

## Report to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation: ArtWorks: Developing Practice in Participatory Settings

### Introduction

In February 2013 Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance was awarded funding through the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's Special Initiative *ArtWorks: Developing Practice in Participatory Settings*, to develop two new pieces of Continuing Professional Development activity around arts practice with older people.

The ideas behind this activity came from the wealth of experiences developed through our *Retired Not Tired* programme of music and dance activity with older people in Lewisham; the collective and shared expertise of the Older People's Art Network in Lewisham (a providers network of arts organisations) as well as the findings of our 'Age Gap' symposium held in April 2013 which explored ways of supporting and nurturing artists to develop creative practice in participatory settings with older people.

The funding received through Artworks enabled us to develop two pieces of professional development for artists engaged, or wishing to become engaged, in participatory arts practice with older people:

1. *Sharing Practice* – a facilitated 'reflective learning' group for experienced older people's arts practitioners, taking co-mentoring as a core facilitative process
2. *Older and Wiser* – a one day conference style event for emerging older people's arts practitioners

The sections to follow in this report take a closer look at the two funded pieces of CPD, and specifically:

- Background information – the context, process and logistical details
- The learning, including:
  - SWOT analysis
  - Learning Points
  - Areas for future exploration and consideration

Then a summary encompassing the learning from both pieces of CPD, including:

- Impact for participants, based on interviews, reports and questionnaires undertaken with participants, practitioners, project managers and partner organisations.
- The impact for Trinity Laban as the lead funded organisation

### Evaluation process

In pulling together this evaluation report we have drawn upon evidence and data collected to evaluate the CPD events, including:

- Summary of feedback from the OPAN network members
- Notes taken by Trinity Laban's Research Fellow Kate Wakeling whose work is currently focused on the *Retired Not Tired* programme
- Feedback from participants, as analysed by external evaluators Annabel Jackson Associates
- Our own internal reflections and review

## **Sharing Practice** - facilitated 'reflective learning' group for experienced older people's arts practitioners

### **Background**

*Sharing Practice* was created in response to a need for CPD for experienced artists who had been working in the field of older people's arts for at least 3 years. Eight artists, who responded to a call to artists working across the OPAN network, met for an initial day held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013 facilitated by Clair Chapwell, an artist experienced in working with older people's arts. The group met and were led through a series of self and co reflective activities. They then went away and met separately to observe each other's practice in situ. The group re-convened on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014, this time to reflect back on the observations and engage in some co-mentoring activities.

Practitioners working across art forms and employed by OPAN members were invited to participate in the programme. An honorarium was offered for taking part as it was recognised that loss of earnings would be a barrier to participation for this cohort. Even so it proved challenging for the project manager to encourage take up of the offer.

Much of the activity undertaken in the sessions was participatory, creative and improvisatory. This group of practitioners, as artists, seemed to respond well to the creative framework and process to the CPD.

*'It was very good for helping me focus. Talking it through with somebody and being asked to think about it – it hasn't given me answers but has given me ways to go on with it and move towards finding a solution.'*

This project was managed by Katie Windsor with support from the Learning and Participation Team (Dance).

Practitioner

### **About the participants:**

- 8 artists participated
- Art forms represented: Music, Dance, Theatre & Visual arts
- The average length of time working in participatory arts is 11.5 years, with an average of 6.5 years before embarking on working in older people's arts
- On average 55% of this cohort's work is with older people so they have significant expertise in this area

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artists experience at the heart of the sessions</li> <li>• Cross art form focus</li> <li>• Safe experimental and mutually supportive space where artists could try out/ challenge/ devise/ critique and reflect. The sessions were devised with this element of 'trust' at the heart</li> <li>• Creatively energising and renewing session – inspiring for those taking part</li> <li>• Using creative activity within CPD for artists –positively received by the group</li> <li>• The cohort gelled (partly due to the sensitive facilitation and process design,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of the artists, (who as experienced freelance artists are very busy) meant that some were unable to take part, and one dropped out of the project after the first session</li> </ul>

