

National Youth Dance Company 2012 - 2015

Three Year Evaluation

An evaluation by Goldsmiths University of London Institute
for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship (ICCE)



“In a very short time National Youth Dance Company has become a national institution. It is now unimaginable that it should not exist.”

Ed Vaizey, Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy 2010-16

“It has been even more than I thought that it would be. Not only have I experienced the responsibilities of a professional dancer as an individual, I’ve also learnt how my attitude and contribution affects the whole company. I feel that NYDC has taught me invaluable skills that I can keep with me forever, such as how to look after my body, breathing techniques and a higher level of understanding of other people from all over the country who share the same passion and work ethic.”

NYDC Dancer

“I have seen the company develop from my original recommendation on paper to a flagship organisation for youth dance. It has been wonderful to see the company grow over the past three years, benefiting young people from all backgrounds and from across the whole of England. The company has established a reputation for producing high quality performances from a group of young people who are shaping the future of dance in this country.”

Darren Henley OBE, Chief Executive, Arts Council England.

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This evaluation was undertaken by Goldsmiths University of London Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship (ICCE). The report was commissioned by National Youth Dance Company and funded by Arts Council England and the Department for Education. ICCE delivers entrepreneurship, cultural management and policy education to the creative and cultural sectors, and supports research into new approaches to business, financial models and management in the Creative Economy. The lead evaluator for this report was Gerald Lidstone BA MA ATC Dr.h.c FRGS. Additional research by Sarah Bucknall & Chris Hogg.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

When NYDC began, there were seven areas of the project that were identified for the evaluation to report on. This has been done in detail in section four of this report. However, over the three years of the evaluation it became clear that there were important overarching themes emerging from the programme that as evaluators we felt were unique to NYDC and would be valuable to look at in more depth. The articulation of these themes provides a deeper understanding of what has been achieved and where additional value has been added to the company and programme to allow it to develop further. These themes are dealt with in section 3 of the report.

Key findings from the research

(This is a brief summary of main points, the key findings are shown in more detail in sections 3 and 4, on the pages indicated):

1.1. The recruitment process was seen by participants to be an equitable, inclusive, accessible selection and recruitment process which has supported diversity in company membership. In the first three years, there have been 66 Experience Workshops with over 1400 participants. The 1277 workshop evaluation forms show overwhelmingly that the process was a positive experience both in terms of gaining dance skills and also how participants had gained confidence in their abilities just from participating, whatever the outcome. Each year the reach of the workshops has increased, developing the potential of NYDC to impact on a greater number of individuals and communities (p.20).

1.2. There is a cohesive support system for joining and sustaining company membership, linked from the open recruitment process through to the pastoral care given to the dancers throughout their journey. Only three dancers out of 90 in the first three years did not go on to graduate from the programme. NYDC has developed a participant responsibility to the company but also celebrates individual abilities and journeys through the process. The company dancers come from a wide variety of backgrounds and skills, and this diversity is initially achieved through the recruitment process but also maintained through the structure of the programme, enabling those with the talent¹ to be able to participate whatever their circumstances, including financial help.

¹Talent in this context is broadly defined as 'Natural aptitude or skill'- Oxford Dictionary- and would refer to a student who met the NYDC selection criteria (see Appendix 1 p.67).

The company has been equally successful in recruiting both male and female dancers with 52% male and 48% female in the first three years and successful in recruiting dancers from minority ethnic backgrounds, the percentage being significantly higher than that in the general population (p.13) and has also been effective in increasing reach across England. See maps (p.14)

1.3. Proof of the effectiveness of the programme in creating a bridge to full time training is that 80% of NYDC graduates have gone on to full time dance training in prestigious vocational conservatoires or schools. A unique feature of the programme is that it enables dancers who are not ready or old enough to move on to full time training to remain with NYDC for a subsequent year, thus increasing their skills until they are ready to transfer to the next stage in their learning (p.28).

1.4. The learning strategy developed by the NYDC Director, from Experience Workshops to performances, touring and beyond, has proved to be very effective. Essentially providing intense periods of learning followed by periods of reflection, it has been constantly refined and adapted to respond to members needs and has a high positive response rate: 87% found the training hard, 99% enjoyed it and 83% endorsed the structure. As final proof of the effectiveness of the strategy, the critical response to the standard of the performances was excellent (p.31).

1.5. The successful curriculum was designed to develop thoughtful, curious, brave artists, building technique, artistry and performance skills alongside complimentary knowledge and ability through the valuable ‘Dancers Toolbox’. Linked directly with the learning strategy, the timing of the curriculum has been evolved and developed with student and parental feedback. The ‘Dancers Toolbox’ is an additional output from the process that adds value to the programme and continues to guide the dancers after they leave the company, in their health, wellbeing and professional development. Even at this early stage, 70% of participants highly value the knowledge gained in ‘Dancers Toolbox’ (p.33).



The Rashomon Effect, choreographed by Andrej Petrovic and directed by Akram Khan, 2014

1.6. The overall Learning Programme successfully integrates all the elements of the process, creating a holistic training that prepares dancers for the profession and a sustainable career. Feedback from focus groups held with colleagues from the education and dance sectors indicates that NYDC students are more articulate and better able to reflect on their own learning and progress. The final component of touring as a valuable experience is endorsed 100% by NYDC dancers (p.36).

1.7. NYDC develops positive, useful participant and company attributes. The evaluators noticed a considerable change in the students that went beyond skills training as the programme progressed from first residencies through to performance and touring. Based on student focus groups, surveys and interviews, the chart on p.41 is an attempt to articulate these qualities that students developed, recognising that the development of the individual goes beyond the specific dance experience (p.38).



(in between), choreographed by Jasmin Vardimon, 2013

1.8. Collaborating with outstanding artists is a key factor. 99% of students commented that they were inspired by the artists they worked with, 91% reported that their confidence grew and 98% that their dance skills increased. All of the artists/ choreographers selected to lead the company have world-recognised reputations. However, they were carefully chosen by the NYDC Director because their professional practice is inspirational and appropriate for these dancers. 94% of dancers stated that the level of the artist was an important factor in the success of their learning (p.42).

1.9. Peer Learning: The peer learning process is embedded as an important element throughout the programme. The combined elements of the training, the ethos (particularly feeling safe and accepted with peers) and encouragement to experiment creatively were commented on positively by dancers, with 90% saying they 'felt accepted as themselves'. This is a considerable achievement considering the diversity of the group. (p.45).

1.10. Creating a professional company work environment was crucial to the learning strategy. Dancers, parents and artists commented on how important this was to successful learning, to developing a focused work ethic and developing interdependency between members of the company as well as the wider community of Sadler's Wells and the professional dance sector (p.46).

1.11. A Culture of Giving Back - a virtuous circle. The NYDC programme has successfully created further value by developing mechanisms for current and past company members to feed back into the programme. A culture of giving back has been created where the dancers seek ways to continue to support the journeys of future company members as a way of recognising the opportunity they have had. There are formal ways in which this happens (p.48).

Summary of findings against original NYDC aims (section4)

1.12. To nurture creativity, learning and an intelligent, thoughtful approach to dance practice as a preparation for high-level performance.

The quality of the performances, both in Sadler's Wells and on tour, indicates the high level of performance achieved by the company – the feedback has been very positive from critics, choreographers and those in the dance networks. Students have also clearly pointed out that the specific curriculum and approach to learning has developed not only their skills but also a reflective approach to their own practice. This is then evident in the high number of dancers progressing from the company into leading vocational dance schools (p.52).

1.13. To include families, teachers and peers in each young dancer's development.

Families are communicated with regularly and their opinions and feedback sought. There is a separate appendix on the response of parents over 3 years, giving a detailed breakdown of responses (Appendix 3, p.70). In 2015, 45% of the discussion with parents referenced examples of how their child's creativity, learning and critical approach to dance practice had developed, there was evidence that their children had become more professional, resilient, confident and self-aware. This shows overwhelmingly that parents recognised positive change in their child's personal and professional development. The most noticeable change in feedback was that in 2013 there was an emphasis on high levels of communication from Sadler's Wells and a confidence in their duty of care. In 2014 and 2015 the emphasis was on how parents now understood the potential professional development paths that their children could take.

In 2013, there was feedback from NYDC dancers that some of their external teachers were not as aware of the work they were engaged in as they would like and that they found it difficult that some NYDC work was undertaken close to school examinations. Both areas were acted upon, with teachers receiving more information on the aims of NYDC and the following year the schedule moved to accommodate school work. A change in response can then be seen in 2014/15 (p.53). The response to inclusion of peers and teachers is further covered in sections 3.2 and 3.9.

1.14. To communicate a clear, encouraging and inclusive message about NYDC.

Over the first three years the reach of the programme has increased substantially geographically (maps p.14). The diversity of the company and the positive gender balance, as well as the wide range of types of experience the company draws upon, demonstrates its inclusive message (p.11-13). There is a clearly expressed desire from current members and alumni to become ambassadors for the Company to further spread this message through contributing to the Experience workshops, VIP events, receptions and a range of regional dance activity in their home areas (p.55).

1.15. To seek maximum reach and impact for the company's activities without compromising quality or depth of experience.

The reach of the Experience workshops and the National Tours has expanded each year with 11 workshops and 8 performances in the first year, to 18 and 10 respectively in 2015. The quality and depth of experience has been maintained and developed and the balance between most evidence indicators on this theme has largely remained stable over three years (p.56).

1.16. To collaborate with and add value to existing youth Dance networks and programmes.

The NYDC programme has year on year extended its reach across dance networks, collaborating with nine partners and host venues in 2012/13, increased to 16 in 2015. As indicated in the Giving Back process (p.48) it can also be seen that alumni from the company are heavily involved in diverse dance networks, sharing both what they have personally learnt and experienced and also the Curriculum and the Dancers Toolbox (p.36). In addition, specific collaborative initiatives with organisations such as *Dance Whispers* in Yorkshire (p.58) have been created to use local network projects to increase impact.

1.17. To share our results and learning widely across the Youth Dance Sector.

This has been achieved through the company dancers returning to networks and schools and sharing their experience with their teachers and peers. NYDC has also presented at seven regional meetings across the three years and has shared information through national initiatives such as the national meetings for Centres for Advanced Training (CATS) and Youth Dance England. These forums and meetings provide an opportunity for the methodology and structure of the training to be shared and response received.

The culmination of this sharing came in April 2015 when NYDC hosted the final day of Dance UK's International Conference. The day was entitled Emerging Artists: Training, Creativity & Choreography and brought together industry professionals, artists, teachers and dancers to discuss dance training and the needs of the profession and younger artists as they prepare to be the future of dance. Within the conference, the Director of NYDC and company members were able to share their learning across a wide range of networks (p.60).



Frame[d], choreographed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, 2015

1.18. To utilise Sadler's Wells' full range of resources to enhance the learning and experience of NYDC members.

Sadler's Wells has supported the work of NYDC through allowing use of the main stage and all the allied resources of staff and the building to provide an exceptional experience for Company members, their families, associated dance professionals and the public. However, Company members, whilst acknowledging this unique opportunity, also consistently stated that it was the access to dance professionals, the choreographers, the NYDC Team and the way they were treated as 'professionals' that had the most impact on them (p.60).

2. THE EVALUATION PROCESS

2.1. Introduction

National Youth Dance Company (NYDC)

In February 2012, the UK government published “Cultural Education in England” which comprised an independent review by Darren Henley on behalf of the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. A key recommendation in this report was that: ‘A new permanent National Youth Dance Company should be created and funded.’ Following an open application process, Sadler’s Wells was awarded the contract to form the National Youth Dance Company in September 2012. Funding for the company comes from Arts Council England and the Department for Education.

The Vision for NYDC

The vision for NYDC is to identify and nurture a selected group of young dance artists who demonstrate an exceptional capacity to express, communicate and interpret through movement, presence and performance. The intention is that the selected dancers should gain an unparalleled artistic learning experience in preparation for a career in Dance, through creating and performing challenging work, presented with the highest artistic integrity and production values.

The motivation in developing NYDC is to make a unique contribution to the education and preparation of young dancers which will ultimately impact across the whole Dance sector, including professional practice. A primary aim is to ensure that the model of the learning experience and the results and benefits secured by its implementation could be disseminated as widely as possible, to act as inspiration and practical support across the sector, thereby raising aspirations and outcomes for youth dance, vocational training and dance professionals of the future.

A parallel aim is to ensure the widest possible access to the opportunities offered, taking into consideration any potential geographic, economic, physical or cultural barriers. NYDC is hosted by Sadler’s Wells, a national dance house of international renown, interacting not only with the world’s leading dance artists and companies but also with people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience within the dance sector and local communities.

SINCE NYDC'S INCEPTION IN 2012

90
DANCERS

have joined the company,
working intensively with
renowned dance artists including

Guest Artistic Directors:

Jasmin Vardimon (2012-13)

Akram Khan (2013-14) and

Sidi Labri Cherkaoui (2014-15)

These 90 dancers come from

43
**DIFFERENT TOWNS/
CITIES IN ENGLAND**

1400
YOUNG DANCERS

have worked with the company

Over
26,000
PEOPLE

have seen
the company perform

NYDC has featured in
33
PERFORMANCES

visiting

18
DIFFERENT VENUES

across the UK, including some
leading theatres in the country

NYDC has delivered

66
WORKSHOPS

in

26
DIFFERENT VENUES

across

23
TOWNS/CITIES

67
DANCERS

have been offered places at
leading vocational schools
across Europe

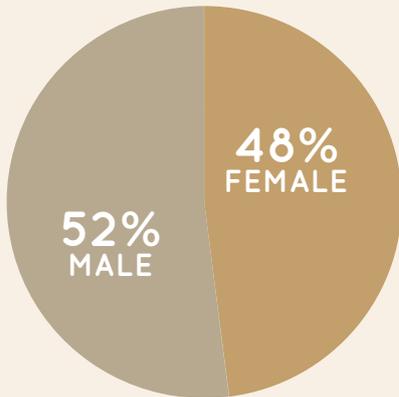
+

ANOTHER 6
DANCERS

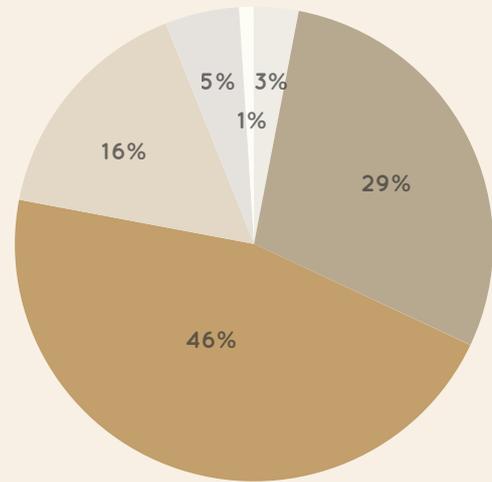
from the 3rd cohort
graduated into full time
training the following year

REPRESENTATION OF NYDC DANCERS FROM 2012 – 2015

COMPANY STATISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHIC



AGE WHEN STARTING



15 16 17 18 19 20

COMPANY MEMBERSHIP REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

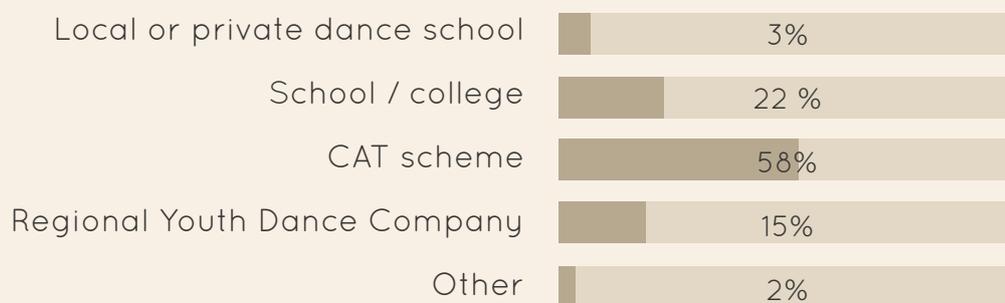
Region	Percentage of 15-24yr olds in the general population of England	Percentage of NYDC Company members per region
East	10.3%	19%
East Midlands	8.7%	9%
London	15.9%	17%
North East	5.1%	6%
North West	13.6%	3%
South East	15.5%	21%
South West	9.5%	13%
West Midlands	10.5%	4%
Yorkshire and The Humber	10.5%	8%

Please note that the statistics presented here use the categories that fit most closely from the ONS. The company does not generally have participants from 20-24 however the 15-24 group was the closest match. Therefore these figures are a guideline.

Ethnicity	NYDC	England and Wales % of Population
White	62.2%	86%
Black/British	11.1%	3.3
Mixed/Dual Heritage	21.1%	2.2%
Asian/British	2.2%	7.5%
Other	0%	1%
Not declared	3.4%	

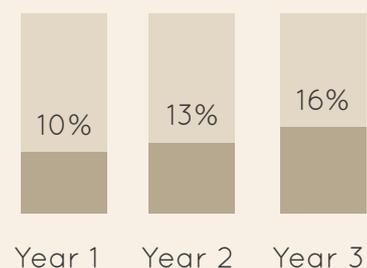
[ONS, 2011 census]

MAIN PLACE OF TRAINING OUTSIDE OF NYDC



95%
WERE AT SCHOOL
OR COLLEGE
when they applied to NYDC

13%
WITH ACCESS/
ADDITIONAL NEEDS



GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF NATIONAL YOUTH DANCE COMPANY 2013-2015- THREE COHORTS



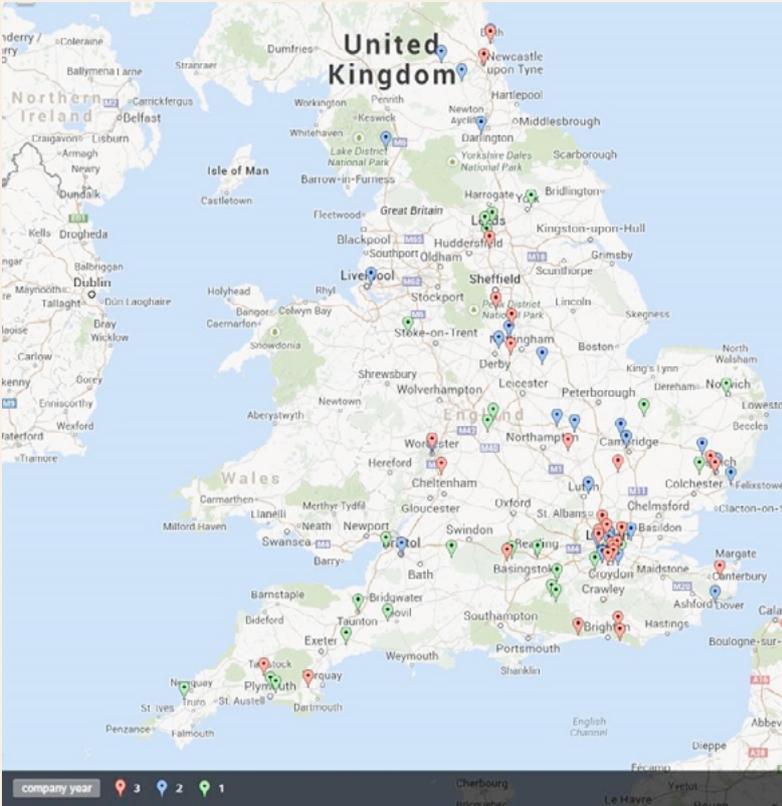
MAP A
Cohort 1
2012-13



MAP B
Cohort 2
2013-14



MAP C
Cohort 3
2014-15



MAP D
Cohorts 1-3
90 dancers in total:
47 male and 43 female

2.2. Aims of the report

This report is designed to provide the reader with an insight into three key areas of NYDC:

1. An overview of the first three years of the company
2. How the programme is constructed and the resulting impact
3. Implementation of the original aims

The NYDC programme is complex in both design and delivery and it is not the intention of this report to go into great detail on the day to day workings of the company. Instead, the report will foreground the areas that create the overall value of the project.

Data and narratives from evaluation questionnaires and interviews from all stakeholders in NYDC, particularly from participants and parents/ guardians, have been fed back to the NYDC team each year in order to help with the development of the programme.

In addition, NYDC have undertaken their own stakeholder evaluation / feedback, focussing on the wider dance sector, including existing training schemes, regional youth dance companies, dance agencies, performance venues, conservatoires, choreographers and artistic directors. This knowledge has informed the development of the project directly and has also been fed into this report.

For the evaluation over three years there have been:

1277 experience workshop evaluation forms, 360 company evaluation forms/ questionnaires, nine Focus Group interviews with dancers, three annual Focus Group interviews with parents, three annual Focus Group meetings with representatives across the education and dance sectors, one online survey for all participants.

This report falls into two parts:

Themes of key value for NYDC

Throughout the evaluation it became clear that there were overarching themes emerging from the programme that as evaluators we felt were unique to NYDC and would be valuable to look at in more depth. The articulation of these themes provides a deeper understanding of what has been achieved and where additional value could be added to the company and programme to allow it to develop further.

These themes of key value are:

- The recruitment process,
- Creating and sustaining a company
- The bridge to full time training
- The learning strategy
- The curriculum
- The learning programme
- Participant and company attributes
- Collaborating with outstanding artists
- Peer learning process
- Creating a professional company work environment
- Creating a culture of giving back
- The future

Each of these themes has been identified as a crucial part of the experience for the participant and their successful progress and has been evaluated and reviewed throughout the three years.

It was clear in the discussions and focus groups held with participants throughout the three years that the dancers as individuals change and mature as they progress throughout their NYDC experience. However, this was even more noticeable when they returned for the three year celebration of NYDC in September 2015, Apex Rising (p.62). This positive personal development is an area that was focused on particularly by parents in their feedback. A topography of attributes of NYDC participants has been developed (p.41) to explore what type of people they had become and what attributes they had developed. Some of the attributes, e.g. dance skills, are to be expected but others focus on a personal development which may play a key part in sustaining careers in the long term, particularly in a demanding art-form and industry.

In order to fully evaluate the programme it was necessary to look at the three year cycle as a whole, as the interactive relationship between years not only increases the richness of the experience for participants but also enhances the complexity required on behalf of the implementation and administration. At the same time, the developing network of regional partners and the different types of contribution and engagement they have with the programme is now evident in a way it might not have been in the first year.

Through this evaluation process we have separated out future strategic potential at national, regional and local level and suggested areas for future discussion and for developing the programme and the company.

The purpose of this report is not to go into detail about the wider dance sector, however 2015 was a stimulating and turbulent year for dance. There is huge debate currently as to the positioning of arts subjects within the curriculum and it is clear that among arts subjects, dance is the lowest (by a long way) in terms of participation, compared with art or drama. The difficulty in accessing dance education in some regions is something that many participants in NYDC mentioned during the evaluation interview process. In addition to this, three major choreographers - Akram Khan, Hofesh Schechter and Lloyd Newson - issued a joint statement in April 2015 to the effect that they struggled to find British trained dancers of 'sufficient calibre' for their work and their companies. This had a particular impact on NYDC dancers and alumni as Akram Khan was the Guest artistic Director 2013/14. It will be at least another year before NYDC participants will have finished their formal training and will potentially be auditioning for this calibre of choreographer. There is already evidence concerning the successful progress of NYDC participants into professional dance training. However, further research will be necessary to track NYDC participants after graduation and to observe the long-term impact within the profession. At the end of each section of the report there is a summary of key points in bold print.

The original aims of the company:

- To nurture creativity, learning and an intelligent, thoughtful approach to dance practice as a preparation for high level performance
- To include families, teachers and peers in each young dancer's development
- To communicate a clear, encouraging and inclusive message about NYDC
- To seek maximum reach and impact for the company's activities without compromising quality or depth of experience
- To collaborate with and add value to existing youth Dance networks and programmes
- To share our results and learning widely across the youth Dance sector
- To utilise Sadler's Wells full range of resources to enhance the learning and experience of NYDC members

Research was conducted on a regular basis throughout the three years as to what degree the aims had been achieved and feedback was provided to the NYDC team and Sadler's Wells on an annual basis, who then in turn provided quarterly reports and data to Arts Council England. Pages 51 to 61 of this report provide a breakdown of the responses and data related to these areas.

2.3. Methodology

This report is based on the use of a number of research methodologies and techniques. However, within unique arts based programmes such as NYDC it is essential to understand the point of the evaluation itself. The evaluators are guided by the Arts Council England, Partnerships for Learning: a Guide to Evaluating Arts Education Projects. This guide recommends the development of three key ideas:

- Evaluation helps with decision-making during a project and for future projects.
- Evaluation involves making judgements, based on evidence, about the value and quality of a project.
- Evaluation is open and clear and involves all partners, including the people taking part.

We see the role of the evaluator in developing the project, as being particularly related to the first idea, namely the gathering of appropriate evidence to support decision -making. The next two are more directly functional and adhered to throughout the process by both the evaluators and the NYDC team.



