

“La vida no es la que uno vivió, sino la que uno recuerda y cómo la recuerda para contarla.”

Life is not what one lived, but what one remembers and tells of the memory.

Gabriel García Márquez.⁽¹⁾



Photo: Gary John Norman

Scilla Dyke MBE, Former Dance Artist-in-Residence/Animateur and Founder Director, DanceEast/Suffolk Dance, 1982-1993, and Editor of *Animated* 1996-2002, lifts the lid on the ground-breaking work of some of the early pioneers of community dance. Often unspoken, these intimate and compelling insights from a diversity of practices, people and communities serve to illustrate how arts, social and political issues shaped dance practice and thinking in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, influencing dance as it is today and asking what can inspire us now?



Photo: Suffolk Dance, Emlyn Claid Choreographic Commission

In this 30th Anniversary issue of Animated we record a montage of memories – recollections of history from some early pioneers of community dance. Often unspoken, these intimate and compelling insights from a diversity of practices, people and communities, paint a reflective picture of how the animateur movement began to emerge and develop. Significantly, these serve to illustrate how arts, social and political issues shaped practice and thinking at that time.

They reveal and celebrate the genius, daring, and risk, “sustained by the animated”.⁽²⁾ Courageous, passionate individuals who dared to dream... realising the impossible, an implicit expectation. The ensuing ecology and practice, as practise, built on the curiosity, generosity, collaboration and absolute passion for dance and its ability to change lives, irrespective of genre or training.

Paradoxically, at a time of shifting landscapes, one thing resonates: the power of community dance to sow the seeds of change and offer an innovative and impactful solution to continue to realise the impossible. It can ‘disturb the air’, ignite and

inform new creative thinking, and future-forward approaches – not only stimulating insight and better understanding of ourselves and the evolving world in which we live – but crucially, our communities, enhancing creativity, innovation and a positive sense of self and identity. Laying beneath the surface of community dance’s skin, practice that continues to enhance access to dance training and art form development, fostering current and future artists, practitioners, dancers, choreographers, artistic directors, leaders, managers, advocates and audiences to achieve excellence worldwide.

But, imprinted on our minds, are the memories of those precious to our dance lineage and community dance heritage. Their lives in dance reveal the connectivity, inter-connectedness and serendipitous relationships between people, across mediums, genres, spaces and places, histories and social inequities. Each and every personal journey reveals the humanity, humility and passion of inspirational, clarifying, curious and sensitive people – artists, animateurs – and the relationships they built. Ricocheting from one project to the next – initiative by initiative, artist

by artist, dancer by dancer, person by person, community by community – helped forge our ecology today.

We discover and re-discover the past in the now, so what can inspire us in the now? “Moving and being moved” can open vistas, unsettle the status quo, enable us to look “beneath the veil of convention of making art”.⁽³⁾ It is not simply our ‘role’ as dance artists and animateurs; it is a community dance artist’s ‘life’, past, present and future forward.

Info

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