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## Dance Notes

Dance  
Research  
Forum  
Ireland

Fóram Taighde Rince na hÉireann

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Catherine Young outlines the theme – Dance Residences in Ireland - and contributions of this first issue of 'Dance Notes'

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## Dance Residencies in Ireland

Dance Artists share their experiences

### Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of Dance Research Forum Ireland's newsletter *Dance Notes*. With this publication we aim to provide our membership with updates on current thinking and practice in dance in Ireland, and to share international perspectives of Irish dance. In 2011/12, *Dance Notes* will present a series of special issues, each individually curated by invited members of DRFI that will focus on a specific theme.

This first issue, "Dance Residencies in Ireland", curated by Catherine Young, provides an insight to the many different situations of dance residencies across Ireland. It explores how the dance artist and the communities they work within, can share and develop a practice that can be both fulfilling for the artist, and have a broader impact on the lives of the participants. The contributors have approached this subject in



diverse ways - from personal insights and project overviews, to reflections on the balance of artistic practice and academia. I am confident that this issue will share invaluable information on the life of the dancer in residence, and will contribute to the ongoing discussion on the benefits of investment in dance and the arts.

**Sheila Creevey**, Chairperson, Dance Research Forum Ireland

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## About Dance Research Forum Ireland

Dance Research Forum Ireland is a non-profit, international, inclusive and inter-disciplinary society for the scholarship of dance, in all its manifestations, in Ireland and its diaspora. Your support as a member allows us to ensure that there is a voice for dance artists and scholars on the international academic 'stage'. Our activities have included three international conferences, as well as seminars, student symposiums and the publication of Proceedings from these events. The National Dance Archive of Ireland was recently established by DRFI, in partnership with University of Limerick and An Chomhairle Ealaíon / The Arts Council. This archive will host a broad range of literature and artefacts relating to dance practice and scholarship of all forms and traditions, and will be a valuable international resource for scholars of dance.

## Foreword by Issue Curator

Residencies play an important role in the development of dance especially in regional locations where access is limited. The idea is that they allow the artist time, resources and (in some cases) access to studio space to research and develop work and in exchange the artist shares their skills and engages with the local community. It seems fitting in light of the seven recently appointed Arts Council funded dance residencies throughout Ireland to curate this series of articles which reflect on many of the dance residencies that have taken place (or are about to take place) in Ireland. The Arts Council's Integrated Strategy for Dance 2010-2012 looks to *"ensure a more balanced geographical distribution of dance activities and support across Ireland"* and to *"address gaps in geographical coverage and support existing activity in regional centres."* Nine dancers share their thoughts, visions, experiences as well as some of the challenges associated with their respective residencies. The order of the articles follows a through-line looking at first experiences, establishing practices, on the ground, building participation; through to: analysis, evaluation, insight and ending with reflections.

Residencies funded by

local authorities have had a significant community outreach component as the spend has to be seen to be benefiting the local community; but this can often take precedence over the artists own work. The recent Arts Council residencies appear to be more artist led and artist focused which should help address some of the issues artists have been facing to date.

Residencies are a relatively new model in Ireland and it is hoped that by artists collectively sharing their experiences that residencies will continue to morph and re-shape to eventually find the ideal model where both artist and communities are fulfilled.

**Catherine Young, Board Member,  
DRFI**



**For further information, and to show your support by becoming a member of DRFI, please visit our website [www.danceresearchforumireland.org](http://www.danceresearchforumireland.org).**

## You always remember your first time.

### *Fearghus Ó'Conchúir, Dublin City Council & Muskerry Gaeltacht*

I've undertaken two quite different Dance Artist in Residence Schemes: the first for the Muskerry Gaeltacht in 2003/4 and the second for Dublin City Council in 2007/8. I use the phrase Dance Artist in Residence rather than Dancer in Residence since what most residencies require first are not the performance skills of a dancer but those of choreographer, dance teacher and animateur. Most often it is a shifting combination of these skills that generates success.

