaknesses
- the capacity to make further improvements
- the effectiveness of any steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection

and, where appropriate:

- the effectiveness of links with other organisations to promote the well-being of learners
- the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage
- the effectiveness of the sixth form.

### Achievement and standards

**How well do learners achieve?**

Inspectors should evaluate (the numbers in parentheses refer to the Every Child Matters outcomes in each part of the schedule):

- learners' success in achieving challenging targets, including qualifications and learning goals, with trends over time and any significant variations between groups of learners (3)
- the standards of learners' work (3)
- learners' progress relative to their prior attainment and potential, with any significant variations between groups of learners (3)
- the extent to which learners enjoy their work (3)

and, where appropriate:<sup>5</sup>

- the acquisition of workplace skills (4,5)

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<sup>4</sup> More detailed listings of what to evaluate are given in *Using the evaluation schedule*

<sup>5</sup> These outcomes for learners are generally reported in the personal development and well-being section of section 5 school reports.

## **The Responsiveness of Dance Training to Employers' Needs**

- the development of skills which contribute to the social and economic well-being of the learner (2,4,5)
- the emotional development of learners (1)
- the behaviour of learners (1,2)
- the attendance of learners (2,3)
- the extent to which learners adopt safe practices and a healthy lifestyle (1,2,5)
- learners' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development (3,4)
- whether learners make a positive contribution to the community (4).

### **The quality of provision**

#### **How effective are teaching, training and learning?**

Inspectors should evaluate:

- how well teaching and/or training and resources promote learning, address the full range of learners' needs and meet course or programme requirements (3,4)
- the suitability and rigour of assessment in planning and monitoring learners' progress (3)
- the identification of, and provision for, additional learning needs (3)

and, where appropriate

- the involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning and development (3).

#### **How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners?**

Inspectors should evaluate:

- the extent to which programmes or activities match learners' needs, aspirations and potential, building on prior attainment and experience (3,5)
- how far programmes or the curriculum meet external requirements and are responsive to local circumstances (4,5)
- the extent to which enrichment activities and/or extended services contribute to learners' enjoyment and achievement (3,4,5)
- the extent to which the provision contributes to the learners' personal development and well-being, for example their capacity to stay safe and healthy, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (1, 2).

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### **How well are learners guided and supported?**

Inspectors should evaluate:

- the care, advice, guidance and other support provided to safeguard welfare, promote personal development and achieve high standards (1,2,3)
- the quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance to learners in relation to courses and programmes, and where applicable, career progression (3,5).

### **Leadership and management**

#### **How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?**

Inspectors should evaluate:

- how effectively self-evaluation is used to secure improvement
- how well challenging targets are being used to raise standards for all learners
- how effectively leaders and managers at all levels clearly direct improvement and promote the well-being of learners through high quality care, education and training
- how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated
- how well the school contributes to community cohesion
- the adequacy and suitability of staff, including the effectiveness of processes for recruitment and selection of staff to ensure that learners are well taught and protected
- the adequacy and suitability of specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation
- how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money

and, where appropriate:

- how effective are the links made with other providers, services, employers and other organisations to promote the integration of care, education and any extended services to enhance learning and to promote well-being
- the effectiveness with which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities.