

FERTILE GROUND

Annual Report for Nov 2015- Nov 2016



The ensemble in Eight Steps. Image Rachel Cherry

Executive Summary

Fertile Ground ran the 2nd project *2nd planting* from Jan 4th – July 1st 2016
The external evaluation was done by Tim Rubidge.

- The tour #dancingtheroad a triple bill was performed in 11 venues across the North East including schools and delivered three outstanding residencies in Benfield School, Walkergate, Oxclose Community Academy, Washington and Bede Community Primary School in Gateshead.
- Outdoor performances included Trinity Square, Gateshead
- ‘Sharings’ and showcases included The Late Shows in Arts Sanctuary Space, Gateshead (May) and International Dance Day in the Studio Theatre, Performance Academy, Newcastle College April
- Fertile Ground employed 16 Artists including four dancers and related creatives compared to 6 in 2014-15.
- 1,154 Workshop Participants compared to 488 with 909 workshop attendees in 2014-2015
- 2,014 Audience up from 1,985 in 2014-2015
- Press reach 2.4 million compared to 600,000 in 2014 -2015

- Nationally recognised and award winning choreographer James Wilton was commissioned for *Dancing The Road* to create *ERA*
- Malgorzata Dzierzon creator of *Flight* for Rambert Dance and one of the Directors of new Movement Collective was commissioned to create *EIGHT STEPS*
- Bowes Museum co –commissioned *ELEPHANT DANCES* by Dora Frankel as part of their exhibition *From Temple to Home: Celebrating Ganesha*
- Dora Frankel and the dancers worked with Payal Ramchandani Kuchipudi dancer who had recently relocated from India, as part of the creation
- Fertile Ground subsequently received Arts Council England funding to reflect, research and develop the next phase

This year Fertile Ground (FG) established a higher level of artistic and production standard, wider regional reach with greater national visibility within the dance sector.

Last night... what a night! What an evening of total dedication to art, choreography, dance and performance.... and what a terrific and huge step on and up from Fertile Ground's first year of activities. Everyone should hopefully be feeling incredibly proud – I know I was for all of you.

Tim Rubidge Choreographer.

FG, established in 2013 is the premier graduate dance company for the North East, funded through a combination of ACE Grants for the Arts, Gillian Dickinson Trust, workshop commissions and ticket sales. Abbie Ross (dancer) received an ERDF bursary from Sunderland University and Helix Arts contributed £3,125 towards Door Dance Wave a project that will run from July 2016 – March 2017.

The Dancers 2015 -2016

Emma Palmer studied at Gateshead College and the Centre of Advanced Training Programme (CAT) at Dance City, Newcastle. She completed her training, gaining a First Class Honours BPA in Contemporary Dance at Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Leeds. She is currently working freelance including for Balbir Singh and Fertile Ground (Door Dance Wave - Helix Arts).

Emma Robinson studied BA Modern Ballet at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and continued her studies with a BA Hons in Classical Ballet and Dance Performance from Ballet West in association with Northumbria University. Emma has been involved in a number of projects and toured Scotland with Ballet West for whom she now facilitates workshops.

Abbie Ross completed her Dance BTEC and Foundation degree at Sunderland College and progressed to Sunderland University to complete her BA Hons Dance degree. Abbie has performed with the DUSC Dance Company and currently works freelance including with Balbir Singh.

Niall Tyzack –Carlin started dancing in Hartlepool and went on to train at Rambert School of Contemporary Dance before performing 'Gisele' with the English Youth Ballet. Niall toured with Watkins Dance Company in their production 'Angled Eye', gaining further experience

with choreographer Jarek Cemerek in 2012 and Lo Giudice Dance in 2013. Niall is also a fitness trainer and is currently working in Spain.



Abbie Ross and Niall Tyzack Carlin in *Era*. Image Rachel Cherry

Production

Eight Steps by Malgorzata Dzierzon. Malgorzata has worked with a number of prestigious ballet companies including; the Royal Danish Ballet, Peter Schaufuss Ballet, Gothenburg Ballet and Rambert Dance Company, performing in works by Christopher Bruce, Merce Cunningham and Mark Baldwin, among others. Malgorzata has a BA Honours in Leadership and Management, is a Clore Cultural Leadership fellow (2015) and a qualified Pilates teacher. She left Rambert Dance Company in 2014 to concentrate on her work with New Movement Collective <http://www.newmovement.org.uk/>. She has recently created *Flight* for Rambert Dance <http://www.rambert.org.uk/performances/flight/>

Era by James Wilton. James graduated from London School of Contemporary Dance in 2009 and created his first professional work, *'The Shortest Day'* in 2010, going on to create *'Drift'* for Scottish Dance Theatre www.scottishdancetheatre.com James is Artistic Director of James Wilton Dance and has also created works for Scottish Dance Theatre (2010), *Edge* (2012), *Tanz Compagnie der Oper Graz* (2012), *Verve* (2013), *Ballet Hagen* (2013), *Stadttheater Geissen* (2015). He is a recipient of a BBC Performing Arts Fellowship award in partnership with Swindon Dance and was the winner of the Blueprint Bursary through Sadlers Wells, East London Dance and London Youth Dance. James is currently on tour with his new production *Leviathan* created for his own company.