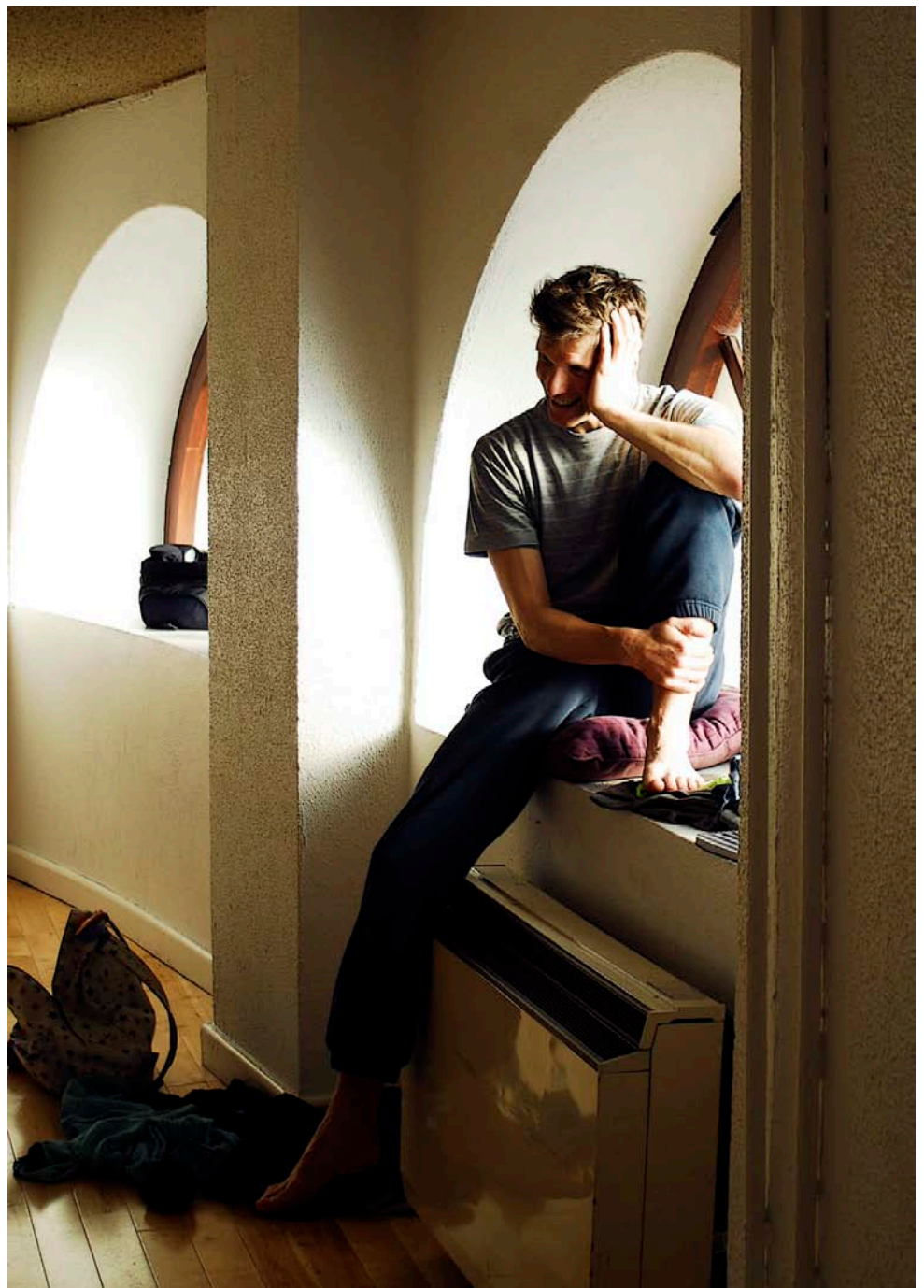
By the time I was appointed Dance Artist in Residence for Dublin City Council, I understood enough to be able to communicate with the DCC in a way that made the residency a great opportunity for artistic research and innovative public engagement. Interested in the relationship between bodies and buildings in areas of urban regeneration, I used the residency to rehearse and perform on streets and building sites across the Docklands, working with other performers and artists to create films and theatre performances that have been shown in Dublin and around the world.

But it was my first experience as Dance Artist in Residence in the Muskerry Gaeltacht that taught me that artistic practice and public engagement don't need to be separate tasks. The residency was funded by Ealaín na Gaeltachta and Cork County Council and was based at the Ionad Cultúrtha in

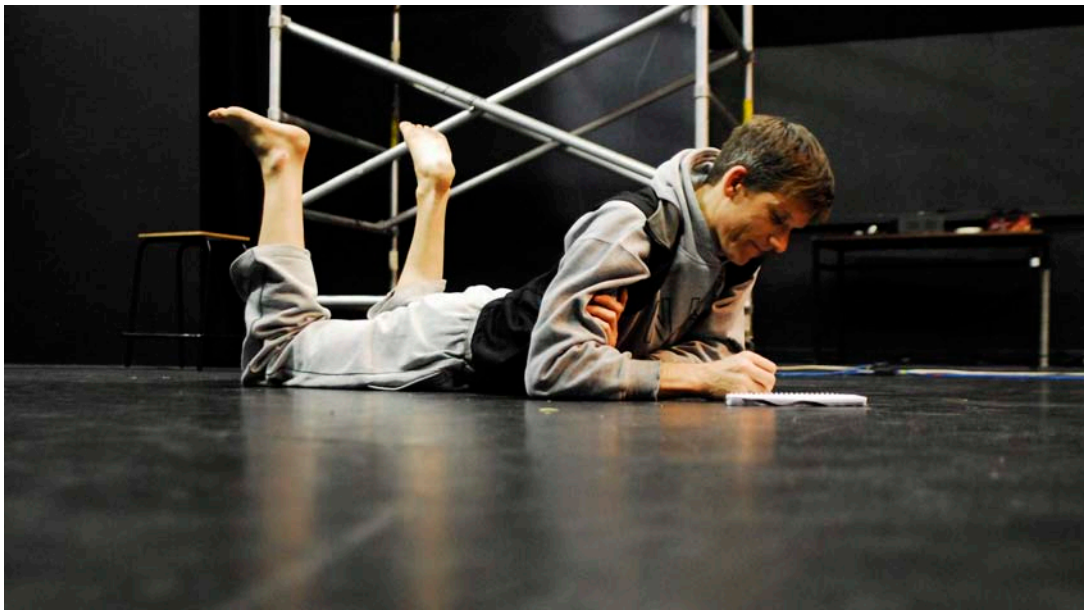
Ballyvourney. I was attracted to the residency because the area had a similar rural Gaeltacht community to the one in which I grew up and I thought it would provide me with an opportunity to

