

NOTT JUST BALLET 2014

an evaluation of the project's impact



September 2014



Thank you to all the young people who took part in Nott Just Ballet, to Nottingham Academy, especially Ian Oxlade and Victoria Musson, to Edale Rise Primary and Nursery School, to Bluebell Hill Primary School, to Gillian Dack and Maxine Cockett, to Dance 4 and to David Longford and the team at Theatre Royal.

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INTRODUCTION

THE PROJECT

Nott Just Ballet is the second collaboration between the Renewal Trust and the Birmingham Royal Ballet, and builds on the success of the Nott Ballet project in May 2013.

It provided an intensive week long programme for 60 children and young people from 8 -16, from the St Anns and Sneinton areas of Nottingham. Most of the young people taking part had never danced before, and included students from Nottingham Academy, Bluebell Hill Primary School, Edale Rise Primary and Nursery School and a group from the wider community. The young people participated in dance workshops, created their own dance piece and performed it on stage at the Theatre Royal with sets and technical support from the Birmingham Royal Ballet. Alongside this, a shadow company was created, giving another group of young people the opportunity to 'shadow' the professionals providing the technical, creative and media support to the project.



THIS LEARNING HISTORY

This is the second Learning History evaluating the collaborations between the Renewal Trust and the Birmingham Royal Ballet. The first was a general evaluation of the Nott Ballet project in 2013, reviewing it's achievements and impact, and exploring the learning for how projects of this sort are commissioned and run. This second Learning History for this year's Nott Just Ballet project focuses on the impact of the project on the participants and their families and the broader community. Furthermore, this impact is explored specifically in the context of the role of the Renewal Trust, and how the project contributes to its aims and objectives as a community regeneration organisation.

It has been developed from extended conversations to share the stories and reflections of:

- o nearly all of the young participants both before and after participating in the project
- o eight parents or grandparents of children from the two Primary Schools, two Academies and Community group
- o all five group leaders
- o various other project team members

The first chapter tells the stories of two parents, one of a primary school aged child on the project, and the other of two secondary school aged children on the project.

The second chapter explores the impact of the project on the participating children and their families, through the lens of personal, social and community resilience.

The third chapter looks at the impact of, and potential learning from the project for the schools involved.

The final chapter reflects on the impact and legacy of last year's Nott Ballet on the shaping and success of this year's Nott Just Ballet project.

One final point: the Learning History might read as unusually positive – but this really is a fair reflection of the stories that were shared from all perspectives.

TWO PARENT'S STORIES

This chapter looks at the stories of two different families and their experience of the project through the eyes of the parent. While each story is the unique experience of that particular family, there is much in both that reflects and reinforces themes and observations from all the parents and children that were spoken to for this Learning History.

The first story is of a family whose child is currently at Primary School. The second is of a family from the Academy who participated in the project.

We haven't added any commentary to these two stories - you are invited to just read and reflect. Subsequent chapters will draw out and expand on the themes and learning that arise from these and all the other stories shared in this Learning History

PRIMARY

.. she came home with the letter... first she told me about it, then I got to read the letter... she was really excited... she was over the moon... she rang all her family members... every single person in the family to tell them... every time if my friends call – 'can you tell them please mum?'

...I was really happy for her, because she does love dancing, and.....to perform in front of everyone, I think she's always wanted to do that...

...she was telling me... what type of dance they were doing... everything... the support she got... talking about every little thing...

...she was going on and on and on about how much she enjoyed (it)... and how she enjoyed meeting other people, as well, that was quite good for her... how she got on with everyone (and)... how they, like, worked together as a group as well, that's what she enjoyed the most...

...I had a tear in my eye (at the performance) as soon as I seen (her)... you feel so proud, and happy... all sorts of things going through your mind... it was so nice...

...she did... really surprise me...

...I think she's more confident now... she can talk about it more in front of people – this is what I've done, and this is what I'd like to do – it wasn't like her before... she's always been really quiet in school...

...and I think it's just opened her eyes a bit as well... what it's like to perform in front of people... and I think she goes – I would love to do that later on in life... when I'm a bit older.....she actually wanted to be a doctor, but now she's saying that she wants to be... a doctor... but she wants to do something... like performing, as well... like, singing...

...she goes – I'm more confident now... I think I can do it in front of people, I can sing!... she wants to go on... Britain's Got Talent...

...she opened up a bit... she's always been quiet... even when she started school, in nursery, she didn't make friends until she was about a year 2... she only had one friend in year 1, as well... she wouldn't make friends, she would not talk to another child... and even her teachers are so surprised she's come out of her shell so much...

...she mixed a lot with other children... and she enjoyed it, meeting other people...

...I think someone told her not to do something, and I think it's the first time that she actually spoke out to her... she said to her – 'I can do what I want, you don't have to tell me what to do' – another child... and I was really shocked, it's not like (her), she would not answer anyone back, and that's the first time she actually said it... so I think that brought her confidence out more... I was really shocked when she told me... and I said 'how did you do that?' and she goes 'oh, I just said it'... it's not like her, it's out of her character to speak up... I'm actually happy that she's more open now, she can speak out now if someone says something to her...

...she's learned now there are other things out of school you can do... or what happens around, she didn't know you could do this kind of stuff, like ballet... or dance... meeting other people... performing... she didn't know that things like this happen... how they work... so she knows more about that now, which has helped her a lot...

...100%, she's definitely up for everything... we went to the Academy, and they were saying that we help children who like to do drama and things like that... and she was just, like... there was a big smile... she was just sat there... pinching me, pinching me...'mum, that's me next year, that's me next year'... she got home... she goes... 'mum, I just can not wait to go Academy because you've got more opportunities there'... she was really excited about that...

...she wouldn't have (responded in the same way if she hadn't had the Nott Just Ballet experience)... she wouldn't know what's going on, or what they mean by you get more chances... so she wouldn't have known...

...she was really excited, as soon as she walked through the door she told her dad... 'dad, this is what they're going to do in Academy... and I'm going to be the first one there to do drama...'

...even her teacher last week, she said, you know... 'I think... she'll go further in drama 'cause she's really, really good'... they made her act last week... in front of the class... and the teacher said she was amazing... she has progressed so much... she's always been the quiet one... she's definitely more confident now...

...actually... we only had three tickets... and my younger daughter and older son, they wanted to go and see their sister perform... he (my husband) was gutted... I think he just sat at home and he was really, really upset... in a way, he was so happy that (she) performed, but he was really upset that he couldn't go... he was really, really gutted... but he was happy that (she) performed, he was really proud of her...

...they (her brother and sister) thought she was amazing... (she) and my other son, who's a year older than her, they're always fighting at home... but when she come on... he was really proud of her... so was my youngest... they were actually shocked... they were really proud of her, especially (my older son), he was so proud of her... as soon as my husband picked us up... as soon as he got in the car... he goes... 'dad, you actually missed it, you should have been there, (she) was amazing'... and he was coming out with all sorts of words... she was great, she was amazing... he was so proud of her... that was nice to see... as a brother, he was saying that about his sister... it was so sweet... it's not like (him) to... praise (her).. and as soon as we got in he rang my mum... he goes... 'oh, (she) was so good... I love her to bits...' and that was such a sweet moment for me to hear that from him... it was great... they were really, really happy...

...I think that day was such a lovely day for us... amazing... to see (her) perform, to hear that from (her brother), as well... it was lovely...

..100% go for it, definitely... once in a lifetime isn't it, definitely...

SECONDARY

...when the children came home from school... they came home saying they were doing this dance... theatre thing... I said 'hey that sounds terrific, right up their street'... and then they said... 'and then we can perform it', so I said 'oh, that'll be wonderful'...