Excerpt of Vertical Road, choreographed by Akram Khan, restaged for NYDC 2014

The tools used were written surveys, focus groups or interviews (recorded with permission) of participants and stakeholders. At appropriate times in each year of the programme, these were conducted with participants, parents, choreographers and allied creative artists, regional dance organisations/venues and the NYDC team. Evaluators were primarily concerned with understanding the 'bigger picture' and the more strategic role of the project, while at the same time collating independent detailed data on the experience of stakeholders. In parallel, the NYDC team undertook extensive feedback from the same groups of stakeholders to secure evidence on which to base quick responses in order to develop the project on virtually a daily basis.

This was augmented by the data from the external evaluators. The ensuing iterative approach provides the basis for regular reports for ACE.

The Nesta², Standards of Evidence: An approach that balances the need for evidence with innovation indicates a scale of levels of value for evidence:

Level 1 You can give an account of impact. By this we mean providing a logical reason, or set of reasons, for why your intervention could have an impact and why that would be an improvement on the current situation.

Level 2 You are gathering data that shows some change amongst those receiving or using your intervention.

The three year evaluation would suggest that in this case the first two have been met.

Level 3 would require a control group, who have not had the experience, but in this case it would be unrealistic to create this and would be unlikely to be comparable.

In addition the evaluation would suggest that a high degree of causality can be attributed to the NYDC programme, particularly in the acquisition of skills and through exposure to choreography that would not have been taught to them in another context. Also many of the attributes acquired are only likely to have come from the company ethos, as they had not had exposure to other contexts where they would have learnt these specific attributes. Additionally, participants are themselves reflective and thoughtful practitioners and are able to assess the reasons for their development and can communicate this effectively in interviews and focus groups.

This evaluation has (as with previous dance project evaluations) been guided by Grounded Theory as an approach to uncovering the important themes from the project in an iterative way with stakeholders, rather than imposed. All statistics quoted are (SA&A) Strongly Agreed and Agreed on responses to surveys other than where stated differently. All quotes are from recorded interviews or written answers.

²www.nesta.org.uk/publications/nesta-standards-evidence

3. KEY RESULTS AND FINDINGS

3.1. Recruitment Process

Dancers are recruited into NYDC through a series of Experience Workshops that take place across the country. These are undertaken from May- July, approximately four months before the programme starts. An innovation in 2015 that had very positive results was to attach the Experience Workshops to the Company tour from that year wherever possible. The demand for workshops and interest in NYDC was greater after seeing what had been achieved by the company and, as can be seen from the maps (p.14), the coverage is fairly comprehensive, though there are gaps and concentrations which are primarily due to the rural nature or size of some areas, or less dance activity compared with extensive provision in others. Each year of the process has sought to create greater coverage and year on year this has been achieved.

“There were concerns when Sadler’s Wells was announced as the host venue of NYDC that the company would be London focussed and ‘national’ would be difficult to achieve. However, seeing the diversity of locations of the dancers and the spread of activity, those fears have been allayed”.

Deryck Newland, Artistic Director, Pavilion Dance South West

The workshops have been created to not only act as part of the selection process for the company but also to allow even more young people to be part of the company experience. They have been designed to challenge and inspire, offering considerable value through providing a training opportunity in which over 1400 young dancers have participated. The workshops aim to create a highly positive experience, one in which the dancers can develop and learn new skills.



NYDC Workshop

The focus is on the workshop and not an audition, allowing the dancers to enjoy the process and relax into it. Dancers are encouraged to come year on year and reminded that each year the company are looking for different dancers due to the yearly change in Guest Artistic Director.

Participant feedback on the workshops, identifying the most valued aspect for participants based on the number of times each aspect was mentioned



Participants come from a wide spectrum of dance training backgrounds, ranging from those fortunate to have had regular training through existing schemes e.g. Regional youth dance companies, private dance schools, CAT programmes (Centres for Advance Training), schools and colleges, to those who are self-taught. The criteria for selection, largely dependent on inherent abilities (eg. Musicality, co-ordination- Appendix 1 p.67) means that it is possible to evaluate those with existing training alongside those without. This approach contributes substantially to the diversity of the social, as well as dance backgrounds, of the company. The first part of the workshop concentrates on dance skills, current company repertoire (taught by NYDC dancers, thus increasing the dancers’ experience) and importantly a willingness to ‘embrace new experiences and ideas’. The second part of the workshop includes a question and answer session about the company and careers in dance, led by current company members, the NYDC team and a regional artist who joins the workshop team as a guest panel member, thus increasing the connection between NYDC and the local dance sector, besides introducing young people to dance artists based in their area (Appendix 2 p.69 for a list of guest panel members).

“NYDC creates an exhilarating and welcoming environment with a genuine workshop feel rather than an audition type session. These unique workshops leave dancers feeling energised and inspired, whilst learning new skills and also being able to interact with a professional guest dance artist, gaining invaluable advice about the dance industry. The Experience Workshops nurture the next generation of dancers by making original and unique contemporary work accessible across the nation and allowing further access to industry professionals within a safe and supportive environment.”

Joss Arnott, Artistic Director Joss Arnott Dance, NYDC Experience Workshop Panel member and Focus Group Member

“Regardless of the outcome, I wanted to thank you all as I know that she loved the workshop and it has inspired her with her current choreographic project on her CAT scheme.”

Parent of Experience Workshop participant

This innovative selection process consciously aims to encourage diversity. The diversity of dance backgrounds, ability, styles, gender and cultural balance is positively encouraged at all stages of the recruitment process. This is achieved through gender balanced workshops, leaders and hosts, and images and messaging on all print that will connect and appeal to a diverse market. However it is now understood that it is seeing the existing company perform well, in terms of demonstrating diversity in gender, race and different abilities that encourages a similar profile of attendees at the workshops.

“The Experience Workshops have been amazing because they give a taste of what NYDC is about and give access to the NYDC artists. Workshops linked to performances build this even further, the fact that it is young people presenting that work, therefore having a far reaching effect on other young people - to see their peers, their age group perform such quality work has huge impact.”

Eddie Copp, Artistic Director CAPA College, Wakefield, Yorkshire.

The final workshop offers the participants another full day of experience, this time with a backstage tour of Sadler’s Wells, a workshop led by the next year’s Guest Artistic Director, a world renowned choreographer, and the opportunity to see the current company perform. This increases participants’ motivation and gives them a greater insight into the dance profession and NYDC life. For those who were unsuccessful, there is evidence that this process encouraged them to reapply for the following year.

NYDC now has a good picture of youth dance provision across England and understands the differences regionally in terms of infrastructure. They have developed, over three years, ways of balancing engagement with this diversity of provision and support, to provide as wide a range of opportunities across these differences.

“I think there was a great deal of organising behind the auditions because they were almost an end in themselves. It wasn’t just a case of seeing whether they could dance, they were workshops - they made friends even at that stage as well. She said ‘even if I don’t make it through that stage, this is fine for me. I’ve learned a lot.’”

NYDC Parent

Feedback from the participants highlighted that the workshop was a new experience for most of them and very different to the content of their usual classes, particularly the creative and improvisation sections. NYDC is aware that there are currently many valuable learning opportunities for young dancers but each is different in terms of ethos and the skills taught. Accordingly, the NYDC programme seeks to complement other learning experiences the workshop participants may have. As NYDC builds on local networks the process of communication becomes easier as they are able to increase each year the spread of information to ensure that those in more remote or less supported areas have the opportunity to engage.

The method of selection created by NYDC has potential well beyond the dance sector in terms of providing value through the experience as well as creating a selection process that rewards risk taking and difference. This is a model that could be of value to other sectors such as theatre or music. The selection criteria and recruitment process was specially designed to achieve the company's aims by NYDC Director Jane Hackett. This part of the process was reviewed each year and the three cohorts' combined response to Experience Workshops is: 95% enjoyed the first Experience Workshop; 90% gained useful experience and information; 95% enjoyed the Final Selection Workshop; 87% gained useful information in the Final Selection Workshop. When asked about the impact of being chosen and offered membership of NYDC: 72% said it made them think differently about themselves, 82% said it raised their self-esteem; 81% said it made them think differently about their future possibilities.

There is evidence that strong, equitable, accessible selection and recruitment processes are in place, designed to give wider value (participants leave with new skills, information and experience), but also providing an excellent method of identifying potential and key company requirements that are not dependent on prior learning, resulting in greater diversity in the company with individuals both keen to learn and those who will be in a position to benefit from the experience.

3.2. Creating and sustaining a company

The creation of the company very much follows on from the recruitment process. As can be seen from the chart of 'Attributes' (p.41), in addition to skills, the programme is designed to engender a range of attitudes and orientations. The first part of this relates to the inclusiveness of the programme, which is supported from a variety of directions.

