

Dance Internship Report –Cathy Barnes

For the last three years I have been studying dance at De Montfort University and graduated in July 2015. Through De Montfort University's graduate scheme I was given the opportunity to do a six week paid internship with a company in the area that I wished to gain valuable real life experience and to use the skills learnt from my degree in a job setting. The company I have been working for is artsNK based in Lincolnshire and my job role was a dance community artist. Exactly what job role I wanted and needed to gain experience in.

For the last six weeks I have been shadowing classes and leading parts of some classes. Classes that range from primary schools, youth dance groups, children with disabilities and Vitality which is for the older generation. It has been amazing to experience to observe and teach such a wide range of age groups and abilities and has enabled me to distinguish more which pathway I would like to go down with teaching.

Whilst working for artsNK I was lucky enough to see two showcases that artsNK run, the Youth Dance Programme showcase and the Primary Dance Festival. Both were two great events to get involved in and watch. It gave me an insight into how events are planned and run by the team and actually how much time and effort goes in to making sure these shows run seamlessly. I thoroughly enjoyed watching the work showcased and what was particularly great to see was the young people's enjoyment and buzz to perform on stage. Such a great opportunity for young people in Lincolnshire!

The Youth Dance Programme has classes available for seven to nineteen year olds and because they had a show coming up it was great to see them rehearsing their pieces in class time, and then seeing the tech run of the pieces which for me really brought the whole thing alive. Jumpstart which is an all-boys group for age 11+ I particularly enjoyed. For a start it was great to see an all- male group, and what was even better to see was how strong this male group are. It was great to watch Jumpstart's rehearsal and also performance, the amount of effort all the boys put in to what they do was great, they give 110% commitment to rehearsing and committing to the movement. You can see how much they love to dance which was really nice to see! They all work well together and seeing them rehearse/performance was definitely a highlight for me. There were some great movements showcased by them with personality and individuality added to make it even more special.

The primary dance festival consisted of five primary schools in Lincolnshire, they all had six weeks to learn and create a piece to perform at North Kesteven School. The point of the festival is to showcase a piece of work about the transition into secondary school and also advertise the North Kesteven School to pupils and parents. artsNK work in partnership with North Kesteven School to put on the festival. I went to South Hykeham primary school, one of the schools performing in the festival to shadow a couple of classes and it was great to see the development of the piece, seeing the creative process behind it and to work with the children. It was really great to watch the primary dance festival and to see the children buzzing backstage waiting to perform. What I have learnt from this programme is more about managing children of this age and more about how to deliver information and high quality dance to children. I have also learnt about some aspects of project management and also a bit about working in partnership with other schools.

InspireDance is another programme that the artsNK dance team deliver to primary schools so I got to shadow these sessions. It is designed to increase participation in dance and meet the needs of the school. From shadowing I have seen the enjoyment the children get from these sessions and how these sessions allows them to be creative and active. I have also seen in these classes how dance is such a good subject to use for cross-curricular work as well, so hopefully I can use the things I have learnt from the InspireDance programme to improve my teaching skills for example making sure to meet the needs and requirements of the host organisation whether it be in a school or a community setting .

During my internship I was lucky enough to watch and judge two competitions, the True Motion qualifiers. artsNK work in partnership with Dance4 to produce the annual U.dance platform in Lincolnshire which is called True Motion. I got to watch and assist with judging in Sleaford and one in Boston, seeing both of these shows was a highpoint for me! The standard was so high in both of them and it was great to see so many children performing and dancing on stage and enjoying themselves. It was great to get an insight into this event and to see the variety of performances. I thoroughly enjoyed this aspect to the job and helped me to gain more knowledge about feeding back positively and encouraging children to keep dancing.

During my degree and in teaching modules there was a lot of focus on inclusivity of dance and making sure dance is inclusive so it was great to get an opportunity to see this in all the different settings I have been too. Particularly the inclusivity of the vitality sessions and catering for all the needs and abilities of individuals in the youth dance programme and primary schools. So of the vitality sessions I have been to, I have observed and taken part in just seated sessions, just standing sessions and half standing and half sitting which shows the inclusivity of the sessions ,and ,no one is ever pushed too far out of there comfort zone. Of all the ladies and gentleman I have spoken to that take part in these sessions they absolutely love it, they love the exercise and props, a couple of individuals in a seated session particularly enjoyed the music and dancing along to the rhythm, I think some of the music was quite nostalgic for them. They also love the social side some older people can get quite lonely so for many of them it is a chance to get out and interact with others and dance is great for interaction, I noticed a lot of partner work was incorporated into these sessions which I thought was a nice aspect of the class and it was so great for me take part in these sessions and interact with the ladies/gents, I could really see the value of these sessions to the community and the people taking part.