...I've got three children... two children were in, one... wasn't... and he has to be, sort of, encouraged a little bit, especially with it being dance... because it had the word ballet in it, he kind of steered away a little... we talked about Billy Elliot... how wonderful it would be... you know, that age, 13... 14... a bit sceptical...

...he was disappointed that he wasn't in it... because he thought it was ballet, at the onset, that kind of put him off... then he was tempted to go with his friends... and when he saw it he was just blown away... he just loved it... and he watched the ballet after... and that has kind of, given him a different perspective about ballet...

...they're the kind of children that like music, like dance and theatre... do performance with us, at home... 'look at this we've learned'... and do little routines together...

...they just loved it, they loved every minute of it... they woke up in the morning... 'oh, we've got dance today'... they loved it... eager to get there... eager to get started... they just loved the week... a positive experience.....and to have the opportunity, then... to perform it, that just took it to a different level for them...

...I think they were nervous... when they perform, they just normally do it for mum and dad, and aunties and uncles...

...they've been to see shows, but obviously they don't, kind of, know what it entails when you're at the other end...

...they said they were nervous (about the performance) when they came home, but then they just loved it... they loved the whole idea of just being at the theatre...

...they bought the outfits from Primark, and jazzed them all up... and that for them was 'oh, fantastic... we can do this with my teeshirt...'... it's brought them a whole new different level of just playing at home...

...I think the creativity... what they saw them do with the clothes... they're doing that more at home...

...for me, it's had a really big impact... the fact they had the opportunity to watch it... to perform it on stage...

...this weekend... they've done a programme, and they've used the clothes that they used at the theatre, and done us a little show... it's brilliant... absolutely been brilliant... they've done a whole performance of dance and music at home...

...and when we went... to see the (BRB) show... sat with them there, they were saying... 'oh my gosh, you can't see a thing when you're down there'... they couldn't believe that we could see them so clearly, because they couldn't see anybody in the audience... so to follow it up with watching something, has taken it to a different level... they've really enjoyed it from both sides...

...I think they were shocked... at themselves... when they were watching the stage... talking about the scenery, and how it works... it was just amazing really...

...in our opinion... the week thing was fantastic... you can see the progression, you can see the confidence, you can see the extra things they were doing... 'cause my lot will practice stuff like that at home... we were seeing that, and seeing it grow... they were practicing the moves, and showing their friends... they were showing (my son) – because he wasn't able to do it...

...but when we came to see it... as parents... it was just too short... it felt like it could have been a little bit longer... it was done in an instant.....and the timing... I had to rush to get there... from work, I really had to break my neck to get there... and missed probably about five or ten minutes of it..... but... my husband... he was kind of mesmerised... to see them on stage... and just settling in for a bit more, and it was done!

...it's been a brilliant thing... I've not known that in school before... they should do more of that...

...I just thought that was a great experience... something different from the norm... they've learned something... they've raised confidence in performance...

...my kids are quite active, so they do a lot of... sporty activities... they're quite used to that, but I think it was around the process of... thinking and doing and performing... in sport you just do it... you don't focus on someone watching you... when they were performing, I think their thought processes were more on the people watching them... and that's where the energy got sapped, I think, for them... they had to do it just so...

...I've seen a difference... they're not cheeky, my children, but some of the things they've been saying, I thought – ooh, where's that come from... you're getting a little bit brave here... this weekend, laughing at us as adults... now they normally wouldn't do that... I think that rapport with... being around adults... performing... and joking around... and that's why I think it will help them push themselves forward in class...

...personally, for me, it will be interesting to see, probably next February... because the teachers say... my children are good... and they'll tell me that... but they say that they do lack in putting their hand up or putting themselves forward... so I hope, that's what it will have brought... in terms of their confidence level... them being a little bit more vocal...

...they were brilliant (Lee and the other dancers), and they'd helped them a lot is what they said... you know like kids will say - oh that teacher, they're not very good... they don't talk to you much, or they're always shouting - but we just got positive... comments really... their approach... how calm they were, they didn't shout... and my kids... they don't like to be shouted at... but they didn't sense that at all, they just thought that they were so helpful... they made them work is what they said... and they've enjoyed it...

...they didn't have one negative word to say about the help that they got... they weren't worried that they might get it wrong... it just felt so relaxed... they were just eager to get back and do it again... they loved it...

...I think... (one's) more creative, and (the other's) more academic, although they both like to do creative things... I think this may give (one) confidence to choose anything arty... thinking about the GCSEs next year... I think she could go that way... ...whereas I think it's just given (the other)... more confidence that she can do anything creative...

...from when they did the dance, they've been practicing the dance, and it was this Sunday that they did the performance... and that just brings the family together doesn't it... everybody has to sit down and watch it...

...with them as brothers and sisters, it's that age that they're scratching at each other... in each other's space... more arguments... but I think that since the dance, (their brother) has been willing to work with them... it's just been spectacular really...

...whether your child's shy, whether they don't like dance... I'd say, yeah, encourage them to do it... even if they can't dance, or don't like performing, they'll get something out of it... build relationships... they'll just feel confident just being around people being confident... I would encourage them 100%...

...I would just encourage any child to get involved with anything like that, because they can't lose... they can't fail... because it's not about being right or wrong, it's much more than that... it's about enjoying the experience, building confidence... and... building new relationships...

...the whole performance... was great... the only disappointment for the parents was that it was too short... but the aftermath... the reception type thing... that felt to me, a little bit more... political... it kind of took the edge off why we were there... too formal, too political... it just kind of dampened it for me...

IMPACT: PARTICIPANTS AND FAMILIES

PREAMBLE: RESILIENCE

It was always important, from the Renewal Trust's perspective that the impact of the project on the participants is explored in the context of the Renewal Trust's aims and objectives – what does the project contribute to the work of the Trust? In supporting the communities of St Anns and Sneinton, much of the Trust's work is about developing adaptive community resilience – the ability not just to cope with adversity, but to adapt and thrive.

By focusing on community resilience we emphasise the important role of the community... in understanding resilience. As we have seen, whether or not individuals are resilient will depend not only on personal attributes and skills, but also on the resilience of the community. This includes the nature of relationships between citizens and neighbours, local authorities, housing associations, voluntary groups and will have a profound impact on quality of life and the capacity of the community to contribute to positive social change... A community can both facilitate and constrain resilience, and it can be an agent for change in and of itself.¹

In conversations with participants, resilience kept emerging as an important theme, and it seems to provide a natural framework for exploring the impact of the project. The sections below reflect current conversations about community resilience, and the conceptual and evaluative framework of WARM² (The Well-being and Resilience Measure), with its three domains of:

- Self: the way people feel about their own lives (personal resilience)
- Support: the quality of social support and networks within the community (social resilience)
- Structure and Systems: the strength of the infrastructure and environment to support people

¹ Adapting to change: the role of community resilience: The Young Foundation / Barrow Cadbury Trust. 2012

² Taking the temperature of local communities: The Wellbeing and Resilience Measure (WARM), 2010. <http://youngfoundation.org/publications/taking-the-temperature-of-local-communities-the-wellbeing-and-resilience-measure-warm/>

PERSONAL RESILIENCE

Personal, or self resilience is about the first of the three domains of community resilience discussed above.