<p>and partly down to the individual group members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Externally facilitated sessions</li> </ul>	
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross art form focus of the CPD has lots of potential for development</li> <li>'Slow burn' peer to peer CPD is relatively low cost to organise.</li> <li>The trust element within the design of the CPD was intended to promote and encourage future working together and a sense that the relationships built within the sessions could extend into more permanent 'co-mentoring' relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of experienced artists means we need to explore other more flexible CPD options for this cohort</li> <li>Initial reticence and reluctance to get involved and some scepticism about the benefits</li> </ul>

### Learning Points

- Confidence and self-doubt remain issues, even for experienced artists
- There is a need to differentiate the practice of working between and within groups of older people, particularly with more active and independent older people
- Experienced artists talk about taking on personas during their practice
- Group learning has an affirmative effect
- Artists describe a need to have a real grasp of the group dynamics when working with older people, more so than for participatory arts practice with younger groups. Issues affecting group dynamics for with this participant group can include gender issues, ownership, mental and physical health issues, emotional wellbeing, cultural differences
- Winning hearts and minds can be an ongoing struggle. Older people's arts practitioners often also encounter positive resistance to participation from what they describe as 'factions' within their groups
- Boundaries within older people's groups can be complicated and require sensitive handling
- Many of the experienced older people's arts practitioners felt great emotional investment in this kind of work. Highs can be inspirational and energising. But working alongside vulnerable groups over a long period can have significant personal costs.
- Practitioners felt that with learning from each other came empowerment, that they had more creative tools to use in their practise, they also reported feeling 'braver'
- Practitioners felt a camaraderie and sharing of support around some of the dilemmas they encounter in their own practice
- The open nature of the group enabled honest reflection and contribution – the group felt this contributed to the success of the CPD so setting ground rules or perimeters is vital
- It is important for freelance artists to feel part of a community of practice as it can traditionally be quite an isolated role to work in

*'It's like having a mirror – when you're listening to someone you need to take in every bit of it – and you have to ask about anything that's missing – just 10 minutes to talk about something was great – it helped me see the bigger picture.'*

Participant

## **Areas for future exploration and consideration**

- Artists asked for particular support, or ideas from each other around beginnings and endings of projects
  - There was recognition of the value of CPD offerings that provide mutual support, review and reflection – traditionally slower burning forms of CPD offer this kind of learning and reflection, rather than one day courses
  - Potential to bring the group together again in the future as part of an on-going co-mentoring relationship
  - A need for longer term emotional support and resilience building through sustained, co-mentoring type support
  - A regularly meeting ‘freelancer’s network’
  - Facilitate further opportunities to observe each other’s work
  - Training in the co-mentoring techniques covered through this CPD
  - Regular skill sharing workshops for practitioners
  - Facilitate opportunities to visit each other’s organisations to be able to learn from the collective expertise of the organisations active in this field of work
  - Support for artists working with staff in older people’s settings
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## **Older & Wiser** - one day conference style event for emerging older people's arts practitioners

### **Background**

*Older & Wiser*, was a one day conference style event which ran on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2014, targeted at emerging older people's arts practitioners. The need for such an event was identified through OPAN who recognise that there is a shortage of artists who have the understanding, experience and skills to undertake this work, which is currently undergoing a period of growth in terms of recognition, as well as financial investment.



The event was project managed by Katie Windsor, with significant support from the Learning and Participation Dance team, OPAN members, experienced practitioners and participants from many of the OPAN programmes.

The event was promoted via an e-flier and using free email bulletins, word of mouth, the OPAN network and Artworks. Delegates were charged a nominal fee of £25 to attend.

The design of the sessions was intended to provide a balance of theoretical, discussion, practical skills sharing and development, as well as opportunities to meet experienced artists as well as participants. We hoped that those attending would come away feeling inspired, supported and having learned some practical skills. A small number of mentoring opportunities were also offered as a follow on opportunity after the event.

*'I thought the day was incredibly energising and inspiring! Feels like a good springboard for now attending more specialised CPD events – really like the ethos of shared practice and the invitation to attend/ observe sessions and it is extremely useful to take part and see things in practice.'*

The event proved very popular and despite adding additional capacity we still had a waiting list.