Elephant Dances by Dora Frankel. Dora trained at Rambert School of Ballet and The Institute of Choreology and holds an MA in Choreography from Middlesex University and has been working professionally for over 40 years here and abroad, mainly in Scandinavia. Whilst there she worked as Head of Dance at Angered's Gymnasium, Gothenburg designing and

developing a three stranded dance programme. Dora's recent credits include *Bitter, Sweet and Dark* 2010/2011, *The Unfolding Sky; Turner in the North* for Festival of the North East 2013 and *On the Darkened Wing* 2015. Dora recently created *Door Dance Wave* for Helix Arts and was Dance UK's featured choreographer in 2014.

Partnership development.

HIGHER EDUCATION

- Northumbria University Newcastle Business School- Business internships facilitated by Dr Matt Sutherland
- Newcastle University – Newcastle Work Experience graduates and post graduates in business and marketing
- Sunderland University – ERDF bursary 2016. Collaboration with dance department & contribution of £1500
- Teesside University Graduates into Enterprise 2016 and collaboration with dance department
- Sunderland College - use of studios and theatre, and front of house support. FG delivers a programme of workshops and classes with students and learners from both college and their feeder schools spending up to two weeks in the college. The premiere had an audience of 72.
- Newcastle College - the company delivered weekly classes, invited students to open rehearsals and gave interviews supporting professional practice foundation degree module activity. FG holds annual stage 1 auditions in both colleges and participates in Circulate, Newcastle College's regular industry week. This year the company performed in the Performance Academy studio theatre as part of International Dance Day.

COMMUNITY

Helix Arts. This is a NEW collaboration creating *Door Dance Wave* choreography, collaborating on concept and realisation. FG employed dancers Alys North (FG ensemble 2014-2015) and Emma Palmer as dancers/dance captains. This project is supporting social cohesion will be completed in 2017. Financial contribution £3,125.

INTERNATIONAL

Moving into Dance Mophatong Johannesburg. The company began brokering long term relationships and Dora gave a masterclass in Graham technique during her visit to their Johannesburg studios.

ARTS AND HERITAGE

The Bowes Museum and The Witham, Barnard Castle worked with FG to present *Dancing the Road* at The Witham and a special *Elephant Dances* gallery performance at the Bowes Museum. The Bowes Museum underwrote the project for £1,500 as well as covering all associated costs. The performance at the Witham featured a special 'touch and talk' introduction for visually challenged and wheelchair using audiences.

'Thank you both for bringing fantastic dance to The Witham – Dora for your amazing dancers and performance and Alison and The Bowes Museum team for enabling it to happen here at The Witham. It was a powerful evening of contemporary dance and people were very impressed with the high standard of performance.'

Sarah Gent, Marketing and Communications The Witham

'Listening to company member Emma Palmer speak following the performance, it was clear how the investment in dance in the North East has nourished her from school to becoming a professional. This company, who go from strength to strength, truly are the face of home grown North East dance- and they look good.'

Rosie Bradford Events Manager The Bowes Museum May 27th The Witham

FG donated Abbie Ross's costume to the exhibition and established a stronger presence in Barnard Castle and improved audience figures at both performances.

The company developed its relationship with Northern Gallery of Contemporary Art performing in the empty gallery space to a predominately new audience.

OTHER VENUES

FG spent a week in The Maltings, Berwick –upon-Tweed delivering workshops and performed to a 'sold out' audience of 45 in the Henry Travers Studio Theatre.

Dance City supported the company in a well- attended performance (129) when FG also held a reception.

FG continues to receive substantial support in kind from Dance City and raised its audience figures at the performance there on May 24th. We would like to thank Anthony Baker, Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive for his continued advice and support.

Participatory work.

The performance programme is complemented and enriched by the workshop programmes where the repertoire is central to the workshop structure. Participants are challenged and nurtured through warm- up or technique class, learning repertoire and finally creating their own work based on the theme. Regardless of age participants are treated as professional dancers. The results are extraordinary.