A recent project about community resilience in the London Borough of Newham worked with the conceptual framework of the three domains, and suggested that individuals who have self resilience:

*'are able to handle challenges and setbacks, and have the skills and resources to make the most of opportunities'*³

The Nott Just Ballet project put the young people in a position where they became aware of the importance of their own resilience if they wanted to succeed. It gave them the opportunity to recognise how resilient they were, and to push themselves to become more resilient. The project can be seen to have impacted on the young people's personal resilience in four different areas:

- Perseverance
- Self confidence
- Adaptability
- Being open to opportunity



³ Plugging the Gap: turning strangers into neighbours. RSA 2013. <http://www.thersa.org/action-research-centre/public-services-arts-social-change/plugging-the-gap/turning-strangers-into-neighbours>

PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance – getting stuck in and keeping going, and handling challenges and setbacks is the most obvious element of personal resilience.

The Nott Just Ballet project was really hard work, and presented a real physical and mental challenge to the young participants. This came as something of a surprise to many of the young people, who had anticipated an easy option, out of school and lessons for the week.

The participants, their parents and the group leaders all commented on how hard the young people had had to work, and how tired this had made them.

Some of them surprised themselves and their parents with how hard they were willing to work.

What many of them found, however, was how rewarding this hard work was – and with this came the understanding that if you want to succeed in something, you have to put in some real effort.

...I chose it because... we get a week out of school and it's good for our CV...

...some of them were a bit laid back, relaxed and casual about it... but as the week's gone on they've realised the amount of work that's had to go in... some of them were... quite surprised about that...

...we just thought it was going to be, like, quite simple... it wasn't...

...it was exhausting... because we were dancing and dancing and dancing... and putting new bits in... and then you'd have a break, then you'd have lunch, then you're dancing again... it just drains all the energy out of you... it was worth it in the end... it was worth it...

...you know the last bit... that was really hard... but we done it...

...everyone... getting their head down and going for it...

...she's had to work hard... she came home last night, she was so tired... but she was happy... and she's got a sense of achievement...

...with school, and the rehearsals it was a very tiring week for her... but, on the flip side, she was enjoying it... and it was a good tired, I think... not a tired where she didn't want to go... she did want to go, because she was enjoying it...

...it was nice to get some of them to start to appreciate what is required for a performance... the level of concentration and hard work that's needed...

They learned that you have to keep going even when you would rather give up, and you have to be able and willing to overcome things that get in the way.

That if you keep pushing yourself, you can really achieve things you would never have thought possible.



Even more importantly, they learned that things will go wrong, you will make mistakes, and that you will only succeed if you keep going, keep trying, and learn from your mistakes.

...if you try, you can actually do it...

...you have to be yourself as an individual, and push yourself... basically losing is just... not an option...

...I've got a bad knee as well... every time it hurt I had to go and calm it down a bit more, because I was so adamant I wanted to do the dance... I didn't want to give up...

...being more resilient... never give up...

...we do have ...a little star in our midst... for him I think this has pulled it to a little bit of reality so he can see how hard you've got to work if you want to be on a stage or join a dance company and it actually has spurred him on...

... she is a big girl.... and isn't the most confident person, but she really did push herself. She really wanted to extend to that level... and seeing her do the moves that she did and with that elegance... she is very self-aware and she is a bit scared of her body weight... and then the way she danced... was like she was a bird...

...don't give up... when you're working hard, and something went wrong, then try it and try it again...

...try your best... if you're struggling, try and try and try...

...that's the biggest thing for me personally ...I think trying and succeeding is harder for them than to have a go and not really care...

...particularly... one child... who does really struggle with getting things wrong... and I think that sense of it's OK, and the calmness within their team, helped him try... and accept that yes, OK, I might get it wrong, but that's fine and I will get better as I practice...



They also learned the importance of repetition, the importance of going over things again and again to get them right and to really learn them.

...all of that dance was just really all hard work... I expected it to be a bit hard, but not as hard as it actually was... we went over and over and over it again...

...we got the hang of it quite quickly... but to get it in our memories it took... quite a lot more...

...and they've learnt about the importance of repeated rehearsal. Over and over and over again until it's in your arms and legs, even without the use of your brain. And that's a really important thing for them to learn...

They became more aware of the importance of self motivation – doing things to achieve their or their teams goals, rather than because someone in authority tells them.

...if we kept doing it we would be able to perform on the stage at the Theatre Royal...

...because... it (giving up because tired) will affect the whole group... that would be selfish... we're a team...

Many of the young people recognised that what they had learned about perseverance was already having an impact on their attitudes and behaviours in school - they were already applying their learning.

This had also been observed by the group leaders.



They also recognised that this learning and these changed behaviours would be important for them more widely – outside school and in their future lives.

...I've become... more sensible, and more like... feeling better about... the opportunities that you could get if you work hard... it's kind of made me, like, concentrate, and head on, and focus a lot more...

...yeah (back in school)... see it through, no matter how tired you are, it's always worth it in the end...

...yeah, maths... because I'm like the rubbishest maths person in my class... before I did ballet, I always gived up...

...stay together... if you're on the same table and you're working as a group, stay together and carry on working...

...I learned to stay focussed...

...before he went to the ballet he was ...very frightened to get things wrong... couldn't cope with the fact that he couldn't do things and would almost give up straight away, but since going to the ballet he's ...he just says it himself, it's not something we've pushed on to him... he will say...'don't give up... keep trying'... and it's fine, you can get things wrong and you will get it right, and he is actually able to bring himself around now...

... I'm a stronger person...

...and also making mistakes... you make mistakes, it doesn't really matter... and you have to work out, well, what do I do?.. you have to get up and carry on... so all these kind of experiences apply to lots of other learnings...

...it's really helped them to grow self-esteem... and the belief in themselves... that they can actually do something if they try...

SELF CONFIDENCE

Self confidence and self esteem provide the grounding for developing and maintaining personal resilience. It is through developing self confidence that people can develop a sense of entitlement, and can aspire to new opportunities and take on new challenges.

Before starting the Nott Just Ballet project many of the young people were worried about what people might think of them, and felt that they lacked self confidence. Some hoped the project would be a real opportunity to develop their self confidence.

Involvement in the project has clearly increased the self confidence and self esteem of many of the participants. This has been recognised by the young people themselves, their parents, and the group leaders.

This increased self confidence has been evident on the project itself. The young people have become more confident around their peers and the adults on the project.

Many also commented on the performance, and their increased confidence in performing in front of others. For some this represented a natural progression, but for some, it represented a much more profound change.

...I don't want to look like... an idiot in front of people... I don't want to look like a muppet in front of all these people that don't know me... that might get the wrong idea of me...

...it was just a once in a lifetime opportunity... I just really thought – wow – you know, it's a chance to build my confidence and make friends...

..I think it's just been, like, a confidence booster... working together... and just seeing it all come together...

...I would recommend it, because... it really does boost your confidence...

...for the... children, I would say the self-esteem ...it's really helped them to grow self-esteem...

...I think I've become less shy, because I was, like, really shy... I think it was because there were loads of other people... my friends were there, and I saw them talking to people and I thought, like, if they're doing it, they're not shy, so I'll have a go...

...she does have a few friends and does play around but I've never seen her get too involved. And with the dance she was really involved... she was really enthusiastic about it and that's what I haven't seen before...

... they're not the most confident kids... and... speaking to the instructors and having a good joke with them... going to have a word with them... just getting out of that bubble ... express themselves and go and talk about their experience...



The increased self confidence is also having an impact beyond the project.

Back in school, participants have been more socially confident, and are speaking up and being more engaged in class.

They have also demonstrated their increased confidence in performing and performance in school.

...I've got over stage fright... I used to hate going on the stage...

...I think they've learned numerous skills... listening skills, preparation skills... and I think they'll overcome huge confidence issues when they get onto the stage tomorrow...