Participants' costs are highly subsidised throughout the NYDC experience and in addition to this, many company members access fees scholarships and travel bursaries which means there is no cost at all for being in the company. Of the 90 dancers in the first three cohorts of the company, 84% received scholarships, with 57% receiving full scholarships (coming from households with a relevant annual income of less than £29,340). This means that no dancer selected for NYDC should turn down their place on the grounds of financial worries and access.

The second area that is important in maintaining a diversity of participants is that there is a respect for all dance styles and forms and this is reinforced through all parts of the learning process.

"I was just doing street [dance] and one of my teachers told me to audition and I got in! It was the first time I had heard Jasmin's [Vardimon] name so I found out a new choreographer, that was amazing, and then during that year I heard Akram's [Khan] name for the first time as well and so I felt without these two years I wouldn't have even known about any of this."

NYDC Dancer

The diversity in the company delivered by the recruitment process is actively maintained by a range of company management processes and this requires a high level of pastoral care and support. Some students may be carers or have financial commitments to support themselves or their families. Therefore the company administration develops relationships with not only the dancers but also with the teachers, youth leaders and crucially parents/ guardians/ families. Over the three years, parents have been interviewed as part of the evaluation process; they have seen the development and change in company members in ways additional to their dance skills.

"For me - everything that followed was so professional - down to the tiniest detail. We knew everything was thought of and provided- accommodation, food - it was a real peace of mind."

NYDC Parent

"They were very responsive to any concerns that arose and acted on them straight away. During residency and tour we had emails from the company manager every other day to keep us in the loop of all that was going on- great when you have a child who rarely calls home!"

NYDC Parent

Most of the students are balancing many commitments such as education, family and part time employment. Since 2013, NYDC has provided dates as early as possible for all stages of time commitment, to both enable students to consciously plan their commitments but also to inform, parents, teachers, and youth leaders in order to involve them in the programme. Many acknowledge that it is the high level of pastoral care that has been key to enabling their family member to not only remain and contribute to the company, but also to deliver the level and quality of work required.

An example of this would be in the second year (2014) where, following feedback, the overall schedule was changed to allow students to concentrate on exams in May and June. The schedules are always evolving, not only to deliver the learning and artistic needs but also to take into account local activities of the students.

The age range for entry into the company is 16-18, however the age can be flexible in certain circumstances:

1. If the dancer is aged 15 but is hoping to go into vocational training at the age of 16.
This is so as to not disqualify classical dancers from the company who usually begin their vocational training at 16.
2. If the dancer is aged 19 but has had little opportunity to access prior training.
3. The age is extended up to 24 for deaf or disabled dancers.

The great age range of company members means that the administrative support team are dealing with a diversity of needs in terms of personal, social and educational.

This support team are also evolving their skills to be able to provide a consistently relevant service. Feedback from students often highlights the level of care and mentoring they receive. The overall programme develops them holistically in relation to health and diet as well as building their reflection, evaluation and communication skills. They comment on the way they are treated as individuals within the company and feel both challenged but able to develop within a safe environment. The commitment to the company created with these strategies means that the dropout rate is extremely low (three in three years).

“The Toolbox sessions covered additional topics such as health and nutrition. She took lots of notes in this session in particular and they were really informative and something she didn’t have from elsewhere.”

NYDC Parent

The diversity of backgrounds and varying degrees of physical ability has been positively commented on by the choreographers working with the company as this provides a richness of talent to work with.

“They are all very different dancers, they all come from different styles but somehow they all interlink together very beautifully.”

Navala Chaudhari, NYDC Assistant Choreographer 2014-15

A key part of the programme’s ethos is to encourage, through the recruitment process, diversity in all senses of the word and this has been very successful, particularly in ensuring a high level of male participation, resulting in a more gender balanced company than many youth dance initiatives. The feedback from all cohorts was that they found the dynamic very positive, not just in the company ethos but in the creative approach to the choreography that the balance engendered. This is particularly relevant as the choreographers expect the students to contribute to the development of the work.

“Everybody comes from massively different backgrounds. Also, this company is unique. We have 20 males and 10 females. I don’t think that I’ve ever seen this before in a youth dance company.”

NYDC Dancer

A consideration after the first year was how previous cohorts could continue to provide support for the current programme. There was an ethos of wanting to ‘give back’ to the programme and aspects of this are dealt with in subsequent sections (p.48).

NYDC dancers express a feeling of ownership and commitment to the company and take pride in representing the highest quality of dance for their age group. This not only creates value in both the relationship with choreographers and the standard of work achieved but also in the dancers’ relationships with other youth dance groups or companies that they interact with.

“Realising that experimenting in any way is valid and that this is how some of the best ideas are formed in dance, because they are honest and have come from inside the person. Becoming so close with the group and this then enabling us to dance together as a company really excited me. I have never worked with a group of people who are so in the same mind set as me. That also made me more open to all ideas.”

NYDC Dancer

Parents and Families

A key part of creating the company was that students felt supported, not only in relation to the training, performing and touring, but also with regard to more basic life skills through involving the families of NYDC members in different parts of the programme. For some students it was their first time away from home for any period of time, some acted in part as carers at home, while others though mature as dancers, were not experienced at looking after themselves. The close relationship between the NYDC team and the dancers' families meant that families were engaged in terms of being aware of what the programme was, how it would help the career of the student and how their child's potential had been recognised. Families were encouraged to see performances and to take part in feedback sessions giving their perspectives on how they had seen their family member develop and change when at home or in relation to their education in general.

"His interests have just exploded this last year and I can't believe how much he has taken on outside of school plus NYDC. He does break dance twice a week, he is learning the sitar, the Tabla, he is doing Kung Fu. Plus he is very academic, an A star student and he has chosen all science A Levels. It has just mushroomed and I think it is all to do with this growing confidence, opening his eyes, seeing stuff, meeting so many different people from such varied backgrounds. I find it exciting. I am just an observer looking at his drive and it is amazing. This whole thing is incredible."

NYDC Parent

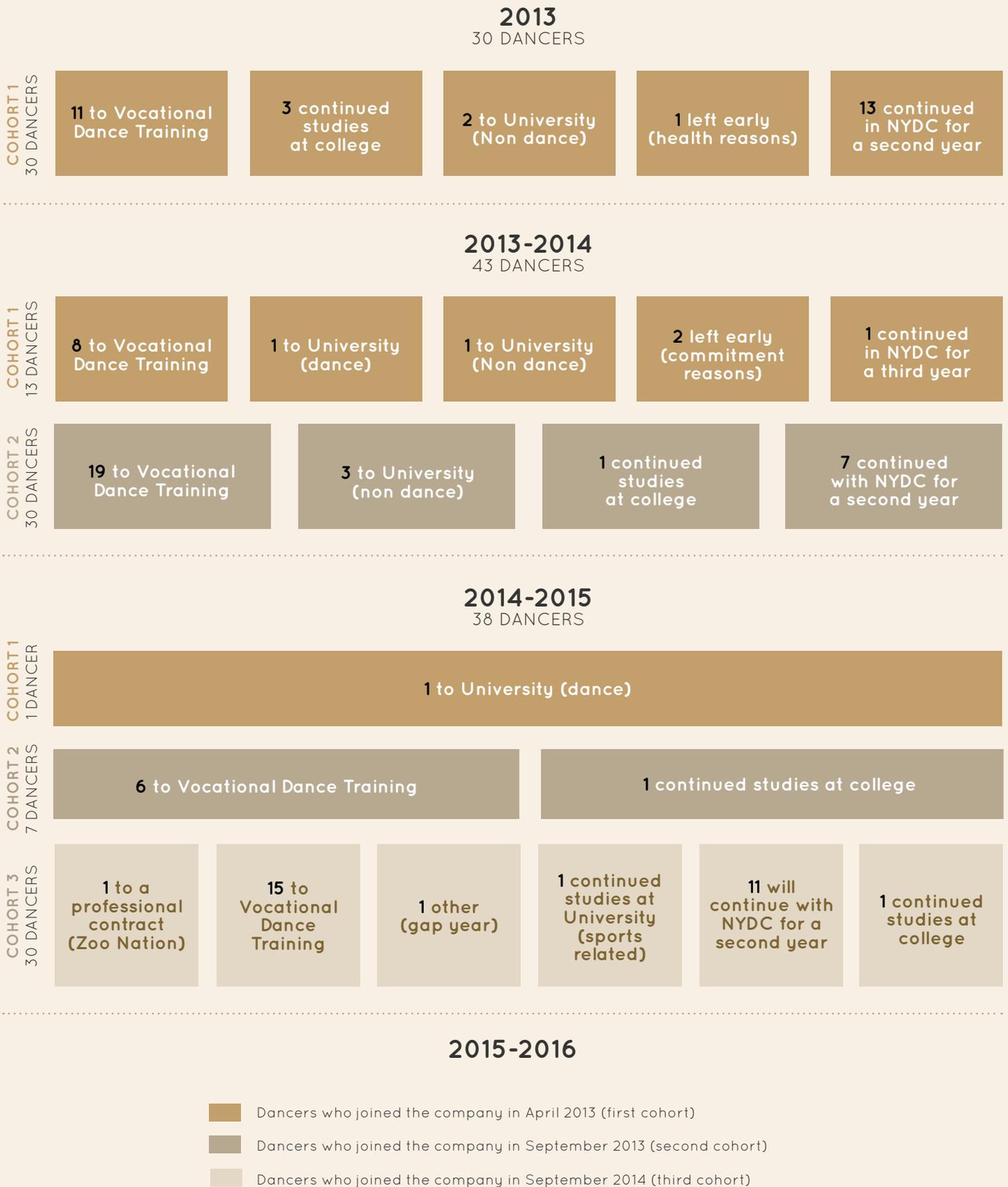


Frame[d], choreographed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, 2015