investigate the sources of my creativity.

I was keen to do the right thing, to be a good boy and, not knowing any better, I set off filling my time







## Fearghus Ó'Conchúir

*"I understood that I had to make choreography and performance central to the residency"*

with teaching endless classes and workshops in chilly school halls, offices and dusty outbuildings. I'd taught many workshops before but nothing like the relentless round of classes that I started for children and adults of all ages. After the first few months, I couldn't understand why I felt so bad, so tired, so alone. And I felt that I was failing to do what was expected of me. I was ok but I knew I wasn't connecting to what feeds me and sharing that with others.

My only restorative outlet was a solo I'd begun making. I showed Sulán, named for the local river, at an exhibition opening in the Ionad and finally felt I could breathe. More importantly it was clear to the people who saw Sulán that I was energised and strong when I performed this work. Seeing it, they could make sense of me and of the classes I was teaching. The work engaged them and made them curious. It also opened me up to them in a way that any of my other activities hadn't quite managed.

After that everything changed. I understood that I had to make choreography and performance central to the residency. I didn't stop teaching but I did focus on making dances for groups of students who were interested in performing. I organised in people's houses performances of my work (and that of Rebecca Walter), drawing on traditions of the seisiún and the Stations. To the credit of the funders and to Bríd Cranitch at the Ionad Cultúrtha, there was no difficulty in shifting the focus of the residency in this way. We stayed in close contact throughout the residency so that they could understand the rationale for the shift and endorse it. Importantly they could see the improvement in the quality of the engagement with a wider public that this apparently selfish focus on artistic development was enabling.

I learned a huge amount from that first residency and made connections that remain dear to me. Since completing the residency, I have returned to the

Ionad Cultúrtha to collaborate on creative projects such as the site-specific installation Idir and the dance and music performance Casadh Arís. The performances in people's houses began a way of engaging with people in non-theatrical settings that has continued to be a feature of my practice. Even my new work, Tabernacle, that premieres in the Dublin Dance Festival this year, owes its music to the connection I made with Iarla Ó Lionáird through that Muskerry Gaeltacht experience.

I know now that there are many residency situations for which I wouldn't be suited. But the two residencies that I have undertaken have helped me realise when I am most authentic, effective, creative and consequently when I am most of use to others. For me that is when I am an artist, making work, involving others in that process and being inspired by what that involvement brings. ✕





## What is the rural residency like?

### *Birr Theatre & Arts Centre / Legitimate Bodies Dance Company - Nick Bryson, Offaly*

Birr Theatre & Arts Centre has been a home for Legitimate Bodies Dance Company since October 2007. Funded by Offaly County Council, the residency involves the use of the pleasant 100-year-old theatre space, which turns into a studio by retracting the seating, whenever it is available. It also involves the use of administration and storage space within the office of the theatre. We have a good working relationship and support from the theatre manager and staff and supporters of arts who live in the town.

We have been working within this framework for more than 3 years and it has been an extraordinary and specific opportunity for Cristina Goletti and myself. It is also one that requires a great deal of self-motivation, an ability to project an image for the art form of contemporary dance, an instinct for publicity. The initial idea was to pursue our own artistic practice while at the same time providing a level of dance education, regular

dance classes, in the theatre as well as surrounding areas in Offaly. We have always had a lot of freedom in our own time management and the amount of teaching we are taking on.

There have been a lot of lessons along the way. Speaking personally, the central question around such residencies is whether or not it is possible to look after **yourself**. In other words can you feed yourself artistically in an isolated rural location, making dance work and interacting with dance ideas, while also feeling that you have an audience and constituency? This may sound self-centred, but it is only through putting yourself first that you can start to put those you are teaching first at same time. It took me while to realise this and then to realise how to do it. The teaching of teenagers or children or adult contemporary classes comes out of an actual set of ideas you are playing around with at the time so that the teaching is an extension

of artistic practice as opposed to a burdensome add-on to your 'serious' dance work. Also in performance, ideally there is not the sense that you are 'holding back' the dance work you are making to allow it to be more accessible. It is growing organically.