...she is not a performer at all, she doesn't like performing, she gets really frightened, to the point where she's been crying before because she's had to do a performance in school, and she's not wanted to do it... this time, she didn't have any nerves at all... so something's different this time... she's not complained, she's been excited... a complete reversal from where she was before... which for me is really powerful, that she's actually had a very positive experience of doing a performance on stage, and she wants to do more...

... I'm just quite quiet... and now I've been speaking more... in class... speaking more to my friends and that..

...when we were performing in front of different schools, it was very helpful... it boosts your confidence up... I'm doing more presentations now (in school)...

...I think she's more confident now... she can talk about it more in front of people – this is what I've done, and this is what I'd like to do – it wasn't like her before... she's always been really quiet in school...

... she went out, on the playground... and... kept doing ballet turns... so, confidence, definitely... you could tell the difference between the Monday and the Friday...

...we have a little girl... she's quite timid. Tends to sort of sit in the background a little bit. But her confidence has grown, we can see a change in her and I think she actually does show more teamwork now in the classroom, rather than just sticking to a couple of friends...



The young people can also see how this increased confidence might impact in the future.

They are expressing this increased confidence in many ways – social confidence, more outgoing, speaking up for themselves....

It is also expanding their ideas for what they are capable of – their self image – and what they might do in the future.

...and even her teachers are so surprised she's come out of her shell so much...

...this is his first time of experiencing dance and actually being on a stage in... which is amazing for him... and he has said to me now he would like to be in a school play... whereas before it was very much 'no, I don't think I'd like to try a school play'. So... his confidence has improved immensely in that area...

...even her teacher last week, she said, you know... 'I think she'll go further in drama 'cause she's really, really good'... they made her act last week... in front of the class, she was the headteacher, and the teacher said she was amazing... she has progressed so much... she's always been the quiet one... she's definitely more confident now...

...personally, for me, it will be interesting to see, probably next February... because the teachers say... my children are good... and they'll tell me that... but they say that they do lack in putting their hand up or putting themselves forward... so I hope, that's what it will have brought... in terms of their confidence level... them being a little bit more vocal...

...because we've just done what we did, on the Theatre Royal stage, and we've got confidence... you have the confidence to go and do more things when you get older...

...I thought it was going to be good, because I'm not much of a confident person... ever since I've done that dance I've got more confident... and more involved in more stuff... and not just keep myself in a dark shadow...

...I've learned that I can express what I'm feeling... and I've got more confident... and I'd love to do it again...

This change has been recognised and welcomed by parents and other adults – who can see the long term benefits it could have.



...it built her confidence up, brought her out of her shell more... she seems more outgoing... when she's round people...

...and she actually spoke up, and I was shocked... it's out of her character to speak up... I'm actually happy that she's more open now, she can speak out now if someone says something to her...

...she goes – I'm more confident now... I think I can do it in front of people, I can sing'... she wants to go on... Britain's Got Talent...

...after she's done this, she's got a lot more confident... she's dancing around... 'oh, I can do this, I can do that'... she's gone more confident now... '...I can do everything now'...

...'I'm more talented now'... she's telling everyone...

... I would generally say confidence... and the specific, performing in front of an audience... it's normal to feel nervous... it's normalising some of those feelings and putting them into context, so if you feel them again... maybe when you're taking a test... you can apply them...

..I think it will stay with them and have an impact on their confidence in lots of different situations...

ADAPTABILITY

Adaptability and the ability to think creatively are critical for self resilience. Without this we get stuck and unable to see a way forward.

The Nott Just Ballet project has given the young people the opportunity to think creatively and independently – to practice problem solving, and to explore different ways to solve problems, not just going with the first and most obvious solution.



...because we had Lee, and the other three helpers... we thought they would just guide us and tell us what to do... but they would just leave us to think for ourselves, they're not going to do everything for us... they needed us to be more independent...

...I like the beginning... because... you know when people do their twirls and stuff... you like, go to your positions, and it's so nice because you get to make up your own moves... I find that really cool and interesting...

...it's a good experience... if you want to push your limits... just go out of your boundaries...

...being resourceful, and making links so that you learn more... using something we already know... that we've already done... to compound into that...

...sometimes my students... they're too ready to take the first decision... and so they've thought more – and I have seen this since – they've learned about options... more... creative options...

...and the instructors were so good... it was kind of... let the kids decide what they want to do... let's see what ideas they have... so that was something that was good... I think that's where the confidence builds up, and the trust...

...my favourite thing was the creativity...

OPEN TO OPPORTUNITY

A really important part of personal resilience is an attitude that is open to new opportunities, underpinned by the confidence to try new things.

For some, this was already part of their thinking, and a major reason for doing the Nott Just Ballet project in the first place.

...I'm looking forward to... going out of my comfort zone and trying something new...

...I had the chance to try this, so thought, why not try?

...she was really excited, she was really happy that she was doing it with some friends... she was really excited to be doing something different...

Others felt that they had learned the importance of, and felt more confident about taking on new opportunities and challenges as a result of their involvement in the project.

...taking part in other things... 'cause if you've done it once you can always do it again...

...if you get an opportunity, take it, because it might never happen again...

...I really enjoyed it, I would do it again... if someone came up to me and said will you do it?... I'd go... you always gain something out of it...

People recognised that having faced the challenge of doing this project, they would be more open to other opportunities in the future, that they could take on a new challenge again.

...I've learned to take opportunities even though you might not want to do it... or you'll miss out...

...doing something I've never done before... I've done something I've never done before, and I could do that again...

For one of the young people it has had an immediate impact – deciding, following the Nott Just Ballet experience, to sign up to attend a University Open Day.

...I think it will help her to take opportunities when it comes along...

...I grew my confidence... and I've already signed up for a trip to go to University... next week...

SOCIAL RESILIENCE

Social resilience is the second of the three domains in the WARM framework of community resilience.

It is about the networks of support within families and communities, and to whom people can turn for advice and support - strong networks are crucial for social resilience. It also recognises, however, that even if a community has very strong networks of support, if it is too inward looking it will be less able to respond positively to change – people need connections and relationships beyond the immediate community to support the capability to develop, innovate and flourish.

This project can be seen to have contributed to future social resilience through:

- The development of relationship building, teamwork and leadership skills which are at the heart of a resilient community
- Its impact on the participating families
- Encouraging the participants to connect with and appreciate others beyond their immediate area and age group
- Encouraging the participants to be more open to new ideas and opportunities

RELATIONSHIPS

Community resilience is built primarily through relationships, and the Nott Just Ballet project has provided excellent opportunities for participants to develop the relationship building skills which are central to a connected community.

Participants had a lot to say about how being involved in the project had improved their social skills.

...I'm confident... with other people now that I would never talk to... I still talk to people that did it with us...

...I think I've got... more confidence making new friends...

...this has been an amazing opportunity for them, it's helped them with their interaction, their social skills... meeting other schools... definitely improved their

This has resulted in many feeling far more socially confident around their peers, and finding it easier to get on with and make friends with new people.

It has also given them the opportunity to understand more about the give and take of relationships. To appreciate other people and still be able to work with them even if you don't agree with them or particularly like them, and to recognise that frustrations will happen but don't need to lead to falling out.

The ability to listen to others is possibly the most important of the social skills for developing socially resilient communities.

In the Nott Just Ballet project, people had to listen to each other, otherwise things would fall apart, and they learned the importance of listening.

listening skills – they've had a lot of listening to do, and watching, and they've done amazingly in a short space of time...

...when you spend a lot of time with people they can get a bit annoying... you can get frustrated with them...