The level of support provided to individual dancers by the NYDC team is a key element in sustaining a diverse membership. NYDC is enhanced through counteracting gender stereotypes, developing large peer groups of males who dance, express emotion and are sensitive to demands and females who can be strong and can take the lead. It promotes effective recruitment and allows the full development of young artists and subsequently to their desire to 'give back' into the programme. Involvement in the creation of a new work is responsible for engendering many of the attributes that participants have the opportunity to acquire.

3.3. A bridge to full time training

NYDC Graduate destinations 2013-2015



Of the 90 dancers who joined the company between 2013-15:

- 59 dancers went onto Vocational Dance Training
- 1 dancer went into a professional contract and deferred a place at Vocational training
- 6 dancers continued their studies at college, entering vocational training the following year
- 1 dancer went onto take a gap year, entering vocational training the following year
- 2 dancers went onto University (dance degrees)
- 7 dancers went onto University (non dance)
- 3 dancers left the company without graduating
- 11 dancers stayed with the company for another year

As can be seen from the diagram, a high percentage of participants' progress from NYDC into full time training. However, the unique construction of the programme encourages those who would benefit from an additional year in the company, to stay on. This progressive process means that the learning gained each year is not lost but is capitalised on; the experience is deepened, creative skills are built and the returning dancers provide continuity and experience for the new cohort.

The dance skills provided by the programme lead to the preparation and understanding of the dance profession and beyond that, to the communication and inter-personal skills required (attributes p.41), including the relationship with the choreographer and an understanding of the creative process. However, the more intangible qualities of risk taking and self-reflection are also important in building confidence, and in turn, useful for future learning, auditions and employment. An additional support for company members is also the ever expanding 'family' of dancers now in the vocational training organisations that the dancers are hoping to apply to.

Residencies are held in a number of different professional working environments, from dance company studios, to vocational training schools, to dance agencies and regional organisations, to Sadler's Wells itself, as well as other professional theatre venues. This allows the dancers to gain a sense of the professional working environment they will inhabit within the companies they may progress to or as independent professional dancers. They are at all times treated as professionals by all staff - creative, technical, support and administrative - and this has a particularly positive effect on them wanting to 'live up' to that expectation both in the quality of dance work produced but also in demonstrating a mature professional approach in all areas of the company activities.

“The professionalism for me has been the thing that defines this experience. There is always something to be done. There is always something to be said. There are always notes!”

NYDC Dancer

“I thought ‘being professional’ was, in a sense, working hard and trying to get the best out of it. You come to NYDC and it goes up another level and you gain a greater understanding of all the elements involved.”

NYDC Dancer

“As artists we are professional dreamers. We have a dream and we live to make the dream come to life. These dancers are approaching their professional paths and they have been selected to have this unique experience of working as a company and performing on the Sadler’s Wells main stage.”

Jasmin Vardimon, Guest Artistic Director 2012-13

From the second cohort of NYDC, 14 members went onto London Contemporary Dance School (nearly a quarter of the school’s first year UK intake). The Vice Principal of the school has commented that the influence of the NYDC dancers is noticeable, they have brought a powerful energy and determination into the group and a mature and self-reflective approach. NYDC has built in a number of opportunities for alumni to feed back into the programme such as supporting Experience workshops: registering and welcoming participants, ‘buddying’ dancers with additional needs, teaching current company repertoire and taking part in Q and A sessions about their time with the company and their experiences. For premieres of performances and on the national tour they play a key role in hosting the event and associated receptions. They also contribute to the first residency of the academic year by sharing their experiences of professional training and providing advice on applying to vocational schools and auditions, highlighting to current company members how NYDC is bridging that gap.

“In terms of their aspirations, it is having a profound affect; it has clearly had an influence on them and one of our students in particular has broadened his horizons past the UK, they are looking further afield to other progression routes and have the confidence to do this.”

Eddie Copp, Artistic Director, CAPA College, Wakefield, Yorkshire

“With my son, it was what he wanted to do anyway but this has made him even more determined. The thing he has now which he didn’t then, was that he now knows what it is to be a professional. They really treated them as professionals.”

NYDC Parent

“He has come from a really tough background and this opportunity means the world to him. He has always had a raw energy and ability but this has just been enhanced by NYDC and now he is looking at conservatoire training. I know there are loads of them (success stories) but he is a real success.”

Dance teacher of an NYDC dancer

3.4. Learning strategy

The learning strategy has been tested and adapted over three years, the key pedagogical concept being that short periods of highly intensive learning, followed by a period of reflection, can advance students swiftly and embed the learning gained. The response from students indicates that, while the level of work is new to them, they gain considerably from the strategy of ‘total immersion’. Given that the first residency might be the first sustained period of time away from family for some, the high level of pastoral support becomes integral to the learning strategy. The initial premise of having three core modules followed by a tour remains but adaptation to the timing has had a positive impact on the learning. As can be seen from the timeline chart (p.35) the first adaptation, due to student and parent response following the first cycle of activity, was to move the third residency back to April (previously May half-term) and to leave May and much of June free for school exams. In addition to the delivery of the curriculum, the whole programme is framed by a range of support strategies to enable students to concentrate fully on the learning process and move towards professional practice.

“NYDC is not a talent show - of course there is an aspect of showing off in dance, but it’s really a way of saying something deeper, about connection. See me. Recognise me. Accept me. Remember me. I think these young dancers are discovering these things for themselves- maybe unconsciously but I am really happy to be a part of it.”

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Guest Artistic Director 2014-15

The strategy includes an understanding of how to care for themselves as dancers. The artist education programme, or ‘Dancers Toolbox’, has input from a nutritionist, physiotherapist and sports psychologist, assisted by specialist knowledge when required, according to the needs of the group.

Dancers are encouraged to take responsibility for their health and development through their individual learning plan and this is supported through online mentoring. Information about fulltime training, careers in Dance and preparation for auditions also forms part of the 'Dancers Toolbox' strand.

"Living and breathing dance for such an intense period of time is such an enriching experience. Being able to absorb everything there is to learn and all the valuable information is a hard task in itself!"

NYDC Dancer

A key part of the Learning Strategy is that the programme and creation of the company is fully inclusive, this is demonstrated in four key areas:

1. In relation to dance forms, all are encouraged [see section 3.1].
2. All abilities are encouraged to apply and a great range is represented within the company.
3. As stated above, as all costs are covered.
4. Utilising a fully effective support team to ensure barriers to participation are consciously minimised.

This inclusive approach is crucial to the quality of the work as 'diversities' are seen as essential to the creative process, but also from the point of selection to make sure talent is not excluded. An outcome of the learning strategy has been one of a shift in result. The original brief had been for the company 'to primarily provide a unique performance experience'; while this has been achieved, the evidence from graduating students demonstrates that they have also gained a substantial skillset in dance and the further invaluable skill of being open and engaged with the process of 'learning'.

"They have this crazily high expectation of you which is really nice because it means they respect us enough to want us to push further than we would know how to push ourselves."

NYDC Dancer

See the recommendation in Section 6, The Future, p.63

The first three core modules are delivered through intensive residencies and the fourth through a series of weekends culminating with a week of national touring.

Evaluation showed that: 99% enjoyed the residencies; 97% thought that the intensive programme during residencies was a good thing; 87% found the residencies hard; 83% thought they could not have learnt as much if the residencies were shorter.