Delegate

### **About the delegates**

- 32 participants attended, with a further 8 experienced artists, 6 older participants, and 10 staff members attending on behalf of the OPAN organisations
- The majority of attendees were in the 20-30 years age group
- Interestingly the average amount of time delegates had worked in the arts was 8.37 years, suggesting those interested in working with older people develop an interest in this work after a significant period developing their wider experience in participatory arts

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artists experience was at the heart of the sessions</li> <li>• Opportunities were included for emerging artists to meet and learn from experienced artists</li> <li>• Content included a mix, from discussion to practical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited capacity. We had a waiting list for the event, despite increasing the capacity.</li> <li>• Limited ability and time to delve into issues within 1 day – trying to achieve too much</li> <li>• Scratches the surface - many of the</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants really valued the experiential sides to the day and 'learning through doing'</li> <li>• Cross faculty project management of the event, an internal organisational success for Trinity Laban</li> <li>• Carefully considered programme, planned with input from the OPAN partnership</li> <li>• Trinity Laban had the capacity to manage and facilities to host the event</li> <li>• Provided a focus for partnership working across the OPAN membership</li> <li>• Structured networking built into the day, particularly important for those starting out who are more likely to find networking daunting</li> <li>• Older people's involvement was central to the day and feedback showed that delegates particularly valued this</li> <li>• Opportunity for frank reflection</li> </ul>	<p>professional development issues for emerging artists require longer term support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegates wanted more time with experienced artists and this is difficult to facilitate using this model</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>	<p><b>Challenges</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand for more opportunities for peer to peer networking is evident</li> <li>• Demand for more practical workshop focused CPD</li> <li>• Demand for this type of event shows that there is a growing body of artists interested in this kind of work</li> <li>• Creation of a model for an introductory / awareness raising / inspire yourself day for emerging artists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioners wanted to be able to attend more than one practical workshop</li> <li>• Packed programme and timekeeping, whilst allowing for the natural flow of sessions</li> </ul>

**Learning Points**

- A strong artistic practice is essential and underpins all participatory arts practice
- Older people's arts, as part of participatory arts practice is not a second rate practice. It has its own set of highly developed skills and demands practitioners to be not only experienced, intuitive and experimental artists, but to be sensitive facilitators, skilled communicators and highly adaptive.
- Those taking part enjoyed the process and benefits of sharing and reflecting on their practice with others
- Artists working within some art forms seem to have a natural affinity for certain types of practice, or possess stronger skillsets that lend themselves to particular elements of older people's arts practice (E.g. dancers tend to work across art forms regularly and actors have strong improvisation skills)

## Ideas or areas for consideration in the future

- When developing CPD emerging older people's artists providers need to take on board how relatively experienced (in terms of participatory arts practice) those considering this area of practice actually are. I.e. the skills gaps will be different from those who are new to participatory arts practice as a whole.
- The need to build confidence was identified as an issue and could suggest that slower burning forms of CPD (as opposed to quicker training courses) would be beneficial to this cohort
- Topics identified as areas of recurring concern (potentially areas for training) included: understanding health issues; understanding the physical limitations of older people; setting the right tone; adapting practice for an older audience; inclusivity and how that applies in an older people's arts setting; pace and levelling – getting a balance between stimulating but not overly challenging activities.
- Delegates particularly welcomed the opportunity to network, exchange ideas and provide mutual support suggesting a need for more networking opportunities
- Practical sessions proved very popular and a 'carousel' day of practical workshops profiling a host of different styles and types of delivery across differing art forms, while aimed at emerging older people's artists, could fulfil this interest
- There is a need for CPD to represent the spectrum of ageing and in particular CPD around working with more active older people and with mixed ability groups were suggested as needs
- Intergenerational work, finding collaborators, evaluation, pitching to funders and reminiscence were all issues raised
- There also need around development of arts practice and in particular digital arts, poetry and storytelling were mentioned
- Training needs around specific health conditions (E.g. dementia, depression) were raised
- Accreditation of training - feedback from older people's arts organisations is that this could be considered
- Participants felt at longer term reflection was important to development of practice and a number wanted support in finding longer term mentors
- Demand for places was high evident so we could organise a repeat run of the Older and Wiser event 'as was'



## Impact for Participants

As part of *Older and Wiser* and the *Reflective Learning Group*, delegates were asked to complete a starting 'baseline' and 'end point' questionnaire as well as questions relating to their levels of experience of working in arts with older people. This process was undertaken by external evaluators Annabel Jackson Associates who were assigned to evaluate the Artsworks programme. A separate report has been compiled, but it is useful to take some of the findings in the context of this report.