...when... I was in a group... because I'm, like, really opinionated... I I was thinking... so if I told this person 'you're not doing this right'... they might think I'm telling them off... so it was really hard to try... to make it sound like I'm not telling you off...

...I've learned... you learn how to appreciate other people's opinion, and ideas, and how they like to do things... and you, sort of, moderate your... personality... to be able to make others feel comfortable working with you...

...you all had to work in a team, so even if you didn't like someone, or... you fell out with them, you kind of had to... put it to one side... and you had to work with people you didn't like...

...they've learned how to share...

...everyone was in time with each other... you can't usually see the people... you had to... listen to the music carefully...

...if he wasn't as strict, we wouldn't have listened... and we did have to listen or we wouldn't have got a final piece... we did have to listen to know what we was doing... and in the end, we was all glad that we listened as much as we did...

... she's a very outspoken character ...by doing this she's gone more disciplined so she knows when the teacher's talking, she doesn't talk... I think that was a big thing that the instructors encouraged... so (she) has definitely changed through being involved...

A resilient community will be able to pull together and work as a team.

Almost everyone commented on the teamwork that was integral and essential to the Nott Just Ballet project. Without teamwork it would have been impossible.

Participants really enjoyed working as a team, supporting and being supported by others. They realised how valuable and rewarding this can be.



...I got involved in the beginning, because I'm not really good at, like, working in a group... and I think the ballet... obviously it was tough working in a group, but I think I did well, because it made us trust our group, because we had to trust each other... so it worked in the group sense...

...I learned... to work in a team...

...help each other... like, if someone fell down and they couldn't do it... help them and let them know they can do it...

...I think some of them will have learned... teamwork, and the sense that... if you all pull together, you really will make an impact... teamwork's a big thing...

...being pulled together more as a team... teamwork was the biggest thing for me, it really was, as they realised that not one of them was more important than the overall piece...

...one of the children missed a whole day of practising... and the children on the next session helped him along and gave him advice about where he should be standing and what dances to do... and that definitely brought them closer together and made him feel part of the team...

...and she realises now it's a team effort, it's not just one person in the front... I think that's really good for her...

...she enjoyed that... how they, like, worked together as a group as well, that's what she enjoyed the most...

...one of the boys... was injured... and no-one would have judged him for not performing on the final piece because of how much pain he was in and... he could have easily turned round and said I can't go on... but he didn't for the benefit of the group...

Group Leaders observed how behaviours of some of the young people changed, how some who would be likely to be resistant in school, stepped up and became important and co-operative team members.

Many felt that they had learned a huge amount about working in teams that this was already helping them in school, and some very clearly saw how it could help them in the future.

Adaptive resilient communities need leaders – people who will see things that need doing, and will step up and help to make things happen. The more the better.

The Nott Just Ballet project gave young people the opportunity to step forward as leaders – both in social and group interactions and in the ballet itself.

Through this process many of the young people proved themselves to be leaders, often to the surprise of themselves, their peers and the Group Leaders.

... I think when they saw how much it was sort of like dependent upon each different group working together that that made her step up and take responsibility... and seeing also that not all of the team were working together and giving her a chance to think well, that's how I normally am at school, but I'm going to help and be more cooperative...

...I want to be a social worker, so it's about working as a group, as a team... so obviously, because I've done this... I will know how to work in a group, with my colleagues or whatever...

... one of my students... at the start, was resisting and struggling... and we gave (her)... some responsibility... and that really made (her) step up... even when there were challenges... and we took her to one side and said... 'the group are resisting at the moment, you're influential, positive or negative, step up'... and she did... and she steered the group, better than we could've done at times...

...so the group work that they have been doing... (three of them)...took that leadership role... and (one), I would never have expected (him) to take that role... so that was definitely something that's really shocked me...

...the playground, that was amazing...they were practising their dance... (other) kids really got involved and there were 6 or 7 kids that were teaching... you can tell that, because they really enjoyed it, they really wanted to teach them as well... I think they liked the leadership role because they know what they are doing now, they wanted to teach the little ones...

...one student... has probably learned more about teamwork... they have seen that they can step up, become a leader, and learned that it doesn't always have to be them resisting against students and staff... I think that's probably helped her a lot, the way that she has changed her attitude and I think it's ... more... what she can offer and can see the potential in herself...

FAMILIES

Cohesive and supportive families are at the heart of social resilience in communities. From conversations with parents it is very clear that the Nott Just Ballet project did a lot to reinforce existing family ties and to bring families closer together.

Parents were immensely proud of their children and what they had achieved. Watching their children perform was a highly emotional experience for many.

Sharing this emotion and pride really brought parents and their children closer together.

Grandparents were also involved and caught up in this pride.

But it was not just parents and grandparents who were affected. There were many stories of the impact of the project on the siblings of the participants.

Brothers and sisters showing an unexpected interest in what their siblings were doing, being affected by the ballet, and improved relationships through sharing this interest.

...I felt proud of myself... I felt... good... and the people out there must be very proud of us... our mothers and dads and brothers and sisters...

...at the end I felt really excited to find out what my mum and dad was going to say to me because they'd been watching the performance... my dad said that I did really well and he was really proud of me...

...I had a tear in my eye (at the performance) as soon as I seen (her)... you feel so proud, and happy... all sorts of things going through your mind... it was so nice...

I think every child had a member of the family, not necessarily parents... grandparents came... and speaking... afterwards, they were all so proud of what the children had achieved...

...it was brilliant... I went, my partner, and our son... he's only two... he was really excited that (his sister) was going to be on stage, and when he saw her he was really happy...

...she (her little sister) was going – I want to go in it, I want to be there, I want to be as big as her... so she did get a bit jealous...

...they (her brother and sister) thought she was amazing... (she) and my other son, who's a year older than her, they're always fighting at home... but when she come on... he was really proud of her...

Expressions of pride in what their siblings had achieved, that ran completely counter to the normal bickering between brothers and sisters.

The children and young people communicated extensively with their parents about the project, what they were doing, and what they had learned. For some, this was in marked contrast to hearing from their children about what they did in school.

Some children were also inspired to practice and perform things they had learned in front of their parents and extended families.

Parents really enjoyed this increased sharing and conversation, and recognised that it had brought the family closer together.

... because he (a participant's brother) thought it was ballet... that... put him off... then... when he saw it he was just blown away... he just loved it... and he watched the ballet after... and that has...given him a different perspective about ballet...

...with them as brothers and sisters, it's that age that they're scratching at each other... in each other's space... more arguments... but I think that since the dance, (their brother) has been willing to work with them... it's just been spectacular really...

...coming home and showing me what she was doing...

...all sorts, lots... they never, ever stopped... they both brought the programmes home, and we sat and read them together... it was like a story theme... she was... going... 'mum, I'm so excited, I'm going to be learning'... because they'd watched, also, on the ipad, they'd seen the... previous years... of how it had gone... they couldn't stop talking about it... the first day she was saying what they had done, what they were learning, what they were going to do... it was amazing...

...she's absolutely loved it... talked about it loads... really, really, really loved it.....this weekend... they've done a programme, and they've used the clothes that they used at the theatre, and done us a little show... it's brilliant... absolutely been brilliant... I'd love them to show it to you... they've done a whole performance of dance and music at home...

...I think the creativity... what they saw them do with the clothes... they're doing that more at home...

...from when they did the dance, they've been practicing the dance, and it was this Sunday that they did the performance... and that just brings the family together doesn't it... everybody has to sit down and watch it...

Many parents were surprised by what their children had achieved and saw talents and abilities that they had not previously recognised.

As a result of these new insights some are already looking at further opportunities for their children to participate in dance and the performing arts.