In professional practice, Cristina and myself have found that sharing is always the path: sharing with each other and with other artists from Ireland and abroad on studio and artistic exchanges. This could be with artists from any art form. It enables us to make the best use of the strengths of our situation. It is also possible for us to program dance in The Birr Theatre & Arts Centre and hence we have attractive possibilities for visiting artists.

The detail of every exact set-up is a compromise. There are very positive sides to being here, the stability and the sense of belonging to a community where we are having an effect. Since we arrived we have given a new and welcome life to Offaly Youth Dance, we have instituted a youth dance platform, 'You(th) Share' as well as the international solo workshop and performance festival 'If Only'. We have also received Arts Council support for these projects. These are only examples.

The problems I have experienced, then, are the obvious ones for a contemporary dance artist of not being understood, disconnection and isolation, or on the other side as being perceived as a business person or dance services provider. With Cristina away in USA to a greater extent recently, it has been important to leave at the weekends



and just reconnect with arts scenes outside of Birr. Being centrally located in the country is good for this. The paradox of isolation in such a residency is that you have a wonderful set up around you but a potentially dried-up well of inspiration. It is important to appreciate this and find ways to face this challenge head-on. The commitment and time scale involved in establishing a dance residency, which is really part of the community, are massive. You need to be sure about it and embrace the total reality of the residency. ✕

## At the coalface.

**Libby Seward,  
Waterford County  
Council**



In 2000 I arrived in Waterford with my 3 children and 3 cats to take up the post of Dance Artist in Residence supported by a visionary youth arts organisation (Waterford Youth Arts) with funding for just 6 months from the Arts Council... I am still here!! Being a resourceful and passionate dance artist were the essential tools for the job. I wove my way into the infrastructure of many local organisations where dance remains a significant contribution to their programmes and profiles. My 'hands on' approach has broken down barriers and inspired confidence as participants experience the vitality, immediacy and expression of dance. The people I have met and worked with have enriched my practice and I continue to be rewarded on an artistic and spiritual level through my engagement with a broad spectrum of ages and abilities. I wish I could enthuse about the financial rewards, but I can't because they don't exist! In those early days I felt like a pioneer, as the idea of a community dance practitioner/animateur was a new phenomenon in Ireland. The recent appointment of 7 Dance Artists in Residence by the Arts Council, will I hope prove to be the start of a much-needed foundation for the network that I searched for when I first arrived.

### The 'coalface':

The recent Arts Council Integrated Dance Strategy 2010-2012 suggests a dramatic shift from my experience to date as an independent dance artist working/surviving in the South East. The structure, which seems to favour the support of coalface workers such

as myself, would indeed be a welcome shift from the top focused support thus far evident from the AC. As a facilitator in a community context in Ireland over the past 10 years I have established and delivered a well-respected and vibrant programme forging links with all areas of the community and building a well-informed audience for contemporary dance. The benefit of this consistent approach has been evident when professional companies have toured to the city.

### Roots up:

My frustration has been that the 'outreach' work of professional companies soaked up available funding for the essential area of regional groundwork in developing appreciation of dance as an art form. I would welcome serious support of a 'roots up' strategy, such as the recent appointment of 7 Dance Artists in Residence, whereby the meeting point between community dance and established companies will produce new and vibrant shoots and branches. My commitment to the slog of long hours in not always suitable conditions has reaped enormous rewards and contributes to the infrastructure of dance in Ireland. This work develops and sustains an audience and fosters emerging dance artists.

### Sustainability:

The programme I established during my Residency was evaluated and recognised by the Arts Council as a substantial body of work that could

not be sustained by a single practitioner. The recommendation was that further personnel should be sought but there was no funding available. Consequently the programme I had developed had to be pruned in order that a single practitioner could deliver it without the recommended additional support.

These are reflections on my experience; I am committed to maintaining a high profile for dance as an art form both regionally and nationally and believe that a network of Dance Artists will build a sustainable platform for dance. Any

opportunity to share and reflect with other dance artists can only enrich and nourish us all. The cats are older, as are the children; fortunately the passing of time has not dampened my enthusiasm and passion for dance as I continue to engage through dance with community and professional dancers. To end on a positive note, what started as a 6 month residency has enabled me to spend the last 10 years exploring, developing and presenting dance, to being supported in the establishment of Animated State Dance Theatre Company and ultimately to my recently achieved MA in Dance (1st class). ✕

gathering an overwhelming amount of information and contacts. It became apparent that it would take the full course of the residency for some of these seeds to grow. Inevitably, the work I planned would have to become more focused and responsive to the needs of the dance community here.

The residency has so far supported a growth in dance activity through: piloting a transition year module in dance; setting up and developing a youth dance company, ANIMOTION; providing classes in schools, youth services and sports centres; establishing NOISEmoves Youth Dance Festival as a platform for young dancers in the county; and an audience development initiative, consultancy and support for venues, VEC Sports Officers and the Sports Partnership in programming dance. Access to professional dance artists for participants in programmes, promoting dance education for teachers through the Laban Foundation Course and developing links to other organisations who can support dance as an art-form/activity such as RUA RED, South Dublin Arts Centre, Tallaght Community Arts, the Civic Theatre, South Dublin Libraries, An Cosan Education Centre and the South Dublin County Sports Partnership. This has been actively nurtured through performance projects, collaborations and consultation.

