

Consultancy Brief to develop the Leeds Dance Hub

Context

The Leeds dance organisations have an ambition to establish themselves as a Dance Hub and the best place for dance in the UK outside London.

Arts Council England (ACE) has an ambition to establish Dance Hubs in Leeds and Birmingham to provide a greater focus for dance outside of the Capital and South East of England.

The Executive Board of Leeds City Council (LCC) has already endorsed Leeds as a “City of Dance” and is keen to support the next steps towards creating a Dance Hub.

The reality as to what it means to be a Dance Hub is open for discussion and interpretation amongst the dance organisations who are excited about the possibilities that this may bring to dance in the North.

Current Situation

There are a wealth of major dance organisations currently in Leeds and the lead organisations (Steering Group) are Northern Ballet; Phoenix Dance Theatre; Yorkshire Dance; DAZL; RJC; Balbir Singh as well as educational establishments the Northern School of Contemporary Dance; Leeds Beckett University.

Whilst this is an impressive range of dance provision, it is acknowledged that there is room for more and the current infrastructure is well placed to take things further. The dance community have established the Leeds Dance Map and information relating to the participating organisations can be found at <http://www.cityofdance.co.uk/>.

Northern Ballet has been requested by ACE to take the lead in establishing the Dance Hub on behalf of the dance community.

Facilitated Meeting of Artistic Directors

As a first step, a facilitated meeting with the Artistic Directors of the eight organisations took place in January 2015. It was a good start with some positive themes and areas of common ground identified but also clearly showed that it is not a simple process and much more in-depth work is needed. Due to the scale of this shared vision and to ensure that we are able to achieve our goals it was felt that the session was just the beginning of a wider consultation. It was also felt that the opportunities that a Dance Hub offers could be considerable for the region and there was enthusiasm from all concerned to see what could be achieved and to create a real step change in the focus of dance in the UK.

Arts Council Ambitions for the Leeds Dance Hub

“The Arts Council’s ambition for a Leeds Dance Hub is informed by the key organisations and infrastructure already based in the city. The Leeds Dance Hub will develop this and strengthen the provision for dance in the city **and support dance development across the North**. Our hope is that the Leeds Dance Hub leads on a **vision for the future**, which capitalises on the city’s existing organisations and assets but also develops these and attracts new ones, and one which is as much about **attracting the best in world-class dance into Leeds** as it is about creating dance there.

We would like to see the Leeds Dance Hub develop **access points and pathways** for new and existing **audiences and participants**, attracting and retaining the best talent and building an inclusive offer of high quality performance and participation opportunities for the people of the north; build **new relationships and partnerships** with stakeholders across the north and nationally and to use its expertise to explore the diversification of income streams and the **raising of funds** from new sources; support and feed into **Leeds City Council's** ambitions for the city to be **European Capital of Culture** in 2023 and to engage with the **Northern Powerhouse** agenda proposed by the UK government; become a **northern pool of expertise** for the dance sector, able to **lead strategically** and respond to developments as they occur.

Opportunities for the Dance Hub

The group identified some of the opportunities that exist for the Dance Hub that would really position it as a centre of excellence for the art form and a recognised leader in art form development: -

1. Talent Development

- Development of a road map that supports the development of more work by our own organisations and local artists as well as more international collaborations
- Increased capacity and expertise to produce dance
- More linking and highlighting of available pathways to make dance accessible from classes for children, young people, adults and older people to the highest levels of professional training.

2. Audience Development

- Encouragement of venues to present more dance and particularly new work whilst acknowledging the existing ecology and the need to be sensitive to any impact change might have. It was noted that this also would require additional sources of funding
- Programme planning, data sharing, cross promotion etc.

3. Talent Retention

- Understanding of what Leeds has to offer dance artists
- Existing dance organisations identifying and creating opportunities for dance practitioners within their existing facilities.

4. Capital Development

- Development of a better infrastructure for the creation and performance of dance through Capital expenditure.

5. Advocacy

- Further development of City of Dance website as a focal point for Dance in Leeds with additional dance organisations invited to contribute to the site
- Positioning of Leeds as an International destination for dance, working in support of Leeds' Capital of Culture bid for 2023.