Some also said that they had noticed changes in their children, in their maturity and behaviour.



It would seem reasonable to speculate that through seeing their children differently, appreciating talents they had not previously recognised, and seeing the way that the project has benefited their children, that the parents will be far more likely to see their children differently in other contexts, and encourage and support them to take part in other types of projects, initiatives and activities both in and beyond the arts.

...she did... really surprise me...

...my mum... 'cause she knows I can't dance, so she thought it was, going to be, like, not as good as what it was... she was surprised...

...I know (one child's) Dad, he was very impressed... and after ballet Lee told me to pass on the message that (she's) been exceptional and she is an amazing dancer and to let her parents know about this... and after that his attitude towards (her) has been so positive ... 'thank you, I know she's a star, I know she's going to be a star when she grows up.' There's that confidence that he has in her, that's really good to see...

...but when we actually saw them dance... it blew me... it was absolutely amazing... to think in such a short time, what they'd learned...

...when we went to see the performance, on the last day, she was really good... I was really surprised how well she performed... the performance was really good...

...and the funniest thing is... her granddad picked her up the other day and said 'we have to do something, we have to get her into dance'... it affected him as well... he saw that as well...

...I've seen a difference... they're not cheeky, my children, but some of the things they've been saying, I thought – ooh, where's that come from... you're getting a little bit brave here... this weekend, laughing at us as adults... now they normally wouldn't do that... I think that rapport with... being around adults... performing... and joking around... and that's why I think it will help them push themselves forward in class...

BROADENING CONNECTIONS: RELATIONSHIPS

Diversity is critically important to adaptive social resilience: a community that is too inwardly focussed, especially one with strong, established social support networks will generally be less likely to welcome or benefit from diversity. This can be experienced as at best a wariness, and at worst a hostility to the most recent new people coming into the community, it can also be experienced as a defensive or territorial localism, where anyone outside of the immediate neighbourhood is likely to be distrusted, and where people are reluctant to venture beyond their own immediate neighbourhood. To support the development of adaptive social resilience, there is a need to connect much more widely.

To look beyond our immediate community and social relationships, we need to realise the value of broader connections and relationships, and have the skills to open up to new and different people.

The Nott Just Ballet project brought together children and young people of different ages from different areas – and for many this was a challenge and concern. Many were fearful of what they might find.

Most found that, in reality, there was little to be scared of, people weren't that different, that it was good to meet new people, and that everyone could work together as a team.

Some particularly enjoyed working with children who were younger or older – something that rarely happens outside the family.

...because it's all different schools, I thought... maybe they wouldn't all work well together...

...then, towards the end we met the other groups... which made us, like, even more nervous... 'cause there was a lot more people around us... watching us...

...meeting so many new people of all different sorts... and obviously it's a bit nerve racking, because you don't know them, or how you're going to get along with them... but you do make a lot of new friends... and it does boost your confidence...

...I got to know them a bit more... I thought they would be, like, rude... but they were all right...

... we hadn't worked together, so it was a bit like... am I going to work with her fine or am I not, are we going to argue, or things like that... but I think when Greenwood joined us it felt more like a team... we got to work with other people, not just someone that we see every day...

...it was really nerve racking at first (meeting the children from other schools) because I didn't know if they was going to be kind or anything... but when I got to know them they were really sweet, especially the little ones...



Hopefully, having experienced working with different people, of different ages, from different areas, the young people will be more open to working with different people in the future, and will have the confidence to take look for and take up opportunities outside their local area and usual friendship groups.

...I learned that... you will not get along with everyone, but... we all wanted the show to be good, so we had to leave our personal issues aside, and just, like, get along... if we wasn't happy about who we were working with or what team, we just had to get along with it...

...all the people we met from primary, Greenwood, my school... at the end of the week was like a big happy family... we didn't know that we were going to get that connection within the week...

... and it was actually hard work...communicating with different children from different schools that I hadn't seen before... at the beginning... it was really hard work... after a couple of days I got used to communicating with and talking to the different children...

...she's met people she wouldn't normally meet, and had to work alongside people she wouldn't normally work alongside... it's been a really good skill for her...

...that was one particular thing I've noticed, that she was very excited and happy that she'd made friends with older kids...

... we had quite a wide age range... I thought it was going to be a bit difficult, but I think they worked really well together... even working with other schools, they really gelled together....

... I think working with the other schools... that helped them accept different people... people they didn't really know... and accept that they don't necessarily have to be with people they're close friends with... and to accept help from others. It's definitely helped them with moving round in different groups in the classroom...

...the biggest thing for me was the teamwork... I think at the end of it they really united.... a lot of our kids are just happy to stay in their own groups and are territorial and for them to do that and realise that they're a part of something...

BROADENING CONNECTIONS: NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Better relationships within and beyond the immediate community are one way to encourage the diversity that is needed to develop the adaptive social resilience for a community to flourish. Another is to broaden the range of experiences and opportunities that are available to people beyond the known and familiar, and to create a climate where people are more open to explore these opportunities. These new experiences can help to change people's self perception, raise aspirations and nurture ambition, and can help people to see future options for themselves and their community that they would previously never have known of or thought possible.

The Nott Just Ballet project offered this glimpse of a different world through the performing arts – there are many other, equally powerful approaches.

There is little doubt that the young people's involvement in the Nott Ballet Project made them more aware of and receptive to dance and the performing arts.

This awareness was not limited to performance, but extended to music, the theatre in general, and particularly to the range of activities behind the scenes of a performance.

It was also about visiting and feeling at home in places, such as the Theatre Royal, from which many would more usually feel excluded – raising the possibility of moving from a sense of inferiority to one of inclusion and entitlement.

...I think it will give them an insight into theatre...

...she'll take a lot from it... an awareness of the arts, for a start...

...behind the scenes... she's got more awareness of how things work... the stage... everything that goes into production... the music, the costumes, the choreography... all of it... more awareness of... theatre...

...they've learned how to appreciate music more... to appreciate... drama... ballet... they appreciate ballet and they can understand it more...

... most of the students... have no experience of theatre whatsoever...so, for them to come along and see something like that ...maybe just maybe will have opened it up to them and they will be interested longer...

...opening up places like the Theatre Royal and the ballet and the Playhouse... lots of people... are frightened of these kind of places... they believe that they are not for them... and that's the main thing I want for my students in all respects, is for them to feel that they are the equal, literally the equal of anyone on the planet...

The experience has inspired some families to come back to the Theatre Royal for other dance and theatre productions.

For some of the participants and their families, the project was a first, and successful introduction to ballet, often seen as an elitist and inaccessible art form – opening up a further sense of cultural entitlement.

Many of the young people have been really inspired to carry on dancing, and look for other opportunities to dance.

Many have also been inspired to consider other opportunities in performance and the arts – both at school and beyond – and are more confident of their own ability to take up these opportunities.

Some are even talking of possible careers in the performing arts.

...she absolutely loved it... we've never been to a ballet before, and she loved it... we're already planning our next trip... normally we only come to the panto, but we already know we're coming to the Horrible History: Barmy Britain one...

...it was the first time I'd been to a ballet... I really enjoyed it... it was really good... and (she) was on about wanting to watch... there's something coming on at the Theatre Royal in the near future... Swan Lake... she's on about going to watch that...

...I've never watched a ballet... so... it's an experience for me as well...

...that was brilliant... she absolutely loved that (the BRB matinee performance)... we'd never been to a ballet before, so that was a new experience for us...

...I loved being involved in it. I've never done dance before, and doing ballet was so good...

...I think they have learnt that ballet is accessible... especially those that came and saw the performance on Saturday...