The geography of South Dublin is such that dance groups and stage schools often work in isolation. Challenges have included communicating across such a broad community, connecting dance in different areas and dealing with tensions between the existing,

## Building a dance community

*Louise Costello, South Dublin County Council*

As I come to the end of a three-year residency with South Dublin County Council, it seems an opportune time to contribute to perspectives shared regarding dance residencies in Ireland. I began my post in March 2008 with a broad remit for activity and development that sought to increase participation in dance and raise the profile of contemporary dance within the County through performance and education.

South Dublin County is a largely populated and diverse community of different neighbourhoods and town lands encompassing separate identities, different cultures, environments and social and

economic circumstances. It includes major urban centres such as Tallaght, Clondalkin, Palmerstown, Lucan, Templeogue and Rathfarnham as well as rural areas, the villages of Brittas, Newcastle, Rathcoole, Saggart. The scale of the dance residency proposed for this area and its objectives reflected in some ways the breadth of the County itself. The goals established were ambitious and sometimes daunting in what is, essentially, a part time post. I began with what turned out to be an intense consultation and workshop period that took me into different organisations and communities,

mostly private dance community and the publicly funded work of the Arts Office. I have been fortunate in being part of a supportive arts team with diverse skills which helped me in meeting the challenges of social engagement and community consultation and balancing those needs with my own artistic concerns. Listening to the groups I work with and being responsive to their needs has helped me to manage expectations and to develop a framework of activity and performance I hope to continue with our new residency beginning in April 2011.

Dance is a popular activity here and an emerging art form. There is awareness of the benefits of participation from a creative, physical and social perspective. The residency has sought to capitalise on this not just through long term classes and programmes but also through performance projects and collaborations with and across art centres, libraries, youth services, schools and professional artists working outside dance. These diverse projects have stretched me creatively and increased the visibility of dance. We are making new work, learning from each other and visiting artists and slowly building a dance community through participation, collaboration and performance.



*"These diverse projects have stretched me creatively  
and increased the visibility of dance"*

- Louise Costello





## Dance, and changing life-practices

*Ríonach Ní Néill / Ciotóg, Galway  
Dance Residency (2010)*

My residency has as its focal point an investigation of the body in the Irish sub/rural landscape, examining how changing life-practices in rural, sub-rural Galway affect the use, relationships with, and perceptions of our bodies.

The residency is in partnership with Galway County Council, supported by NUIG Geography Department, the Town Hall Theatre and Galway City Council.

I'm aiming for a two-fold result from the work. The findings will feed into new public dance interventions and the development of a new choreographic work. But also, stemming from my stance that dance can provoke meaningful public debate and contribute to social dialogues, I am concentrating on what new information or perspective can a dance-based approach elucidate, and how this can be shared in a meaningful way with other (academic) disciplines and even inform public policy.

The research addresses my hypothesis that how we move our bodies, and corresponding changes in how we relate to our surroundings, has changed radically within a generation and that the implications of this haven't been fully examined. Comparing an older person's action repertoire from their youth with a present child's reveals stark differences, as do their mental maps of their local environments. Awareness of what's normal in physical actions and efforts has changed. A perceptual drawing of their bodies from people of different ages would reveal nearly different species!

In order to find out more about these questions, I've been

exploring the investigative tools used in geography and the social sciences. I've also been trawling through Irish literature (English and Irish languages) for examples of how the body and its relationship with landscape has been described in Irish literature (English and Irish languages), hopefully helping me with developing language for my own work.

And bringing it all back to dance, I've commenced a weekly dance class/workshop in Galway, which I'm using as an experimental laboratory. I'm also utilising the older dance programme, Ar Mo Sheanléim, which I've been running in Conamara for the past three years, supported by Ealaíon na Gaeltachta, and a new session in Galway City supported by Go for Life, to investigate the topic with older populations. Later on, I'll be directing at younger people, and the second half of my residency will involve sharing and testing results in more public arenas. ✂

*“Exploring ... examples of how the body and its relationship with landscape has been described in Irish literature...”*

## Programme insights

**Laura Murphy  
and Ailish Claffey**

**Kerry County  
Council  
/Comhairle  
Contae Chiarrai  
(2008 – 2009)**



Commencing September 2008, Dance Artists Laura Murphy and Ailish Claffey worked as a collaborative team for the Community Dancers in Residence Programme under the Arts Office for Kerry County Council / Comhairle Contae Chiarrai for a period of six months and supported by the Arts Council. As professional freelance dance artists based in the South West of Ireland where dance is at a crucial stage in its development, the dancers *“highly valued the opportunity to develop and enrich dance practice throughout the community and believe by working in collaboration we can offer a broader range of dance skills arising from our alternative backgrounds.”*

The primary goal for the residency for the two dancers was *“to introduce high quality dance in an informative, interactive and accessible manner - promoting dance awareness, interest and audiences.”*

The overall residency held by the community dancers in residence was two-fold and entailed 13 hours per week: 10 hours to integrate and promote dance within Kerry's community & hours to work and develop their personal artistic and creative dance practice.