'I just want to say congratulations again on that wonderful studio work you led with the Fertile Ground dancers on Friday. The atmosphere was beautiful and all the students and dancers were thoroughly engaged. There was some beautifully expressive work across the board - it is so good that you place value in really giving students a detailed embodied experience in such a wonderfully supportive way.'

Beth Loughran about the Northumbria University Performing Arts residency 'sharing' Feb 2016

Workshops are offered at every venue and has forged some strong relationships including with The Maltings Berwick-upon-Tweed where the company delivered eight workshops in May.

The Bede Community Primary School, Gateshead residency culminated in a performance to 230 parents and children. There are one in nine children in child protection measures and 70% on free school meals according to Nick Anderson, Head Teacher.

'Recently I was privileged to watch a wonderful dance performance at Bede Primary School. The Fertile Ground dance company had been working with all the children in Years 5 and 6 every afternoon for a week and the result was amazing. They performed 'Elephant Dance', a beautiful and moving piece. They all danced to a high standard – but not only that, they displayed excellent ability to work together as well as with the dance teachers. So the experience didn't just teach them about dance; they learned teamwork, collaboration and respect.'

Chair of governors, Mrs. Sarah Diggle Bede Community Primary School, June 2016

Children's comments can be found on their blog.

www.bedecommunityprimaryschool.org/news/detail/dancing-with-fertile-ground

The performance at Allendale First School, Allendale had an audience of 156 Year 4-6 children.

'Sitting behind the children yesterday afternoon with my wife Linda, Anthony Baker from Dance City and his mum... no theatre lighting, no decent room temperature, no sense of a physical theatre space, just the big shed of a sports hall... and yet it was still a great show because your commitment to your artistry and the choreography is so good it carried everybody with it. As you saw, there were some very young children in the audience - and there is bound to be some fidgets amongst them - but you kept their focus, and near to us some physical engagement with certain moves going up and down the gym benches. This was no small achievement - well done!

Tim Rubidge Evaluator Allendale school performance May 26th

The focus of the Benfield School, Walkergate residency was to develop a special version of ERA exploring homophobia and bullying with contributions from the school's LGBT group.

Helix Arts invited FG to collaborate on their first ever digital dance project (see above) with and for the people of Walker. #doordancewave was performed on Friday 28th October to an audience of 133 with 26 community dancers. There will be a Newcastle show in Spring 2017.

Tour development FG developed its touring circuit but venues continue to hesitate to programme dance with some venue management not even engaging in meaningful conversation.

Venues have difficulty engaging schools in workshops unless they are free.

Employment. Over the two projects (2014-2016) FG has employed ten graduate interns of whom six are currently working in the region in their chosen profession.

Placements The company hosted two placements from Dance City dance degree and three Year 10 students from Oxclose Community Academy where the company also spent 4 days in residence developing a new version of ERA performed by 19 young people to an audience of 240.

Finances for the period up to March 31st 2016. Please see accounts for details.

Turnover was £49,763 with a small profit of £492.

FG needs to raise the income percentage from ticket and workshop sales and to aim to sustain core cost funding.

Board development

FG would like to welcome our new board members.

Dr Matthew Sutherland joined us in January and has a degree in Business Studies and a PhD in Marketing from Newcastle Business School (AACSB) and is Principal Lecturer in Marketing and a Director for Business and Engagement. Matt has extensive experience working with SMEs, advises in the area of marketing and facilitates our internship scheme with Northumbria University Newcastle Business School.

Sue Hurrell who joined us in October is a freelance projects, events and venue manager with a wealth of organisational and management skills in a wide range of roles across The Arts, Events, Heritage, and Tourism. Sue is currently working with Creative Seed South Tyneside and Sunderland Culture Bid.

Gianluca Vincentini joined in October and is formerly Artistic Director Verve (the graduate company for Northern School of Contemporary Dance) and now Artistic Director MÖBIUS DANCE. He holds several Artistic Advisor posts; Jamaal Burkmar Dance (New Adventures Choreographer Award & Company Development), AGITART Companyia, Figueres (Spain) and Gracefool Collective.

Emma Dunn dance artist and Artistic Director Dansformation, Alnwick trained at Rambert School of Contemporary Dance and Ballet and works extensively in Northumberland mainly with children and young people developing performance and workshop activities and opportunities. As a choreographer Emma is best known for *Northumbriana* created in 2014

Katie Wisniewski Finance, Marketing and Business Management 3rd year student at Northumbria University's Newcastle Business School brings experience with fundraising and marketing and business planning.