...they loved it... they want to dance more... every opportunity they can get...

...I think it will, yeah... both of the girls do want to do some form of dancing... I've got another, younger one now... and she wants to join in... it's something that we can look into now for them all...

...and... in the future, she really wants to do dance, she wants to do more of it now... it's sparked her interest in theatre as a whole... it's been a fantastic thing for her...

... the way she keeps talking... I think, there's the possibility, that if she was given the chance... to dance... I reckon she would... try and pursue it...

...I want to do more ballet...



While Nott Just Ballet was an arts project, it didn't just open up possibilities within the arts.

Some of the participants and parents could see that the learning from this project – glimpsing different worlds, being inspired and raising aspiration and ambition – apply equally in other areas.

Once the possibilities have been experienced in a project like this, people become more open to similar possibilities in different contexts.

...at school... I'm dancing all the time...

...she wants to do performing arts... this is someone that did not want to do this stuff at all... she now wants to start... we need to find her somewhere...

...I think it's just opened her eyes a bit... what it's like to perform in front of people... and... she goes – 'I would love to do that later on in life... when I'm a bit older'...

...she actually wanted to be a doctor, but now she's saying that she wants to be... a doctor... but she wants to do something... like performing, as well... like, singing...

...there was another girl who, basically, just appreciates things like this a bit more now. She would never have looked at doing anything within the arts, particularly dance, but she became more confident and proud...

...he said I wouldn't mind being a choreographer. I found it really interesting for him to say it because he was the only boy there and, not having any experience in dance and saying that on the first day, that really did surprise me. Now he says I'm going to do ballet again ...I want to learn more...

...it just makes you realise... what you could do in the future... all the experiences that you could take, and stuff...

...she's learned now there are other things... you can do... she didn't know you could do this kind of stuff, like ballet... or dance... meeting other people... performing... she didn't know that things like this happen... how they work... so she knows more about that now, which has helped her a lot...

... those performances we went to, where it was the teenagers performing... it almost gives them... an ambition... a sense of older role models... of what you could do... this is something that (she) has never experienced, she's not been in that world at all... it's opening her horizons a little bit, to see what choices... you might have... for personal development...

IMPACT ON SCHOOLS: POTENTIAL LEARNING FROM NOTT JUST BALLET

...I don't know what we are doing... in school, in terms of... learning from this experience... what we can draw from it as a school...

It is too early to say whether it will have any impact, but the positive experience of Nott Just Ballet has led parents and group leaders to reflect on what schools might learn from this project.

What was there, in the way that the project was set up and run, in the relationships and the learning that it facilitated, that might be given more attention in schools?

A large part of the success of the Nott Just Ballet project was the learning climate that was established and that was appreciated by the participants and group leaders alike.

This climate stemmed from the understanding that the best learning is based on positive relationships and mutual respect, where people are listened to and treated as equals.

Rather than shouting, or imposing discipline from above, the young people were expected to exercise their own self discipline, on the understanding that without this the project and the performance would not be a success. For many of the older children this was quite a contrast from their normal school experience.

...the change in environment... the staff she was working with... she very quickly realised her boundaries with the people that were running the course and appreciated the way that they were dealing with it was quite different to how I or the school would deal with things. I think when she saw things like that she probably respected them more than she would members of staff at school. A lot of that was down to the approach of the people leading the course...

...I think one of the biggest things... was their (Lee and the shadow artists) reluctance to raise their voice and shout... and one of the key things that I think Lee said in the first session was 'what can I do to help you and what can we do to make this smoother and easier?..

... a lot of it came from Lee and the girls, they were very clear with their instructions, very accommodating of the children and their different ways and so I think the children felt respected... and very comfortable and not frightened to try things...

...the whole thing... was very inclusive... there was... no hierarchical pyramid at all...

The Group Leaders really appreciated the opportunity, in this climate, to develop different relationships with the young people.

Creating a positive and supportive climate for learning made it much easier for people to try things out for themselves.

On the one hand it was very open ended, the young people were able to explore different ideas where there was no definitive right or wrong – people's opinions and ideas were valued as solutions were found.

On the other hand, the safety created, meant that they could try things, and if they didn't work, they wouldn't be punished. They learned that you can learn from your mistakes

This approach is underpinned by the recognition that leading in this way is more about facilitating than teaching.

...that she was being treated... the equal of the BRB and anybody else that has performed on the stage of Theatre Royal... that's the most important thing to me: if you treat people like they are literally as important as President Obama - which of course they are because a human is a human - they respond... that's the crux of it...

...it has helped me build relationships with the students which I would never have had the opportunity to do... that's due to the nature of my job...

...I was in tears at the end of the performance...seeing the kids complete that...it was just this emotional connection with them when they came out and gave me a hug...

...I think because it was just a small group and it was just me and them... I got the chance to know them a bit better and they got to know me better more as a person rather than a teacher...

...one of the... things that was great about the project... unlike what schools normally do... is that there weren't any answers at all. Lee was very loose... I am sure he had some things up his sleeve... but plenty of the choreography came from Lee's observations... It allows them to feel clever; you can't be wrong. Of course there are ways for it to work better but if your way is not used it is not wrong...

...students are a lot of the time afraid... not... willing to put their hand up and try something new for fear of being wrong... but if they're always afraid of being wrong then they're never going to be right...

...they didn't have one negative word to say about the help that they got... they weren't worried that they might get it wrong... it just felt so relaxed...

...we might say that we're choreographers but I think that in fact, more accurately, we're trying to be facilitators... and there's a balance between giving them enough so that they can feel confident and skilled... but also trying to nurture it, facilitate it from them...

Nott Just Ballet was a real, live project - it wasn't an abstract exercise. The young people could see a clear and challenging objective (the performance on the stage of the Theatre Royal) with a real and challenging deadline. It had real meaning, and the possibility of either glorious success or embarrassing failure. There was a clear and immediate purpose to getting stuck in and giving your best.

It was also an intensive activity over a short period. The intensity allowed the young people to really work at something without distractions, and the short time period made it real and tangible, especially for the younger children for whom things further in the future have less obvious meaning.

It was also a project where the young participants could experience a real and very public success. For most this was a very new experience, and the emotional high that they experienced will be a great motivator for future projects and endeavours.

... there's a lot of other world experiences out there, that you don't see unless you're drawn out of the classroom...

...also... the whole structure of working towards something, having a goal – whatever the project is – breaking that down into practising, perfecting... trying your best... working towards that goal... is the same for any kind of learning...

...I definitely think, it was that... intense week, with the goal that you're working towards... very tangible for children, not something in the distance that they can't really grab hold of...

...the children were unsure, even the more confident students... were unsure about the possibility of success... and so for them to succeed at the end was delicious...

...after you performed the last performance you kind of felt... lifted, if you know what I mean... happy and proud of yourself... that you actually did it...

... there were a couple of students... it has helped them because they do have a tough time at school at times, constantly struggling with some things... and it was nice for them to have a positive experience for the week...

...there was... a beautiful moment after the curtains closed, before the kids started jumping up and down screaming, it lasted about half a second... it was a moment of silence and kind of self awe... they were instantly... all of the kids together... and I watched it and it was quite beautiful... they instantly reflected on the magnitude of their success and experience and they were quite overwhelmed by it... then, in typical school student fashion, instead of exploring the magnitude of the awe they started jumping up and down and screaming and it was beautiful... it was great... that is the fundamental impact... and of course it's not temporary impact... that kind of thing is far reaching...



The Nott Just Ballet project was about excellence and aiming for the highest quality and professionalism. This was underpinned by the expectation that the young people are capable of achieving excellence.

