

Being me

As Engagement Creative Director at Scottish Ballet **Lorraine Jameson's** job is to select parts of the repertoire and use them to create accessible and inclusive projects. Here she describes her journey within the organisation which includes their latest project Safe to Be Me

When did you start dancing?

When I was 19. I was serious about acting but decided I wasn't ready for it. I took a year out and did an Introduction to Dance course. I was an awful dancer to start with, but I loved it. I loved the discipline, challenging my body and my brain. Miraculously, I kept getting accepted on to the next year of training!

What made you want to work for Scottish Ballet?

All through my training and first years of employment, I was taking class at Scottish Ballet every Monday and Tuesday. The classes were led by Preston Clare and company dancers (and they still are) and I always went

to see the latest Scottish Ballet productions. When Catherine Cassidy took the post as Director of Education, I started freelancing for Scottish Ballet and each project I worked on became more exciting and ambitious.

What are the challenges of your job?

Over the years my role has evolved to Engagement Creative Director. It's hard sometimes to take a step back and let my team of dance artists put their creative stamp on our work. I'm passionate about what we do, and I get excited.

What are you most proud of working on at Scottish Ballet?

The fact that Artistic Director

Christopher Hampson makes dance engagement a priority means that we have freedom to think big. In 2013, I had the idea to work in the woods with young people from Kibble Education and Care Centre in Paisley, a special unit for young people facing adversity.

We made a dance work together based on themes from Hansel & Gretel. We still deliver The Close project today and through careful development we are expanding. It's gone beyond what we ever thought would be possible and participants have moved on to be mentored by Scottish Ballet staff.

What are you looking forward to working on?

Taking our new project Safe to Be Me on the road to primary schools. I'm excited to see if we hit the mark with the Year 6 children who take part. This project means a lot to me. Young people have the right to feel safe about who they are, try an identity, reject a label and to be allies to their friends who experience prejudice and adversity.

Having members of our Youth Exchange Company perform in the schools for the Safe to Be Me project also feels like something to



Scottish Ballet's Safe to Be Me school workshop. All photos: Andy Ross

be proud of. Being able to offer our young dancers a community dance experience that could shape their careers by going beyond physical training and looking at professionalism and work ethic.

You are responsible for finding appropriate training for the Engagement Team. What has been the most memorable?

Before a project starts we skill-up. Our Time to Dance project for 'dementia friendly' dance involved specific training. Members from across the company took part alongside the Engagement Team and it was emotional. To walk around a building that we know very well with props that limit and distort our senses had an impact on us all. It has made me even more empathetic every time we enter a care home setting.

What inspires you at Scottish Ballet?

The Scottish Ballet repertoire inspires the content. But it's the groups of people we work with who inspire me to do my job.

Info

www.scottishballet.co.uk



Safe to be me

Following a successful pilot from February – March 2019, the Safe to Be Me project has been rolled out to primary schools across Scotland, working with 25 schools to address bullying in these areas.

Delivered in line with key Scottish Government targets and made possible with the support of Aberdeen Standard Investments, Safe to Be Me engages with Year 6 pupils, aged 9-11, to explore themes that include identity, tolerance, acceptance, respect, ethnic and family diversity and LGBTQ+ communities.

Pupils are initially introduced to the themes by a team of experienced dance practitioners in the weeks leading up to watching a performance, which is choreographed by Lorraine. The pupils then take part in a full-day workshop where they have the opportunity to create their own Safe to be Me performance; encouraging each of them to be comfortable with who they are.

Feedback from pupils, teachers and parents has been extremely positive, demonstrating the value of a creative approach to help schools introduce and discuss these important topics.

