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Thinking big

Big Dance is London's Legacy Trust UK programme from 2009-2012 delivered by the Greater London Authority in partnership with Arts Council England. The aim is that thousands of people will be inspired to change something about their lives beyond 2012, and the planning is in full swing. **Jacqueline Rose**, Big Dance Director, tells us more



Begoña Cao and Arionel Vargas dancing The White Swan pas de deux from Derek Deane's Swan Lake. The T-Mobile Big Dance 2010 launch. © David Parry, Press Association.

Big Dance is a biennial pan-London celebration of dance and dancing with 9 days of dance events in unusual places throughout the city shopping centres, parks, heritage sites and museums. Big Dance has taken place twice before in 2006 and 2008. The next one is The T-Mobile Big Dance 2010 from 3-11 July.

The Big Dance London team has been established and the development of the programme is supported by London Councils, Sport England, Museums Libraries & Archives London and NHS London. Shape is the official Access Partner for Big Dance and the Dance Champions Group has just come on board.

New to the programme is the appointment of the five Big Dance Hubs, which are: East (East London Dance), West (English National Ballet), South-East (Greenwich Dance Agency), North (Sadler's Wells) and South (Siobhan Davies Dance). The role of the Hubs is to connect activity across the dance, sports, health and museums sectors in partnership with London's local authorities. The purpose is to establish cross-sector artistic partnerships that may support the delivery of projects, provide performance venues or offer professional support in the context of the Big Dance programme.

Big Dance offers a myriad of opportunities for choreographers, artists, leaders, teachers and young people and this is your invitation to participate. Now is the time to get involved. The programme developed by the Big Dance Hubs has a number of strands: young people, older people, film, photography, fashion, talks with choreographers and the production of inspiring site-specific pieces in unexpected locations.

Recently launched by the Southbank Centre is Dance Atlas, with an invitation for people's favourite dance moves to be uploaded from across the globe. This will serve as >



Saima Shariff, Komal Rabadia, Sumit Banya and Charanjoty Tiwana from the Sapnay School of Dance. The T-Mobile Big Dance 2010 launch. © David Parry, Press Association.

choreographic inspiration for Luca Silvestrini, artistic director of Protein Dance, to create the Big World Dance, a production by the Southbank Centre for an audience of thousands.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, says he's "delighted to once again support Big Dance. Anyone switching on the television lately cannot fail to have seen how enormously popular dance is - not just the lively shows, but the dancercise commercials. Big Dance is a terpsichorean feast that takes it quite literally one step further. We want to get as many people moving as possible this July and afterwards, to 2012 and beyond. Whatever your style, whatever your age or ability, as Lady Gaga says, 'Just Dance'."

Just some of the opportunities that are already on the horizon include:

Existing participants – get involved, share their passion and inspire others

New participants – try out something new and unleash their creative talents

Organisations – be encouraged to open up venues and showcase programmes through dance

Choreographers – lead productions and commissions and site-specific work on both a large and small scale in partnership with other agencies

Dance artists – be inspired to lead workshops and classes

Teachers – deliver projects for organisations and supporting the Big Dance Schools Pledge

Film artists – record and report on Big Dance activities across London and but also being inspired to make and show dance films.

Lecturers – share knowledge about

dance in formal and non-formal environments

Composers – grab the many opportunities to produce new compositions for Big Dance choreographic commissions

Photographers – document dance projects and create new work inspired by Big Dance for photography exhibitions

Project managers – provide production services and event organisation management for a range of dance projects in unusual spaces



The Big Dance Chair Dance at the Southbank Centre. Delivered by Entelechy Arts, East London Dance as part of Capital Age Festival 2008. Photo: Hayley Madden.

Apprenticeships - maximise opportunities for people to develop their skills and experience, allowing artists, managers, administrators and many other dance/arts professionals to expand their portfolios.

In 2008 Big Dance piloted a simple volunteering scheme. People recruited to work on a range of events over the course of Big Dance have gone on to take up various positions, such as becoming a London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) Trailblazer and a marketing manager at Dance Umbrella. The volunteering programme for 2010 will be a resource to support events and projects. It offers a unique opportunity for the public to engage with Big Dance, gain new skills and for dance students and professionals to make new contacts and develop their existing experience.