This was really appreciated by the participants, and is already impacting on some of the young people's attitudes and behaviours back in school.

...one of the enduring images for me was... the students who, even though they stated that they weren't enjoying it and were happy to leave and could've been negative all week... when the curtains came down... they were embracing each other as a team and were really excited... and I was just like, I didn't expect that, I just can't believe that I saw that...

...I think it will help her to understand that... you can take on a new challenge, and you can succeed in it, in a very short period of time...

..you need to know what the best work is in order to want to do it in the first place... and I feel sometimes in schools we forget that... the experts need to come in and they need to be seen to be accessible...

...there is nothing to stop any of these children being as good a dancer as Lee, or Louise or Emily... but they need to know what that looks like and they need to know that it's not a gift... that it is just actually work...

...the use of the Theatre Royal while the ballet was in residence... made a big difference...

...it's such a privilege, performing on the Theatre Royal stage...

...I felt like, kind of special... to be able to dance with people that... know what they're doing...

...for him... it's almost like a target, and all you need to say is, 'remember what Lee said to you, be professional' and straight away he's 'oh yes', in the classroom if he gets a little bit silly or ...you say come on, what did Lee say, be professional all the time, and he says 'oh yes'. So I think the team were a great role model... and hopefully one day he will be there...

Teamworking has been identified earlier in this Learning History as one of the important areas of learning for participants - and something that is maybe not given sufficient attention in mainstream education.

Some of the young people on the Nott Just Ballet project have had problems engaging with their mainstream schooling, and have had poor records of behaviour, attendance and timekeeping.

For some, these behaviours changed radically, as they became motivated and inspired by the project.

They proved that they are capable of behaving differently, and the challenge for their schools is to find out how to inspire similar motivation in the rest of their school life.

...I don't think they get it (team working) enough... I think they get it in probably some sports but a lot of other lessons it's very much... this is your individual piece of work, this is for your benefit only... whereas ...you'd only get that in sports or the arts...

...I think it's going to go well if we stay focussed... if we all work as a team...

...(one student) was nearly permanently excluded fairly recently... she moved to the school... kind of on a last chance... her performance and everything is evidence that she had worked hard all week... which some teachers... would be surprised by...

...a year 10 student... is the most gifted actress that I've worked with in a school... but her attendance is very poor... shockingly low... and she regularly turns up late... 2 hours late... and... we need this kind of thing to make her feel like she has potential and doors are open to her. Her attendance during the project was 100%...

...she comes late to school sometimes and this week, the week that was the ballet, she came to school on time. On the Monday she came half an hour early... it was so funny... 'I thought I was going to be late. I can't wait. I was so excited I couldn't sleep last night.'... it's just that encouragement for her to come on time, something to motivate her to get up in the morning ... so hopefully she'll carry that on...

...within about 3 or 4 days of them seeing how much work was going to go into this and the potential for what they were going to do at the end... it...made them... wake up a bit and, since then, they just seem a bit more... pleasant around school...

...I think that was surprising... a couple of them are outspoken and they always want their point to be put across but they were being really calm about it... they knew if they were going to be good, they were going to get the most out of it. So that was a really good environment to be in....

POST SCRIPT: ONE YEAR ON - THE IMPACT OF NOTT BALLET

...because last year did work so well, it was a no brainer to do it again... the desire was there to do it again on both sides, definitely...

The Nott Just Ballet project didn't just come out of nowhere: it was a deliberate follow up to the previous year's Nott Ballet project, building on the successes and learning from that project. This had a number of practical benefits.

Having done a similar thing once, many things become easier at a practical level

...I think it was easier in... we didn't have to explain what the project would be, or what the processes were that were needed... we didn't have to go through in that fine detail... the Renewal Trust knew from last year... they used those templates...

It was easier to encourage young people to participate because of the positive experience of people they knew who had done last year's project.

...it was done last year... a group last year... and they told us how much they enjoyed it... they were all speaking about it... then the teacher... suggested it to us, and we just thought it would be a good idea, so we took the chance...

...just in the playground... just saying how much they enjoyed it (last year's Nott ballet)... and they was, like, recommending it to us...

...my friends... some... did it last year, so I asked them what it was like and what they experienced, and by their evaluation I kind of got the gist of it and wanted to do it... they told me that it was a good experience... and they got free clothes...

There was a greater trust in the arts world about the Renewal Trust and their ability to successfully deliver the project.

...I think there was a greater trust generally within BRB, that working with the Renewal Trust, and work in Nottingham would be good quality, and would work, because it was a proven partnership...

This opened many doors, and made things possible – such as performing on the Theatre Royal stage – that hadn't been possible previously.

Last year's project had created relationships with the Academy, which made it easier to engage with them, and for them to trust their staff and make resources available to them.

While having done a similar project before can make some things much easier, but it is easy to become complacent and assume it can just be rolled out again. The experience of Nott Just Ballet has shown that this is not possible – so much will be different. It is important to recognise and take account of this in planning, preparation and delivery.

...there was no hesitation, everybody said... oh yes... we can find that space... on the stage... because we knew... the Renewal Trust... and everything would be OK...

...because we'd worked with the Academy last year they knew what it was, and they instantly diverted it to their drama and performing arts department, which immediately got picked up... they trusted people to get on with it... we know what it is... it worked really well last year... we can let it run...

...the relationship with the Academy... it's so hard to get in to the Academy... and yet we pretty much just walked in this year...

...the school were very pleased that it happened. Some members of staff... came to see the performance on Friday. The school have been very supportive in terms of time, cover... and resources...

...not on such a high as last year... we don't get as excited... we know we can do it...

...I'm not sure it's achievable... we were trying to make... a package that could be picked up and rolled out with other people, without our involvement... I just don't know that that's realistic any more... the success was based so much on people...

NOTT BALLET AND THE 'ADJACENT POSSIBLE'

This section of the Learning History introduces the idea of the 'adjacent possible' to explore how last year's Nott Ballet collaboration has impacted not just on this year's Nott Just Ballet project, but also on the confidence and ability of the Renewal Trust to take on other new projects.

The 'adjacent possible' is an idea that comes from evolutionary biology – that each evolutionary change can only be a step into the 'adjacent possible', and can only happen when the conditions are right (evolutionary steps can't be missed out). Importantly, although each step might be small, moving into the 'adjacent possible' radically increases the diversity of other options for change as it presents a whole set of new 'adjacent possibles'.

Taking on Nott Ballet in 2013 was a major leap into the unknown for the Renewal Trust, but having done it, many new opportunities opened up – new 'adjacent possibles' emerged. For example:

- As shown above, new relationships and partnerships had been formed that eased and facilitated this year's project
- It was possible to extend and enrich the Nott Just Ballet project in three main ways, specifically the Shadow Company, the follow up with the Dance Summer School, and performing on the main stage at the Theatre Royal. None of these, for various reasons, had been possible on the Nott Ballet project, but had been identified as potential improvements through last year's Nott Ballet Learning History. This year they became possible – and had a massive impact on the success of the project.
- The Renewal Trust's new found confidence in delivering community arts projects, and the relationships and credibility it had started to develop in the arts world gave the Trust the confidence to bid for, and the ability to deliver the Rankin 4 Notts Museums at Night programme on the allotments.
- The Rankin 4 Notts event, in turn, opened up connections with the University which made it possible to recruit and engage the photographer for the Nott Just Ballet project
- A community dance class has been started in the Chase led by one of last year's Shadow Artists
- The Scouts, through their participation in Nott Ballet are now keen to participate in other projects initiated by the Trust

A big question now, is following Nott Just Ballet – what are the new adjacent possibles?