



11 MILLION REASONS TO DANCE: CYMRU

All Photos: 11 Million Reasons to Dance: Cymru project, 2021. Photographer: Philip Hatcher-Moore. Above features dancer Krystal S Lowe.



“Starting the work is two-thirds of it.”

Welsh proverb



If ever a project transpired in the face of adversity, it's the 11 Million Reasons to Dance: Cymru (11MRTDC) project that took place across Wales during 2021. So, it's especially pertinent to experience the stunning photographs from the exhibition element of the project in this Spring's edition of Animated.

People Dancing secured funding from the Arts Council of Wales back in 2019 as part of our wider strategic work that aims to support organisations and individuals to embed inclusive dance practice, and to raise the profile of, and opportunities for, disabled people who dance. Working alongside a consortium of Welsh partners (commencing a year >>



“11MRTDC is perhaps testament to a resilient, committed and a passionate community of people, who, along with many more, past and present, continue to drive for equity and equalities in dance in Cymru.”

Jen Angharad: Project Manager, 11MRTDC and CEO, Artis Community.





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later than planned) 11MRTDC set out to deliver a dance participation and training programme, and a brand new photography exhibition, all inspired by the original 11 Million Reasons to Dance photography and film programme that took place in England in 2014-18.

Like many artists and organisations delivering in 2021, there were numerous conversations about whether the project should or even could go ahead, and what the practicalities of delivering work were for everyone involved. What was clear was that the project needed to be re-worked, but that it was

incredibly important, now more than ever, for it to take place, and as the Welsh proverb says: 'starting the work is two thirds of it'.

Working with main partners Artis Community, Dawns i Bawb, New Dance and Impelo, and with wider strategic partners in Ballet Cymru, Disability Arts Cymru and Theatre Soar, we developed a project that included a training, development and mentoring programme with eight artists and leaders across the four main partner organisations (alongside our Associate Artist Kimberley Harvey). Other components of the project included an online >>



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bilingual Wales-themed networking event – with speakers including Jenny Stoves, Arts Council of Wales, disability consultant and advocate Andrew Miller, and Corali Dance Company – and the formation of an 11MRTDC strategy group, which set out to invest in a strategic legacy planning for the project, plus a bilingual resource for venues and organisations who want to work more inclusively, which was supported by Unlimited.

The online training and mentoring sessions created a shared platform for the artists involved to explore key questions and choreographic techniques which has fed back into their community dance practice.

“It was hugely beneficial to have been given that

time and space, especially when there were various restrictions being placed upon us and our practice due to COVID-19. It allowed us to reset, consider our artistic values and reaffirm what skills we could bring to the project and into our communities.”

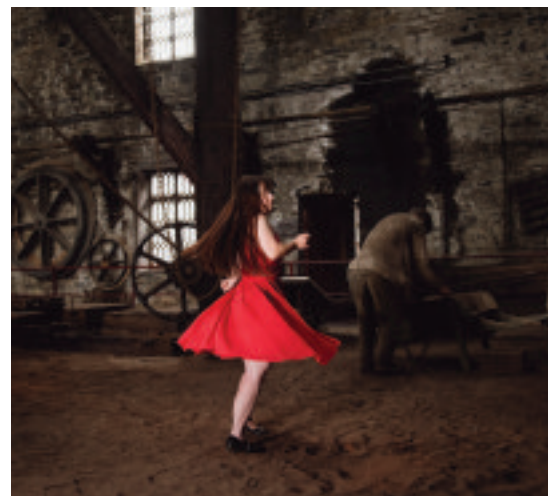
Dance practitioner, 11MRTDC, 2021.

The partner organisations were also each given funding to deliver a creative project collaborating with disabled participants in their communities, working predominately online to create content in preparation for dancing in person in the emotive landscapes of Wales!

This leads on to what was perhaps the greatest achievement of the project in the face of COVID-19 – let alone the even more complicated risk

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assessments and administration that come with any participation project – which was the creation of the brand new Welsh bi-lingual photography exhibition. Despite the huge challenges the project faced during the pandemic, the participants danced in and around the incredible landscapes of Wales and, also inspired by the Welsh language, they worked with internationally renowned and New York Times published photographer Philip Hatcher-Moore.

This extraordinary collection, highlighted in today's edition of Animated, and which will

hopefully tour to venues in 2023, reflects an incredibly unique time in our dance history, with participants stating how valued this project was in combating isolation and creating connectivity through dance.

Diolch!

Louise Wildish, Director of Engagement, People Dancing.

Info

www.communitydance.org.uk/11MRTDC

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