Innovative Approaches to Ballet Audience Development with Young Asian Communities.

White Rose College of Arts and Humanities, PhD Studentship hosted by PCI with Northern Ballet as collaborative partner

Are you interested in debates concerning the case for diversity in arts practice and reception? What might the future look like for professional ballet organisations as they engage with young, diverse audiences? Do you want to refine your skills as a researcher and practitioner through work with one of the busiest touring ballet company in the UK? Are you curious about the audience experiences valued by young Asian communities? Can you contribute to strategic plans for ballet companies as they seek to promote work for culturally diverse audiences and participants?

The successful candidate will be based in the School of Performance and Cultural Industries at the University of Leeds and supervised by Dr Fiona Bannon, Lead Academic Supervisor; Dr Joslin McKinney, Academic Co-Supervisor; and the Partner Organisation Supervisor, Leanne Kirkham, Director of Learning – Northern Ballet.

What is this project about?

The research engages with the challenges involved in developing and sustaining audiences for ballet through investigation of the use and value of diversity initiatives in school-based projects. Focused on an established partnership between Leeds based, Northern Ballet and Green Lane Primary School, Bradford, the research seeks to evaluate the design and impact of outreach partnerships developed and integrated into curriculum delivery. The research will provide opportunities to explore the changing landscape of participation across diverse audiences, and contribute to the strategic framework for the future development of education initiatives and audience development programmes. The design of the arts based research can embrace both qualitative and quantitative research methods and will include exploration of dance as a form of communication, performance, education, community arts practice and audience experience. The research respects our rights of equal access across dance forms and includes investigation of digital environments. There will also be an opportunity to join the Equality and Diversity Committee at Northern Ballet.

The impetus for the collaborative project is to engage in a critical review of the varied approaches already adopted in terms of audience development with young diverse audiences. Exploration of the feasible design and operation of alternative methods for audience experience working with the education team at Northern Ballet will be a central pathway for investigation. The successful candidate will review the extensive literature addressing audience experience with particular focus on young audiences and audiences for dance and ballet. Modelling alternative and new
models for audience development with long term engagement with community groups and education partnerships will be a particular focus for the research.

What contributions will you make to the partner organisation?

Established in 1969, Northern Ballet is the busiest touring ballet company in the UK, creating full length ballets, children’s ballets and a range of digital work. With a belief in the value of creating a diverse range of narrative ballets appealing to as many people as possible, from all walks of life and they constantly seek to engage new audiences. Key objectives include;

- Deliver outstanding and engaging narrative ballets to people across the UK
- Create new and original work
- Further the talent of exceptional young dancers
- Enable people of all means and abilities to take part in dance activities

The 3-year partnership between Green Lane Primary School and Northern Ballet was initially established to create a platform to explore aspects of Northern Ballet’s Equality Action Plan regarding engaging children and young people from black, and minority ethnic backgrounds in dance. In 2017 it was decided to extend the project for a further 4 years to review our approach to ensure secure outcomes for both parties. Work to date has included;

- surveys with parents and pupils about attitudes towards engaging in arts activity outside of school
- pupil attendance of performances for children’s ballets
- in curriculum dance workshops
- performances of the children’s ballet in the school – with professional dancers and a live orchestra

Through this work, the company has developed a strong relationship with staff, pupils and parents at the school, which allows for open and constructive conversations. With a desire to consolidate and further develop the work there is an opportunity to engage in a period of research exploring new ways to reach diverse audiences and to contribute to sector awareness of longer terms goals for professional engagement with the education sector.

Northern Ballet will host a conference in 2020 to share and disseminate outcomes from their involvement with Children’s Ballet since 2012. Part of the event will relate to explorations of diverse audience engagements. This platform will provide a route for dissemination of the research project, in-process offering a chance to broaden the discussion with national and international colleagues, funders, sector representatives and politicians.

The School of Performance and Cultural Industries is a vibrant centre of research and teaching, with an excellent track record of working with industry partners. We are looking for highly qualified, enthusiastic candidates with academic and/or professional interests or experience in the development of culturally diverse audiences. Because the research is driven through collaborative practice between the university and Northern Ballet a key feature of your engagement will be a willingness to contribute to the research needs of our partners with respect to dance performance, education, community arts practice, audience experience, qualitative and practice based arts research.

Financial support

Full-time AHRC Competition Studentships for doctoral research are 3 years in duration (or 5 years part time). Awards are subject to satisfactory academic progress. Awards must be taken up in October 2019.
No deferrals are possible. Awards will comprise UK/EU fees at Research Council rates and, for eligible students, a maintenance grant (£14,777 in 2017/8).

Eligibility

Strong applicants will have a good first degree in an appropriate subject, as well as a Master’s degree and professional experience relevant to the scope of the project.

Please note that all applicants should meet the AHRC’s academic criteria and residency requirements (http://wrocah.ac.uk/new-student/ahrc-competition/#amiableligible).

How to apply

Before applying for any WRoCAH Studentship, please first ensure that you have read the WRoCAH webpages about Collaborative Doctoral Awards, the WRoCAH training programme and requirements http://wrocah.ac.uk/new-student/2019-cda/

**STAGE 1**

Applicants must apply for a place of study http://www.leeds.ac.uk/info/130206/applying/91/applying_for_research_degrees clearly stating to which project you wish to apply, by the deadline given below.

To assess your academic ability to undertake three years of independent research you may be required to provide the following evidence:
- Project Statement (a two-page statement that conveys your motivation and enthusiasm for the project and demonstrate your suitability for the intended study)
- Curriculum Vitae
- Transcripts of marks for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees plus certificates where available
- Two academic references http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/download/1484/reference_template-research_degrees from referees who will be able to provide their references by the deadline for Stage 1
- IELTS Certificate (if applicable)

**Interviews will then take place to select a suitable candidate.**

**Deadline for STAGE 1 applications**

**21st December, 2018**

**Date of interviews**

Interviews will take place between, **2nd -7th Jan 2019.**

**STAGE 2**

Apply for funding to WRoCAH

Candidates selected after Stage 1 then liaise with the project supervisory team to submit a WRoCAH studentship application via the WRoCAH online application form by the 5pm on **Wednesday 23 January 2019 deadline.**

NB: Candidates who have been unsuccessful in Phase One can submit a separate WRoCAH application as a non-CDA applicant.

For more information about this project contact

**Informal enquiries may be made to:** Fiona Bannon and/or Joslin McKinney, School of Performance and Cultural Industries, f.bannon@leeds.ac.uk and J.McKinney@leeds.ac.uk. You can also enquire with Leanne Kirkham and/or Emma Mooney at Northern Ballet, Leanne.kirkham@northernballet.com and emma.mooney@northernballet.com.