“The knowledge I needed to create and implement an entirely new company, learning strategy and curriculum came from my prior experience, gained as Director of two national conservatoires and Artistic Director of a touring dance company. I knew that a lot of talented young people were not getting a chance to enter dance training or subsequent careers and I wanted to address that imbalance, to create a system that could fast track and minimise inequality.”

Jane Hackett, NYDC Director

The Learning Strategy provides short intense bursts of learning, interspersed with connected reflective periods and time to consolidate experiences, promoting faster, deeper learning. The dancers’ response makes it clear that across the differing ages and abilities, this works. The contact with students between modules (mainly online and phone) and the creation of a company ethic through mutual support and respect for diversity is essential to achieving this.

3.5. The Curriculum

The curriculum is designed to provide intense learning sessions followed by periods of reflection and in the last module an introduction to professional touring.

Module 1 – form a company, develop a movement language, accompanied by exposure to stimuli and contextual knowledge, including Dancers health, presentation skills and audition preparation.

Module 2 – Create a dance work, prepare performance skills, stagecraft and learn more on dancers’ healthy practice.

Module 3 - Rehearse, refine, polish and perform the dance work; learning from the artists on reaching artistic understanding and practical preparation for performance, e.g. dealing with nerves, developing professional approaches to work.

Module 4 – Consolidate through performance, refine and reflect. Serving the public through performing, hosting workshops, receptions. Preparation for the next stage of training / career.

These modules are further defined each year by the choreographers working with the company in order to fit their own ideas of a 'company' and the needs of their creative practice, therefore giving students a 'real' experience. The core content and learning from each module remains the same, so the learning entitlement does not change but is adapted each year to meet the needs of the company and the current Guest Artistic Director.

The curriculum is designed to be at the core of the learning programme and is augmented by the 'Dancers Toolbox' designed to embed the learning.

"Another goal we focussed on was to give the dancers a shared training base to work from so we taught them a form of body conditioning combined with Pilates - a technique I have developed over the years working with my own company, which enables dancers to reach high physicality with an emphasis on core stability and support for their joints. We then built on this strong foundation to create (in between)."

Jasmin Vardimon, Guest Artistic Director 2012-13

"It's beautiful to see a body less imposed on by the world of dance, still at a raw stage and still exploring what it wants to be. You see the potential but it's not yet carved in stone. What is beautiful is that the politics of the body are there but not yet determined; the political choices of style are still free, still open to be carved out. As we grow older we become more conformed and at the same time that we become very specialised in certain areas, other doors close. They haven't yet arrived at the point where they know exactly who they are so they are very open to trying new ways of doing things."

Akram Khan, Guest Artistic Director 2013-14

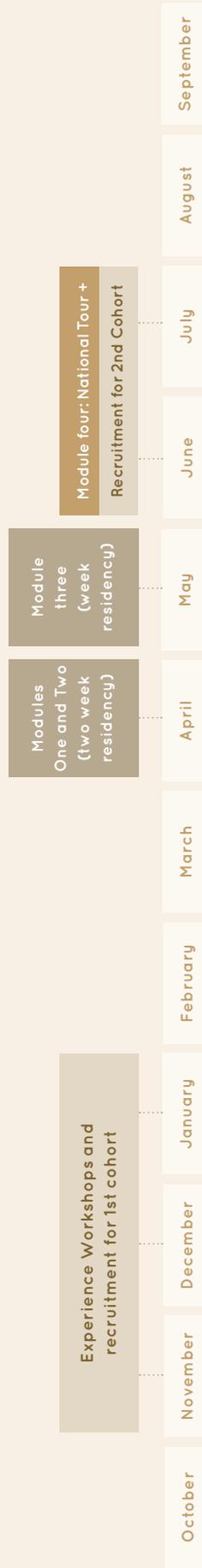
"We had a very short time to create the piece and had to work quickly; the dancers were saturated with information at a fast pace but it has been incredible to see how quickly they absorb and process information."

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Guest Artistic Director 2014-15

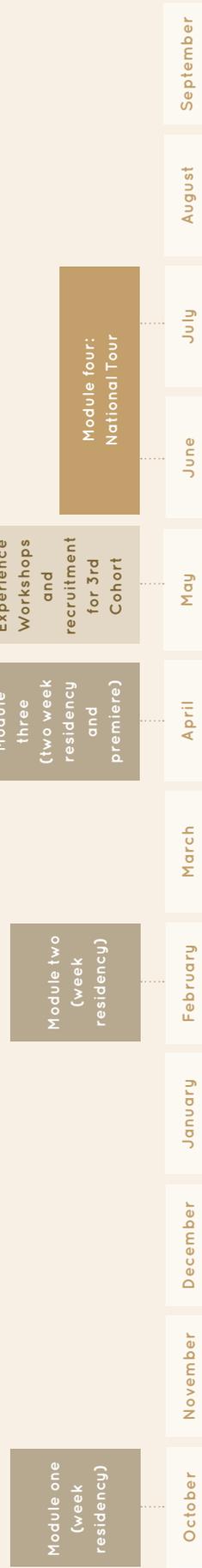
The curriculum and modular structure is effective in achieving desired aims and outcomes. Interaction with experienced artists is a key component and the fourth module of touring consolidates the learning throughout the year.

National Youth Dance Company Timeline

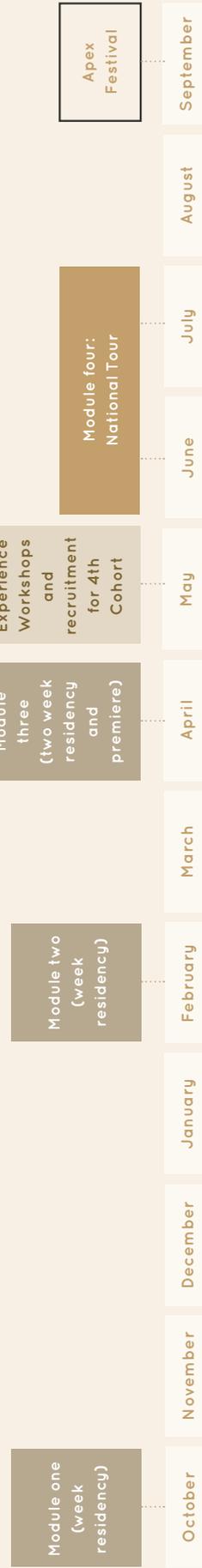
Cohort One 2013/2014



Cohort Two 2013/2014



Cohort Three 2014/2015



3.6. The Learning Programme

The overall Learning Programme is designed to integrate all of the individual elements of the process from the Experience Workshops, through the four parts of the Curriculum supported by the Dancers Toolbox through to the 'giving back' activities and the networking of Alumni and their role in future years to NYDC. Part of the function of the programme is to develop the attributes of the students and give them the qualities of resilience to succeed as professionals.

Touring the production at the end of the process provided a context to two key parts of the learning process. Students gained an idea of the level of hard work required for multiple performances but were also made aware of the skills needed to maintain a company ethos under this working rigor. The second area of great benefit was to be able to combine touring presentations with experience workshops for the following year, providing a link from one year to the next but also inspiring and encouraging potential students to apply. 100% of company members agreed that touring was a valuable experience and 95% thought that learning continued each time they repeated a performance of the work.

NYDC dancers' comments on Touring:

"I learnt... It's what they do, it's the real thing."

"...that it requires an extreme amount of professionalism, maturity and patience."

"I learnt how to adapt to different spaces and how to find solutions to adapt to a new space."

"I learnt you have to be able to develop the piece further and retain the emotional intention."

Dancers Toolbox



Dancers Toolbox

NYDC aims to create dancers who are fully engaged in an extensive artistic process, linking their experience to cross art forms and building an understanding of how to fulfil their potential and maximise progress and performance. Each evening during residency is dedicated to Dancers' Toolbox, a series of practical workshops contributing to the dancers' greater understand of themselves and their world.

The Dancers Toolbox programme covers a range of topics to enhance the work in the studio and introduce the dancers to skills and techniques that will support their development and understanding, not just for dance but for any training/ career they enter.

The overarching focus is dancers' personal development, future training and careers, health and wellbeing and the dance Industry, with topics including nutrition and injury prevention, relaxation techniques, professional practice and seeing professional work, audition preparation, presentation skills and the dancers' voice, and music and rhythm work. All members of the Artistic Team contribute to the sessions, sharing their understanding of professional dance practice with the company members and preparing them for performance.

Underpinning all work in the studio and in toolbox is an emphasis on reflective practice. At the start of each evening workshop, the dancers reflect on the day's work, encouraging them to focus on what has been achieved and what can be focussed on tomorrow. Every residency starts and ends with an open discussion that every company member contributes to, reflecting on the period that has passed and what is to come. This reflective practice is integral in encouraging the dancers to be confident with their voice, to understand the importance of evaluation and to respect each other's thought processes and understanding. It also builds connection to the artistic process and to each other.