Over the duration of the six month residency, Laura and Ailish visited 29 centres throughout the five constituencies of Co. Kerry; Dingle, Killarney, Killorglin, Listowel and Tralee.

In response to a proposal sent to target groups within Kerry's community; 39 schools, 15 active retirement groups/nursing homes and 7 centres for individuals with learning/physical difficulties, replied with keen interest to host the dancers to deliver workshops and classes. Due to time restraints, over the residency, the two dancers hosted workshops and classes in creative dance in over 29 centres and schools reaching out

to 1,064 members of Kerry's wider community. The below outlines the proposed project, which was delivered by Laura and Ailish.

**Project Title:** *“Have you ever tried moving like this?”*

**Project Aim:** To introduce movement skills through dance to three areas of the community who may not have had the opportunity or experienced dance/movement previously through Laban Movement Analysis.

### **Project Objectives:**

- To introduce dance through Laban Movement Analysis
- To make dance accessible
- To target three groups of the community who may be unfamiliar to dance/movement practice
- To facilitate the physical needs through the medium of dance.



**Target Audience:***1. The elderly (i.e. + 65)*

- This group was accessed through retirement/nursing homes throughout Co. Kerry.
- E.g. Club Ida's Active Retirement Group, Tralee and Ashborough Lodge Nursing Home, Killorglin.
- 49 individuals participated in this project.

*2. People with intellectual and physical disabilities*

- This group was accessed through schools and family resource centres.
- E.g. Enable Ireland, Tralee and Nano Nagel Special Needs School, Listowel
- 104 individuals participated in this project.

*3. The young male (i.e. young males between the ages of 7 and 12).*

- This group was accessed through primary schools throughout Co. Kerry. Some secondary schools were also involved in this initiative.
- E.g. St. Brendan's College, Killarney and Gaelcholaiste Chiarrai, Tralee
- 871 individuals participated in this project.

Of the centres targeted; 21 involved "the Young Male," 5 included working with "People with Intellectual and Physical Disabilities" (Physical and Learning) and the remaining 3 groups involved working with "the Older Adult."



***"Dodge"***

Over the final month of the community dance residency (March 2009), both dancers re-visited the outlined schools and centres to present an informal sharing of their own choreographic dance work, titled *"Dodge"* – alongside an interactive workshop to all those they worked with over the duration of the residency - creating a lively response.

**Dancers personal artistic and creative practice**

For the professional development strand of the residency, Laura and Ailish worked with Steve Batts of Echo Echo Dance Theatre Company, Derry to create *"Like Sisters"*. ✂

## Teaching and learning

*Jazmin Chiodi & Alex Iseli, South Tipperary / Excel Arts Centre*

The aim of the Tipperary residency as stipulated by South Tipperary Arts Office was to develop contemporary dance as an art form in South Tipperary, inspiring young dance artists while at the same time providing the artists in residence with studio space to develop their own practice and work. The goal was also to develop the Excel as an education and outreach resource for professional dance and community dance through the establishment of Youth / Community Dance Group(s).

As artists, our own goals for the residency were to:

1. To stimulate an interest in Dance in the Midlands/Tipperary and to shift some common ideas around dance, which can often be seen as a competitive and commercial practice for the young and fit.
2. Develop Excel as a resource for dance, raising the Excel's profile as a local, national, and international resource for professional dance - through the creation of Iseli-Chiodi Dance Company, production of new work, the launching of a dance platform, dance performances as well as connections made with visiting national and international artists.
3. Develop our own practice as artists with the creation of our company, using the studio and theatre infrastructure to develop our company work and show our work in public.

At a *community level*: we engaged in dance workshops at primary schools, with teenagers, with active retired groups, at day care centres and with various community groups; collaborations with Connex Youth Festival; holistic day workshops; regular weekly contemporary dance classes as well as performances for schools in the Excel Centre.



Professional activities included: the creation of a dance company; professional artistic collaborations (with Rex Levitates Dance Company, video-artist Elaine Hurley, video-artist Catalina Fernandez, Teatro Victoria in Spain & La Compañia-Mariana Bellotto in Argentina); the creation and production of two dance pieces in collaboration with local resources (Excel, County Council & Clonmel Festival) as well as the organisation of a public dance platform.

Some of our main challenges included maintaining a continuity in the work with a very limited budget and finding ways to counter our geographic location and make collaborations more cost effective. The community's lack of knowledge around dance encouraged us to find a way to bring people to a more gentle and non-competitive approach to dance as a practice - focusing on self awareness and development, rather than commerce and competition. It was also challenging to get real commitment from the public to a regular practice. Learning dance, just like learning music, does take dedication and continuity.

