



Above: Carolyn Lappin.
Photo: Paul Watt.
Left: Go Dance 09,
Theatre Royal, Glasgow.
Photo: Ian Watson.

Nothing to do with us?

Carolyn Lappin, executive director of YDance (Scottish Youth Dance), advises practitioners nation-wide to take heed of 2012 and beyond

North of the Border the 2012 Olympics can seem a remote prospect – geographically far removed from us and largely irrelevant to our lives. The prevailing opinion, not just in the dance sector but in the general population, appears to be that the Games are ‘nothing to do with us,’ will have little or no impact in Scotland and their only noticeable effect is the reduction of Lottery Funds available for Scottish good causes, including the arts.

But, as in the rest of the UK, it falls to the dance sector to take advantage of whatever opportunities we can identify – not just in the lead up to 2012, but also looking further ahead to the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014. Dance in Scotland has, in effect, two bites at the cherry,

and if we have a willingness to overcome the initial feeling of lack of engagement, the sector could use the momentum generated by 2012 to give dance a huge profile boost by 2014.

The first signs emerging from the 2014 camp are reasonably encouraging. The Scottish Government has published their initial policy document on the Commonwealth Games. Called *On Your Marks* – a Games Legacy for Scotland, it emphasises the potential legacy of the 2014 Games and focuses beyond the actual sporting events themselves to what can be achieved in the wider physical activity sector. In it the First Minister states that ‘above all, we want Scotland to be active.’ Indeed, one of >



Above: Project Y 2009 rehearsals. Photo: Andrew Ross.

Right: Tam O'Shanter rehearsals. Photo: Andrew Ross.

Below: Free To Dance Project, Ayrshire. Photo: Paul Watt.



the main priorities of the legacy is to inspire people of all ages and abilities to become more physical. The document encourages partnerships working across a range of agencies, including the Scottish Arts Council (in the future, Creative Scotland), and features a proposed programme entitled Let's Get Scotland Dancing which will 'develop activities that will

motivate and inspire people across Scotland to get active – to get physical – to get dancing.' It acknowledges that not everyone enjoys participating in sports, and that dance is a great way to increase physical activity for non-sporty people. The Scottish Government believes that the programme can encourage just about everyone in Scotland to get dancing in





some capacity. What a great challenge for the dance community!

The Olympics and Commonwealth Games are not the only high-profile events that could benefit dance in Scotland over the next few years. In 2011, Lanarkshire will host the International Children's Games, bringing together young sporting champions from all over the world. A meeting of the International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM) will take place in Glasgow in November 2010, and in 2012 the city will host the 8th World Congress on Active Ageing. Edinburgh will host the British Dance Edition in 2014 but, before that, Glasgow will even be part of the 2012 Olympics directly as some Olympic football matches are scheduled at Hampden Park.

So, is Scotland perhaps not as removed from events surrounding 2012 as we might think? There still remains a real challenge for dance to take full advantage of the high profile being given to physical activity over

the next few years. The dance sector in Scotland is already involved in the Dance Takes the Lead talks, with two representatives on the group which is planning the UK dance community's involvement with the 2012 Cultural Olympiad and focusing on a national profile-raising campaign for dance which will be open to all parts of the UK. YDance (Scottish Youth Dance) is working with the national youth dance organisations for England, Wales and Northern Ireland to develop a UK-wide version of Youth Dance England's UDance programme for 2012. The Scottish Project, funded through the 2012 Legacy Trust, includes a major training and development programme for physical theatre called Conflux, and the Big Screen live sites, which will showcase cultural and sporting events including dance all over the UK are to include sites in Scotland.

The focus on a legacy outside the sporting arena related to both the 2012 Olympics and the 2014 Commonwealth Games offers a unique

chance to showcase dance both as a creative art and an accessible form of physical activity. Funding is, as always, an issue. Dance is nevertheless in an excellent position to take advantage of whatever opportunities may arise through arts funding, or to make the best use of the way in which dance can address a range of agendas across policy areas in health, education and general physical activity.

It's really up to us wherever we live in the UK. We can ignore the 2012 Olympics, and we can complain that all they're doing is diverting money from ongoing activity. But, even if we do so, the Games will happen anyway and that money will still be diverted. I think it's better to look at the positives and grab hold of the chances we have to get more people involved in dancing and watching dance in 2012, 2014 and beyond – and to re-divert some of the funding back into dance.

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