### ***Older and Wiser***

Based on baseline and endpoint feedback points participants indicated a small increase in how confident they felt about working with older people in participatory practice (baseline 4.07, end point 4.97 on a 7 point scale).

90% of respondents said that the session helped them reflect on their practice and linked them to other artists. 83% said the session helped to share the older person's voice. 76% said the session helped to explain the settings for work with older people.

All respondents thought the workshop was well organised, well structured and a good use of their time. 90% or more said it was clear in its objectives, sufficiently participative, sufficiently practical and useful.

The comments fed back through questionnaires to the external evaluators strongly indicate a need for following on activity, which is unsurprising as a one day course can only serve to scratch the surface of development needs.

All the participants indicated that they got what they wanted out of the session, completely or partly, while 36% also emphasised the need for follow on activity. This need for longer term development activity is reiterated in the comments from participants:

*'Interesting day but feel to some degree disabled or possibly that I was naive in thinking I could do this without professional training, a plethora of skills or access to mentoring/supervision. It hasn't caused me to give up but has definitely given me more questions than answers.'*

*'It was a bit too rushed because trying to cover so much'*

*'Excellent, but we need more!'*

*'Information overload in a good way'*

### **Reflective Learning Group**

Respondents said that the Reflective Learning Group increased their feeling of being part of a community of arts practitioners, gave them tools for reflection, increased their priority to reflection and increased their confidence in working with older people.

The five respondents who took part in the observation and feedback sessions found them definitely useful.

*'It was great to see artists in their practice settings.'*

*'I am looking at different ways to discuss and explain experiences with and to colleagues. I have a clearer idea of how to structure reflection so that it can be of benefit to colleagues and fellow practitioners as well as to myself.'*

*'It offered up the opportunity to develop a system of mutual support between practitioners.'*

*'It was inspiring. And it made me feel 'alive to it all.'*

*'I certainly want to do more. If you were doing these sessions again I would encourage everyone to attend at least two different artists and art forms.'*

*'I am always a little sceptical and cynical about these types of events, having experienced many in the past that have 'nice words' but that 'go nowhere'. It is very refreshing to leave an event like this, devoid of scepticism and cynicism.'*



## Organisational and Partnership impact

The CPD work funded through Artsworks has been as significant strand for Trinity Laban and our network of partners within OPAN. As such the funding has enabled significant learning outcomes and impact to the organisations, which include:

- Having a funded opportunity and focus for a piece of cross faculty managed CPD project within Trinity Laban
- Allowed us to test the market in terms of CPD for more experienced as well as emerging artists
- Helping us refine our ideas for future training offers and gain an insight into the CPD issues facing these two significantly different, but also surprisingly similar cohorts.
- Allowed us to pilot an offer on behalf of OPAN organisations
- Testing the market potential for future commercially viable CPD products and services
- Helping OPAN organisations develop our capacity, skills and experience from arts to CPD providers
- Helping us reflect upon and refine our thinking around the format, structure, content, delivery, pacing and management of future CPD offerings
- Helping to raise the profile of Trinity Laban and the OPAN member organisations
- Investing in and developing the skills of practitioners working with the sector
- Strengthening the partnership working between the OPAN member organisations



In conclusion, a comment from the external evaluator Annabel Jackson Associates:

*'These two types of CPD served different purposes. Both types of CPD were extremely well received and seen as well organised and delivered. Old and Wiser had the advantage of supporting a larger number of artists at the same time. The Reflective Learning Group had an advantage in being seen as more self contained and self organising. There is strong demand for continuation, whether in networking or attending training.'*

### Acknowledgements

There are too many people who have worked on the project to list individually, but our whole hearted thanks goes to the project managers and artists working within the Learning and Participation teams at Trinity Laban, to our partner organisations within OPAN and of course the participants of the *Retired Not Tired* programme.

We particularly wish to acknowledge and thank the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for their support of this work, which has been vital to making it happen and enabling the learning we take away.

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