The residency was instrumental in developing our company and our artistic work, providing access to infrastructure, funding and support. It also allowed us to collaborate with artists and work with the Excel to stage the Dance Platform bringing professional dance to the stage in Tipperary. On an educational level, the Dance in schools was a great success with wonderful feedback, ease of execution and solid numbers. It showed us that children of both sexes have no inhibitions in



approaching dance as we conceived it. We consider this work deeply important - planting seeds for the future of dance in Ireland.

The residency gave us the opportunity to develop our own work even though at times the community and administrative work made it difficult to maintain dedicated studio time. But on the whole the residency has been invaluable in terms of development of work at a professional level, which also has important benefits for the community. The education work has very long term benefits, developing social skills among participants as well as enabling them to maintain their health and fitness based on their own personal perception versus an external one.

The local public here can often be very hard to reach for a variety of reasons, and on going commitment towards the work is difficult to obtain. This can be very frustrating and affect us at times and it gives a sense of mission. This is counterbalanced by the support for developing professionally as artists with space etc., although we do suffer from artistic isolation at times.

Being able to organize a dance platform with public success, after more than two years of work, was hugely satisfying. The access to theatre infrastructure has been instrumental in the ability to develop artistically and has been a wonderful privilege. ✕

## Catherine Young, Kerry County Council / Comhairle Contae Chiarrai (2006-2009)

### *Reflections on a residency - A question of balance?*

I came to Kerry for 6 months to take up the position as Dancer in Residence with Kerry County Council. 5 years later... I am *"Still Here"* as Bill T. Jones once choreographed. The residencies have provided much in terms of exposure, visibility, financial remuneration, access to resources which otherwise might have proven difficult and strong moral support from Kerry Arts officer Kate Kennelly. The residencies have provided me with opportunities to try new things and gain a vast array of experience working with such a

diverse public from youths to the elderly, professional dancers to those with disability, immigrants, international artists and many more wonderful collaborators. They have supported me to create new work and produce an annual home season at Siamsa Tire. Being a solo contemporary dancer located in a rural location – has forced me to constantly innovate, push, inspire and motivate myself to find new ways to address the challenges and issues that go hand in hand with the territory. There has been a sense that one is

trailblazing to a degree, foraging out new territory, introducing and exposing people to new things, new ways of moving, thinking, seeing.... developing new audiences.

On arriving to Kerry in 2005, after 8 years in San Francisco, I was eager to give it all I could -share my skills, inspire. Kerry is a vast county and I covered almost every inch of it delivering workshops, classes, choreographing on groups, working with venues, helping touring companies, developing audiences. I worked with schools to deliver





training modules to primary and secondary school teachers, with Kerry Local Sports Partnership to deliver the “Dance for the Young at Heart” for the active retired and the “Teenscene” program in schools, as well as establishing a successful and vibrant youth company **Kerry Youth Dance Theatre (KYDT)**, now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year (supported by the Arts Council Youth Ensemble Scheme). And in addition to this, organised an array of guest artists, collaborators and teachers. The list could go on....

Having successive residencies has allowed me to develop things that worked to allow them take root, change the things that weren't and essentially develop a working infrastructure for dance in

collaboration with local organizations, theatres, schools etc. The earlier residencies laid the foundation to my current one which I think will be more sustainable and rewarding.

The key challenge has been maintaining my own professional practice amidst the demands of the residency. There is often a misunderstanding that “Dancer in Residence” = dance teacher. So to try carve out those quiet hours in the studio to research and develop work seem odd to those who feel you could be out teaching more classes? But what I have learned is if you do not take care of yourself as an artist - you burn out, are exhausted and have nothing left to

give – all output and no input leaves the artist drained. Only by continuing to feed my own artistic practice and push myself as an artist, does the whole thing work. When I engage with my craft, work with other professionals, learn new things, question my practice – I am fulfilled, inspired and in turn, I have more to share. This makes me a better teacher, choreographer, and dancer. The community and my students benefit from the research and questioning I am doing.

Based 4 hours from Dublin is a challenge. Training wise I have found ways to get out regularly to keep my practice current but the main challenge is access to other professional dancers and mentors. I



tend to make work for many bodies so to date have worked with those around me in Kerry – but it comes to a point where as an artist I would like to see my work on professional dancers and without funding to bring in the dancers, this is difficult and an issue that is not going to go away. There is also a question of getting the work seen outside of Kerry. So as an artist making the kind of work I am interested in – I still have to figure out how to make it work based in Kerry. Other challenges? The feeling of isolation, disconnection, access to a vibrant body of artists that inspire you like cities tend to have, training dancers that leave to go to major cities, being understood as a contemporary artist in a rural location...