All of the above is a positive start and certainly a step change in communication within the dance sector in Leeds but it is now necessary to recruit an experienced consultant to work with the sector to take these ideas forward but with the ability to look beyond the obvious and carry out in depth work with the organisations to identify an exciting future for dance in the city of Leeds and the wider North.

The Role

The consultation will be for a period of approximately 6 months on a part time basis. The successful candidate will need to demonstrate significant experience in the dance sector and have the gravitas to understand and express the views of the various directors, whilst being able to achieve consensus in areas where there are likely to be diverse opinions and priorities.

Given the nature of the work and the requirement to develop relationships with a range of Stakeholders, this work should be undertaken by an individual rather than an organisation or team of consultants.

Those tendering for the consultancy should be able to demonstrate: -

1. A broad knowledge and understanding of the national dance arena including touring; presenting; producing; training of dancers; dance agencies; artist development although Consultants with other areas of expertise may be considered
2. The ability to bring independent perspective to this work
3. Excellent verbal and written communication skills with the ability to facilitate and document discussions with a range of stakeholders and present findings in a compelling manner
4. Knowledge and understanding of the role that dance can play in meeting cross sector agendas
5. A commitment to equal opportunities and diversity
6. Quality of submission with clear stages set out for the programme of work with a sound methodology plus a clear project plan outline for the six month consultancy period
7. An excellent track record in developing strategy in complex contexts, producing strategic plans
8. The ability to work iteratively and instil ownership with stakeholders and project teams.

Scope of Works:-

1. Examine thoroughly the current dance provision in the city and across the Northern region investigating how our organisations can work together meaningfully and operate efficiently to achieve our ambition as a city of excellence in dance
2. Instigate wider conversations across the dance sector, beyond the Steering Group, to ensure a joined up and shared ownership of the Dance Hub from the dance community in Leeds. This would include Large-Scale Dance Companies; Mid and Small-Scale Dance Companies; Cross Arts organisations that work with dance; HE; FE; Primary and Secondary Schools; Academies; Specialist Performing Arts Colleges; Bridge Organisations; Music Hubs
3. Assess the potential impact on the wider region and how the Leeds Dance Hub can reach beyond the city. These could include Hull City of Culture; The Lowry, Salford; Dance City, Newcastle and others
4. Instigate conversations with the venues in the city of Leeds to engage them with the Dance Hub and encourage them to re-visit their programming policies for dance but, at the same time, being mindful of the fragile ecology. The potential of non-traditional spaces should be considered
5. Review the current dance spaces in Leeds and identify the future infrastructure needs if we are to fulfil ambitions
6. Review links and pathways to ensure strong strategies for the future and make connections with the Birmingham hub and dance artists in London and the South East
7. Review existing audiences as well as opportunities for audience development in the future
8. Review the City of Dance website as a gateway to the Hub as part of a wider communications strategy

9. Consult with other major stakeholders including Arts Council England and Leeds City Council.

The consultant will be expected to report on progress on a monthly basis to members of the Steering Group made up of members of the Leeds-based dance organisations.

Outcomes from the Consultancy: -

1. A Vision and 3 year strategy agreed amongst the Leeds-based dance companies with clear actions, milestones and resources identified with direction towards a 10 year Vision and strategy established
2. More clarity on the dance ecology in Leeds and the wider North with a report presented and submitted to the Steering Group and ACE
3. A clear programme of work identified that can lead to a Strategic Touring Application which would be submitted at the end of the contracted period by the Consultant on behalf of the organisations
4. Defined structures for the Governance and Management of the Dance Hub going to forward.

Timescale

Closing date for tenders – 13 June 2015

Applicants will be notified if shortlisted for interview – 20 June 2015

Shortlisted applicants will be invited for interview – w/c 29 June 2015.

It would be expected that the consultancy would be completed by 31 January 2016.

To apply

Please submit a written proposal that includes: -

- Your approach to undertaking the consultancy
- Your CV
- Details of previous consultancies that you have carried out in this field
- Two references from previous similar work
- A budget which breakdowns the requested fee and indicates all additional expenses that may be incurred. The fee is expected to be in the range of £22K to £25K

Submissions should be sent by email to:-

Mark Skipper DL, Chief Executive of Northern Ballet – mark.skipper@northernballet.com

Applicants will receive acknowledgement of submission by email.