A big highlight for me was actually working at St Francis which is a specialist school in Lincoln. It is pilot sessions run by artsNK so that they can further their research to gain funding for it. It was amazing to see the positive effect dance/ movement therapy has on these children with disabilities. Most of them can barely move so it is more about movement/sensory therapy and getting the children to progress on targets for them for example how long they can stand supported / unsupported for etc. It was amazing to see the children enjoying the sessions and getting to do things that are really beneficial to them. The afternoon sessions were hard work due to the children being younger and more able with moving ,so ,that session was tough but there is plenty of staff assisting the children ,and, it is worth it when you see the children's enjoyment and them improving with their targets. It was also interesting to see the different aspects of the dance sessions that the children enjoyed, for example some children liked the sensory aspect and others enjoyed getting the

chance to move. I really hope artsNK get the funding to keep this project going as it is so beneficial to the children, more beneficial to them than learning maths and English in some ways .

So what have I learnt from this six week internship? I have learnt about a lot about artsNK dance team and about a lot of the programmes they run for the community. I have learnt how versatile you need to be to do this job role as you teach such a wide range of individuals/ages so inclusivity is key to this to run high quality dance sessions. I have observed a lot of high quality dance sessions and I'm going to try and take as much as I can away with me to develop my own teaching style. What has really been great is to see and experience all the dance going on in Lincolnshire. I have learnt a lot about what dance is available to the community in Lincolnshire, so it will be very interesting to go back to Leicester and compare the different opportunities that are available there and see how they work in comparison.

I haven't run any projects but I have had more of an insight into how these projects are run and managed, so I have a better understanding of project management and how that side of the job role works. I have developed a better understanding that not only is there lots of teaching involved but this particular role comes with a lot of project management and managing yourself. I have gained more knowledge of youth dance during my internship by shadowing and seeing all the youth programmes that artsNK run in hip-hop and contemporary style.. I have also learnt various admin roles of the job, emailing, researching and cash handling. I have also learnt more about what team skills are required especially from working in a small team of people who are constantly on the go and also working individually.

Another aspect of the job I have been involved in is team meetings and evaluating programmes. From the team meetings I have been involved in one was discussing managing a project that is recently coming up. So from that meeting I gained a better understanding into again project management but from this meeting more about the financial side and the things needed for the event for example transport to the event. This meeting gave me more an insight into budgets of a project and the things required to book so the event runs smoothly. I have had no experience when it comes too project management and the financial side of projects so it was valuable to me to sit in this meeting so that I can gain a bit more knowledge on that aspect of the job. The other meeting I attended was evaluating the primary dance festival so was interesting to listen and discuss in this meeting about what worked well and what did not work well on this programme, constantly evaluating programmes is a good way to gain a better understanding of what is working and what isn't . Another evaluation task I was involved in was asking the young people involved in the Youth dance programme what they wanted more of in there sessions ? What they didn't like in there sessions ?and anything they wanted to stay the same? We went round all the youth programme groups and asked them these questions. Throughout university we were constantly evaluating our modules each term and the tutors would talk a lot about the importance of evaluation, especially in teaching dance. Therefore it was good to see artsNK evaluating all their sessions/programmes and I can really see from my experience at university and my internship the importance of evaluating and feeding back, it is one of the best forms to instil high quality throughout sessions and projects.

From watching artsNK aerial classes I have also been inspired to learn some aerial work therefore I have researched into this and will be starting classes in Leicester. This will make me more versatile as a dance artist and it looks like a lot of fun and will build on my strength and flexibility. It has

definitely been a great experience watching the girls on the silks and I cannot wait to have a go myself. So watching aerial has opened my eyes to a new aspect of dance! So not only ever I have learnt a lot of new things I have also been inspired to start something new myself.

There are many things I have learnt during my internship. It has been a challenging but very rewarding experience. It definitely has not been easy but has been invaluable. To actually build a career in dance is tough; it is a tough industry due to the little amount of jobs and funding for the dance sector. So actually being given the opportunity to do this paid is amazing, and now I can use everything I have learnt in the next step of my career. It has enabled me to build my confidence and `has allowed me to think about what I want to pursue career wise. So thank you to De Montfort Universities graduate scheme and artsNK for this great opportunity! The experience has taught me a lot of valuable information and given me practical experience of being a dance community artist, it has been an inspiring and I can't wait to carry on pursuing a career in dance!