Choreographed by Hakeem Onibudo as part of the Big Dance Schools Pledge, downloadable choreography in four levels will be offered to everyone across the UK and the world. Big Dance is working in partnership with the British Council Connecting Classrooms programme and working towards a world record attempt at 1pm on 9 July 2010. Sharon Phillips is the Big Dance Schools Pledge Coordinator and can be contacted at: Sharon@bigdance2010.com

Register your event at: www.bigdance2010.com to receive further information about key dates, marketing toolkits etc. Organisations and artists in London are encouraged to make contact with the Big Dance Hubs. Information on which boroughs fall into each Hub region is on the website. For organisations outside London just follow the link for event organisers.

A question everyone is asking is whether Big Dance is national. Well, the simple answer is yes. Anyone in the UK can register their activity via the Big Dance website. There are some exciting plans in the pipeline for Big Dance 2012. Read on for more about this and our collaboration with the Foundation for Community Dance and the Dance Champions.

Dance takes the lead

Chris Stanton, Development Director at the Foundation for Community Dance (FCD), brings us up to speed on why Big Dance presents an irresistible opportunity to join forces

A partnership between Big Dance, FCD and the Dance Champions was being developed, sparked by some shared ambitions and a significant investment in Big Dance in London by the Legacy Trust. Great for London, but how could the rest of us benefit from this? How could we work with organisations and individuals outside of the capital to link their Big Dance activities together? What about the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to, quite literally, profile community dance on the world stage?

The Dance Takes the Lead group, established in 2008, is a partnership of over 20 nationally focused dance organisations from across the dance sector and covering the UK with a remit to look at how dance could feature within the Cultural Olympiad. It became apparent that the group needed a clear 'offer' to the dance sector, funding bodies and, crucially, LOCOG. And all this during a severe recession when money's tight and getting tighter. This required a winning idea that makes economic sense and builds on existing infrastructure rather than creating something new just for a few weeks in the summer of 2012.

The answer was staring us in the face. We negotiated with Dance Takes the Lead to adopt the Big Dance National Programme as its own. Building on work undertaken throughout the dance field to increase access and participation for everyone involved in Big Dance, this initiative provides us with the opportunity to raise the profile of our work and brand it within the ambitions for London 2012 and the Cultural Olympiad.

The programme development is being led by a core group of 'managing partners': FCD, Big Dance, the Dance Champions Group, Youth Dance England and the Central Council for Physical Recreation. Other partners include Akademi, Community Dance Wales, the Council for Dance Education and Training, English Folk Dance and Song Society, the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGAO), National Dance Network, the Royal Academy of Dance, Voluntary Arts Network, and Y Dance to name a few. We see it as absolutely essential that strong leadership, coordination and marketing is provided at a national level, and believe that this impressive partnership - in our view a first for dance - is critically placed to provide this.

Taking a cue from Big Dance London, we can see how a network of 'hubs' across the UK might emerge. In some cases strong partnerships, or hubs, already exist, such as in the South East region. In other places there are well-developed plans for local activities that could have a positive spin-off elsewhere.

Working in this way cuts to the core of our fundamental principle of capacity-building existing infrastructure, maximising previous investment and ensuring that partnerships span the entire dance sector. We're not in the business of dictating what Big Dance projects might be or where they might happen. Quite the opposite: our job is about co-ordination, marketing campaigns, increasing profile and placing participation in dance at the centre of the Cultural Olympiad.

Collaboration is the key, and the total sum greater than the individual parts.

Of course this is a massive fundraising job on a sleepless-night or night-before-a-really-exciting-holiday scale - I'm not sure which at the moment! We're in negotiation with a range of funders and remain optimistic that we can get the chemistry right. In terms of timescale we're looking at making a start in Autumn 2010, building up to Big Dance in July 2012.

Find out more about our plans at www.communitydance.org.uk/london2012