



Now's the time to get Scotland dancing

Engaging with every dance teacher, group and venue in Scotland is an exciting and worthwhile task explains **James Allenby**, National Project Manager of Get Scotland Dancing





Left: Dance Ihayami and Fiona Hyslop, Commonwealth Ceilidh Launch. Photo: Rob McDougall. Below: Sophie Laplane, Scottish Ballet Coryphée dancer with cast members, Twyla Tharp's The One Hundreds, Edinburgh International Festival 2013. Photo: Andrew Ross

We're on a mission to get more people dancing in Scotland than ever before. How? We're working with as many dance providers as we can and together we're campaigning for and promoting dance to the public, encouraging all to try a free taster dance class and to join in with our all-singing, but especially all-dancing, Summer 2014 events programme.

Get Scotland Dancing (GSD) was created by a Scottish Government policy in 2010 and is one of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games Legacy programmes. Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, is a key project champion and the initiative is led by Creative Scotland (kick-started by Anita Clark and Katy Mceown) with £1.5m National Lottery funding over four years. I previously led the GSD charge at Dance Base in Edinburgh before taking on the National Project Manager role in May 2013.

GSD plans to make a difference through three clear strands of work: building capacity in dance development across Scotland; celebrating and promoting mass participation; and developing young talent. Activity is focused in two critical years: 2012 – when we presented a public programme under the banner of Big Dance 2012; and 2014 – when GSD has its own identity as part of Culture 2014, the national strand of the Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme, and continues its alliance with Big Dance.

To define the who, what and why? of GSD, this set of six beliefs was developed with our Steering Group:

- **We're not an Organisation** but an association of those who share our beliefs and want to work towards our mission
- **Dance is for Everyone** regardless of any perceived or actual barriers
- **Every Style of Dance** will be represented
- **Join the Movement** embraces our Scottish heritage and invites others to join in
- **Watch and Dance** acknowledges

how watching performance can inspire others to try it

- **Dance Changes Lives:** bringing huge benefits as well as being fun.

Partnerships are at the core of GSD and we believe that by engaging more collaborators we can make the programme more exciting, more vibrant and truly national. So who are these partners and what do they do?

Our National Partners include organisations that reach across Scotland and beyond, like YDance, Scottish Ballet, Royal Academy of Dance (RAD), Scottish Dance Teachers' Alliance (SDTA), The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (RSCDS) and FCD/Big Dance. Six Regional Hub Partners – Citymoves (Aberdeenshire), Dance Base (Edinburgh/Lothians), Dance House (Greater Glasgow), Dundee Dance Partnership, Eden Court (Highland) and MacRobert (Stirling/Forth Valley) – are funded over four years to develop a programme of dance development that is specific and relevant to GSD and the needs and opportunities in their area.

Next there is the Creative Scotland-facilitated network of dance artists and development officers across Scotland – these activists have a huge impact in their areas and have catalysed the creation of some of our established dance agencies. Recognising this significance, GSD has funded three new posts through partnerships with local authorities and arts organisations in Perth & Kinross, Western Isles and Inverclyde – areas currently lacking dance development provision.

But that's not all, Get Scotland Dancing aims to embrace every dance teacher, group and venue in Scotland – no easy task in the short time we have. In late 2013 I travelled across Scotland meeting hundreds of individuals and groups from the public, private, voluntary and education sectors. These people make grass roots dance activities happen and are an important part of our partners network, so we call them our Movers & Shakers.

>



Project Y Performance Course 2012,
A Million Eyes Are On You, choreographed
by Anna Kenrick, Artistic Director.
Photo: YDance/Paul Watt

So, with our National Partners, Regional Hubs, Dance Developers and Movers & Shakers, we plan to represent all dance providers across Scotland. Under this umbrella, we can jointly promote and celebrate dance with a common aim of getting more people involved in regular dance activity. Our activities neatly fall into three areas: pro-dance campaigning, incentives to participate and an events programme.

Pro-dance campaigning

We want to tell the story of dance in Scotland today, who's doing it and why. Traditional and social media campaigns will promote dance as a creative, healthy, fun and social activity. To make it easy for people who've been inspired to get involved, all dance activity providers in Scotland will be listed, helping the public find local groups and opportunities.

Incentives to participate

The Get Dancin' initiative is a nationwide promotion giving new or returning dancers a free taster class. All GSD partners are encouraged to offer places in their classes listed at www.getdancin.org where the participant and provider are connected, hopefully long-term. Get Dancin' launches in March 2014 with an advertising campaign backed up by a marketing toolkit for providers. Press activity happens in March for Commonwealth Day, in September for the new term and November for St. Andrew's Day.

Events programme

Ta-da! Let's celebrate dance with an exhilarating programme of events in summer 2014 as part of the Glasgow

2014 Cultural Programme, which is a partnership between the Glasgow 2014 Organising Committee, Glasgow Life and Creative Scotland:

- **The Big Dance Pledge** created by Scottish Ballet and the Foundation for Community Dance. We're encouraging teachers to learn the dance or make their own version and join groups together and take their performance outside to attract press attention. This year's pledge is really fun and super accessible – YDance are delivering extra activity in under-resourced areas of Scotland
- **The Commonwealth Ceilidh** with the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society. A 24-hour global ceilidh on Saturday 21 June (the summer/winter solstice) with a programme of dances including three commissioned ones. Beginning at 19:30 (local time) in New Zealand and moving around the world, the final event starts 24 hours later in Hawaii
- **Dance-along Movies** (June/July). Large-scale outdoor events with your host Chris Stuart-Wilson who teaches dance moves from key moments in the films. Everyone joins in as the film rolls and Chris keeps the crowd on track
- **Dance Trails** (June/July). Site-specific dance to surprise, interrupt and entertain in daily life, this takes dance out of the studio to people who don't currently participate. Everything from classes in shopping centres and parks to Aberdeen's Dance Hunt, with clues and a city centre map of dance locations, is included.

Partners can work alone or team up with others to put on one or more of these events which are designed to be scale-able and can be staged at low/

no cost. We provide event guidelines, funding advice, Culture 2014 branded print and sample press releases. Postcards distributed at the events will invite audiences to try a free class through Get Dancin'.

GSD has also commissioned YDance to create the first ever Commonwealth Youth Dance Festival from 10-12 July 2014. The event will bring together nearly 400 young people from around the commonwealth for three days of teaching, learning and performing (as well as some socialising!).

These events will be listed at www.getscotlanddancing.org along with a 'fringe' of other events being run by partners during the summer.

Phew! So that's the broad shape of it all, a lot of activity going on and lots to do in a few short months but we're confident we can achieve our mission to get more people dancing in Scotland than ever before. The mission deliberately lacks target numbers, as there are currently no clear statistics on how many people are dancing regularly. The first phase of the evaluation will review existing literature and create baselines and meaningful targets. We will also map dance activity and appraise current levels of provision and potential for development in the partners network. The evaluation aims to provide useful information that will be shared with partners at all stages. Following the summer events programme I'll be working with the evaluation team to present the findings and make recommendations for the future of Get Scotland Dancing.

contact james@getscotlanddancing.org
visit www.getscotlanddancing.org