But on the upside it has been rewarding to know you are making a real difference to peoples lives, offering them great opportunities and new possibilities. It also feels good to see your students grow and witness KYDT go from strength to strength and know that you have really contributed to developing dance in your region. It has also supported me to produce a solid body of work over the past 5 years, really hone and develop my craft, and have the resources to stage the works at such a wonderful venue as Siamsa Tire. So am grateful to the residencies and all those who supported them. I hope to continue to find ways to solve the remaining challenges and find balance and the ideal set up! Kerry County Council residency supported by the Arts Council, KKC and Siamsa Tire ✕

## *The glamour and the grit*

*Tanya McCrory,  
Galway City (2006 – 2008)*

When I moved to Galway from California eight years ago, I didn't know about Dance Residencies. In San Francisco there's a dancer behind every tree and no funding, so dancers created and performed where and when they could, so upon arriving here that's what I did. I performed in cafés, pubs, and even in a car park.

My first piece was performing to the sea area forecast on the radio, I loved the rhythm and sound of it, I found a film-maker (as there were no other contemporary dancers here) and we collaborated on a short solo, me in character as a news reporter, with images projected on my dress of Ireland's changing weather.

Eventually word got to my local arts officer and I was called in for a meeting. I was offered a 6-month residency, which went on for 3 challenging, fruitful, and deeply creative years. I was delighted at the opportunity, but was quickly overwhelmed at the need of my community in Galway for classes, workshops, and performance opportunities. It seemed there were as

many artists here thirsty for dance as in the States but alas, here there was a spot of funding, and that made all the difference.

I was not interested in this residency turning solely into glorified teaching, which I had witnessed in others residencies. With the freedom and support of my local arts officers I devised a way to create a yearly programme that included many guest artists visiting Galway to teach and share their wisdom.

This was great for me and the community, however someone had to administrate all this, and so that became my role. Surprisingly I enjoyed drawing all these energies together but without any dedicated dance space, or any formal infrastructure, that proved challenging. We did and continue to make do with limited resources for dance in Galway, and dance continues to develop here.

But where does that leave the Artist in Residence in regards to their own dance practice? By the time I promoted, emailed attendees, booked fights, swept the floors and sometimes even scrubbed the toilets of dirty venues, I hardly felt like dancing. I did manage to make 2 full-length works while in residence, both reviewed by the Irish Times. It's always helpful to have that kind of exposure nationally, and locally shows are easier to sell while in residence, as people in the community are familiar with you.

The dilemma of residencies, it seems, is that as working dance artists we are hungry to make, to train and share our work, but residencies are not



necessarily about the artist's work. They are about an entire need for access to dance in the country, which I believe is the most under represented art form and yet one of the fastest growing.

Many wonderful things come out of residencies, it creates profile for the artist, provides access to, and a focal point for, dance in the community, and with the time remaining, a platform for the artist to make and present work.

In this financial climate I am happy to see any and all residencies go forward, I hope, however, for those currently in residence that the space is created for their own work to blossom. I am grateful to my local and national art authorities for finding these residencies valuable, and indeed necessary to develop as a culture. Residencies keep dance vibrant and growing especially in rural and regional areas. I don't regret a moment of mine, the glamour, and the grit. ✖



## NOTICE OF DRFI AGM & SPECIAL EVENT

Dance Research Forum Ireland will hold their Annual General Meeting in Dublin on Saturday 25th June 2011. We are delighted to announce that Michael Keegan-Dolan (Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre) will be our guest presenter at the event, providing an exclusive insight to his work through an hour-long lecture-demonstration. The AGM will also be followed by a reception to launch the Proceedings of the DRFI 3rd International Conference, held at the Firkin Crane, Cork, in June 2010. Paul Johnson, CEO Dance Ireland, will formally launch the Proceedings. The details of the event are as follows:

**Date:** Saturday, 25th June 2011

**Venue:** Dance House, Foley Street, Dublin.

### Schedule:

2pm: Lecture-Demonstration

3pm: AGM

4.30pm: Reception and Launch of Proceedings

We encourage all members to attend, and contribute to the development of DRFI.

The lecture-demonstration is for DRFI members only, but it will be possible to join on the day in order to attend.

Membership is €20 for individuals, €10 for students and €50 for institutions.

For further information on the benefits of membership of DRFI visit our website:  
*[www.danceresearchforumireland.org](http://www.danceresearchforumireland.org)*.

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## DRFI 4th International Conference, 2012

Dance Research Forum Ireland are pleased to announce that our 4th International Conference will be held in association with the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo) from 28th June to 1st July 2012.

The conference will take place across Derry and Donegal as part of an exciting and innovative festival of Music and Dance.

The conference will include paper presentations, panels, lecture-demonstrations; and a specially curated series of performance events that will reach out across the north-west of Ireland from the conference base at the University of Ulster.

Further information will soon be available on our website  
*[www.danceresearchforumireland.org](http://www.danceresearchforumireland.org)*, and on our Facebook page.

A call for papers and presentations will be made in the next few months.

*DRFI 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference Committee*

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