We would like to thank Colette Harrison who has been Chair since 9th June 2015 and will be stepping down at the AGM. Colette has contributed enormously to our development and we wish her well with her family and business duties. We said goodbye to Rev Jim Craig who was Founding Member of the Board in 2009. Jim has taken up the post of Guy's Chaplain at Guy's Campus part of Kings College London. We also say goodbye to Rebecca Ball who is concentrating on her responsibilities with Cultural Spring.



Niall Tyzack-Carlin Hartlepool and Emma Robinson Gateshead. Image Stephen Wright Photography

NEW PATRON

Fertile Ground is proud to announce our new patron Lindsay Kemp the celebrated dancer and creator of works that include *Pierrot In Turquoise*, *Flowers*, *Salome*, *Mr Punch's Pantomime*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Nijinsky*, *Alice*, *Cinderella*, *Variété*, *Dream Dances*, and, for Ballet Rambert, *Parades Gone By* (1975) and *Cruel Garden* (1977), most of these works in collaboration with composer Carlos Miranda.

He staged and performed in David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust concerts at London's Rainbow Theatre in August 1972, and, with Jack Birkett, appears in the promotional video for Bowie's single "John, I'm Only Dancing", directed by Mick Rock.

Lindsay and Dora worked together in Ballet Rambert and his influence can be seen in her work.



The ensemble in Era James Wilton. Image R. Cherry

2017 The Leap

Alex Croft Dance Relationship Manager Arts Council England attended a Board meeting in October and advised the company of some aspects of the National Portfolio Organisation application criteria and process. We are keen to pursue this.

A new five year business plan is being written for completion in the New Year building on current partnerships, the success of building critical mass in the region's dance sector, the showcasing of both dancers and choreographers, the broader participatory work and the new international strand.

This third and last pilot project *The Leap* will have an accompanying tour *Fully Grounded* and is planned to start in early July when FG will be in residence at Oxclose Community Academy.

Fully Grounded will tour from August 24th 2017 premiering at Billingham Festival; the show is suitable for small scale theatres, galleries and outdoor spaces particularly in combination with participatory activities in the days preceding the show.

The planned choreographers are Robby Graham, Artistic Director Southpaw Dance Co (Faust, Carousel, Rush, The Word) and Regina Wielingen (freelance choreographer/teacher formerly Rehearsal Director Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary dance (works created for Dance City dance degree, CAT and more).

2018 and beyond

FG will continue its partnership with Moving into Dance Mophatong, South Africa and further ahead plans to work with a European country such as Croatia. FG will develop its relationship with Sunderland City through Sunderland College and Dance City's activities in the renovated Fire Station, develop its cross border relationship with Scotland, tour more widely in the UK, create a succession plan for the current Artistic Director, establish financial reserves and ensure FG's work and impact is evaluated and documented, appropriately engaging local and global media.

Conclusion

The need for graduate pathways and employment opportunities continues to press the whole economy not only in dance but associated areas such marketing, production management, administration, stage management, design and filmmaking. Evidence suggests that even after being part of the project, dancers struggle to maintain enough confidence and to truly appreciate how highly employable and talented they are; they may feel 'less' than their colleagues in larger urban areas.

60% of FG's dancers and related interns are currently working professionally in the region.

Alys North and Alicia Meehan (2014 -2015 pilot) perform regularly for South Paw Dance Company and Alys has established a strong reputation primarily in performance and community based projects such as The Making of Brian. Emma Palmer and Abbie Ross performed with Balbir Singh Dance Company as part of Billingham Festival 2016 and Emma Robinson is working for Vienna Ballet teaching ballet workshops across the region. The impact on the dance sector here is visible.

The importance of touring exciting and varied work reaching new audiences cannot be overstated.

The participatory programmes will be extended throughout the year fulfilling an increasingly important role in the life of school children in both rural and urban areas and helping them develop transferable social, learning, motor and collaborative skills and raising self- esteem and bring benefits to both physical and mental health.

FG shares Gillian Dickinson's commitment to promoting creativity in young people and to helping those who have limited opportunities and aspirations.



Emma Palmer and Niall Tyzack –Carlin in Elephant Dances by Dora Frankel. Image R.Cherry

Fertile Ground’s Board and Artistic Director would like to thank Arts Council England and Gillian Dickinson Trust for their continuing generous support during the 2nd planting project.

This report presents an overview of the year up to 30th October 2016 and a brief look into the future. The external evaluation by Tim Rubidge, quotes and audience statistics from *2nd planting* are available on request and from the website www.fertileground.org.uk.

D. Frankel 01/11/16