

Pawlet
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Let's Dance International Festival (LDIF) 2012

Pawlet Brookes, Director of Serendipity places dance at the intercultural heart of Leicester

Why LDIF? Why another festival for Leicester? What's unique and is this festival special?

These questions underpin the core of LDIF in that it brings to the table an intercultural programme of work that is reflective of the cosmopolitan richness of Leicester. Although a new festival in its second year, LDIF has already started to get itself noticed as it has married the commercial, populist and subsidised dance worlds. The recognition that dance is changing and boundaries are blurring allows dance artists to work across sectors, across cultures and share international creative space.

LDIF is also unique in that it celebrates International Dance Day which is widely celebrated in Europe and the rest of the world. The International Dance Day message is "to celebrate Dance, to revel in the universality of this artform, to cross all political, cultural and ethnic barriers and bring people together through the common language of Dance". Therefore, internationalism, diversity,

social and political commentary are key strands that are constant in the programming of the festival at all levels.

The role of women is also highlighted, not only as dancers but also as creators, through showcasing the strong voice of women in creative leadership roles in dance from an international perspective. It shows how these women use dance to tell stories and put information out in the public domain about social and political issues. L'Antionette Stines celebrates the 50th Anniversary of Jamaica's Independence with a programme called Ruckumbine. Sharmini Tharmaratnam has created a piece of political poetry using dance to highlight the cultural and political sensitivities between Sufi culture and its arrival in Spain. Arlene Philips has had a successful, ground breaking and sometime turbulent career in dance, fighting the sector and remaining on top. Her dialogue with Saira Khan will grapple with other topical issues facing contemporary

businesswomen. Isha Sharvani, originally a Bollywood star is now a leading dancer whose contemporary dance reflects the real face of India today, not the glamorised Bollywood sex symbol.

LDIF questions what is the real face of dance in the UK. Is it Flawless and the raw talent of urban street dance? Is it high art and ballet and western contemporary dance or is it that dance is moving out of the silos of race, class and heritage and creating a new aesthetic that reflects contemporary popular culture that is more homogeneous than we care to believe? The festival is a celebration of similarities as well as difference, which allows the creative space to capture the richness of all cultures and bring a more innovative approach to dance whereby we are able to access all >



Above: Chirague Amarchande. Photo: Brian Would. Right: Ballet Black. Photo: Bill Cooper. Below right: TRes. Photo: somoSQuien

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dance types and forms and claim them as our own. The work of Ballet Black does just this.

'Happening' white British choreographers at the top of their game have created new and exciting work for Ballet Black that illustrate a new hybridised form, drawing on the intercultural understanding drawn from a dance vocabulary both classical and contemporary in its origin.

LDIF brings together some of the best artists in the world from Spain, Jamaica, India and the UK pushing the perspective on what is diversity, what is international. StopGap reminds us that integrated work has also travelled a long road in terms of recognition and acceptance as professional practice.

Politically integrated work has also struggled for a voice and prioritising the work of StopGap with De Montford University students as a central part of the programme is part of changing the face of the mainstream.

So, why Leicester and why now? The answers are complex. The Cultural Olympiad and the region's Igniting Ambition programme has had three key values: inspiring young people; celebrating internationalism and diversity; and leaving a positive legacy through being more ambitious and staging events of national significance which can be sustained for the future. Cities like Leicester reflect the sophisticated urban culture that is now the new face of Britain.



Leicester hosts a dynamic that has given it a reputation as a tolerant city, a place where new arrivals over the centuries have settled and created a city that captures the spirit of cooperation and togetherness. However, in reality there are some intricate issues to be resolved and LDIF aims to support the repositioning of internationalism and diversity so it's at the heart of cultural development, rather than at the fringes.

So, the LDIF is something that is here to stay, is appropriately located in Leicester and offers something that is both unique and necessary.

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