The Tool Box is one of the key training components that relates directly to the development of the programme attributes (p.41). Even those qualities that come more from the dance skills based training are more fully understood and absorbed through the discipline of reflection and through peer discussion. The additional attributes that participants develop are those most commented on by parents as they see their family member develop as a person as well as a dancer.

"One of the other things which it [NYDC] is doing is supporting the dancer's capacity to dialogue. I mean, it is clear that as part of this process and the extraordinary practical experience that they have, that there is a very clear ability to reflect on what sort of experience they are having and they are able to talk about that, which is really impressive. It is enabling that process of development of personal practice which is really extraordinary...and they are taking other people with them."

David Steele, Vice Principal and Director of Studies, London Contemporary Dance School

“The toolbox sessions made me feel more confident in myself. We talk and we listen a lot and I think this is really useful.”

NYDC Dancer

“I found the sessions on auditions, particularly the elements on creating your solo, extremely helpful as it helps me to prepare for my auditions this year.”

NYDC Dancer

“It was great that we had an input into the NYDC website during Toolbox and could see how it was developing.”

NYDC Dancer

“I feel like I have discovered/ realised more authentic, worthwhile, earthier qualities of life or ways of thinking, mostly about energy through meditation and breathing practices.”

NYDC dancer

The Learning Programme is designed to address the needs of a developing professional dancer and therefore takes a holistic approach and a partially individualised programme for each student. The intention is that this approach will carry over after the year with NYDC as a foundation for a sustainable career. The shape of the learning programme throughout the year and accompanying ‘Dancers Toolbox’ sessions, facilitate logical, integrated development of skills and understanding, leading to a ‘complete’ experience, from which the learning can be transposed (transferred) to other contexts.

3.7. Participant & Company Attributes

The chart on Attributes, p.41, has been created to show the relationship between specific skills and the wider learning that the programme creates. The categories and titles have been created to bring together the response from interviews, focus groups and surveys.

NYDC members benefit from a professional company context, gaining dance skills alongside a host of other attributes. Not all company members will develop these to the same extent but it is important that the learning strategy articulates the aspirations for developing each individual.

As can be seen from the chart, The Participant Attributes are directly linked to those of the Company, each reinforcing the other. For example the core beliefs are achieved in the first instance through the orientation and these are soft but important outcomes on the lower level of learning specific skills and competencies.

The Company Attributes can be seen to be foregrounded again by the last two sections of skills, People and Communication, and, although many of these are related to building a company, they are informed by the higher layers.

This diagram has been created to show the more holistic view and how interconnected outcomes of parts of the programme are linked together. It is also informed by student and parent feedback on what they feel they have achieved beyond dance skills. To some extent this is an experiment in bringing together a wide range of feedback into a coherent structure.

“I’ve pushed myself way further than I thought I was capable of and have reached levels I didn’t think attainable. My perseverance and motivation have improved so much which has really helped me, not just in dance but in everything I do. I’ve definitely changed as a dancer/worker/student/person!”

NYDC Dancer

“Confidence: I’m really judgmental and harsh on myself but being around such supportive people helped me to build up my confidence. I created my first solo and presented my work in front of people for the first time...”

NYDC Dancer

“I’ve been able to be really open and have been able to offer my material and ideas with such ease.”

NYDC Dancer

“More determination, focus. I realised that when I am truly focused in/before a performance I feel far more empowered & get much more out of it, at the same time I realised the danger in faking focus.”

NYDC Dancer

“Pushing past physical boundaries in performance. Taking the lead in a warm up session. It surprised me how confident and at ease I felt.”

NYDC Dancer

“Turning fear into power.”

NYDC Dancer

“I just think money can't buy the opportunity that he has had, that he will be grateful for for the rest of his life, and not just for the dance, as we said right at the beginning, maturity, confidence, being with like-minded people, creativity and professional relationships.”

NYDC Parent

“They are slowly discovering their own power... and it is amazing for a teenager to do that. Because Akram would not leave it at an amateur level, so we will try and push the level into a professional state- and they can do it.”

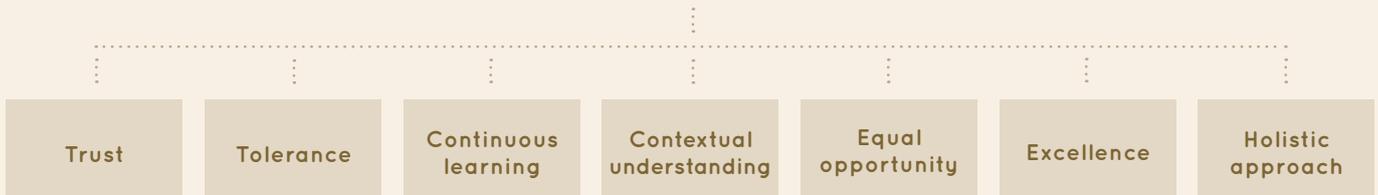
Konstantina Efthymiadou, NYDC Rehearsal Director 2013-14

“They just go for it and make it happen, even though we demand a lot of them- as much as we would from any professional. That is beautiful to see. In an ordinary lesson, it can be hard to get students to concentrate for even a single lesson but here they focus for 8 or 9 hours and often carry on afterwards. I certainly notice their focus in rehearsal; when the dancers are not practicing with the directors they are often found taking notes or learning from each other.”

Leif Firnhaber, NYDC Assistant Choreographer 2014-15

NYDC BELIEFS, ORIENTATION AND SKILLS

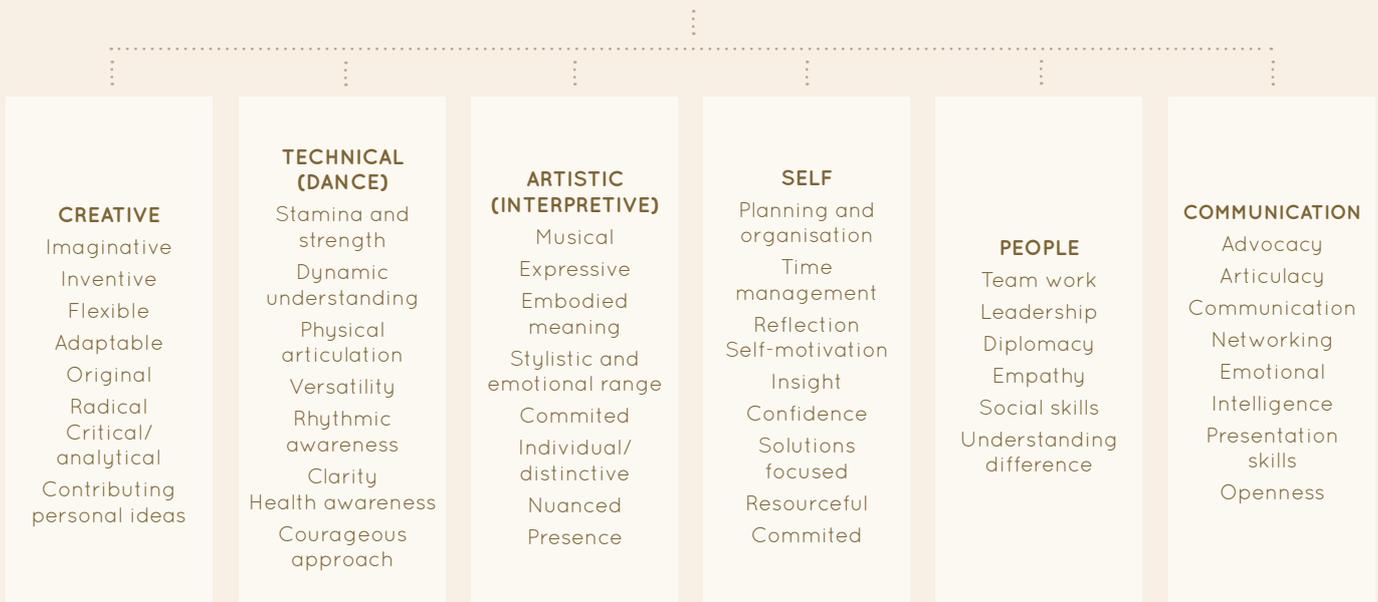
CORE BELIEFS



STYLE/ORIENTATION



SKILLS (COMPETENCIES)



Dancers evaluating the outcome of their NYDC experience:

91% thought that their confidence grew; 98% that their dance skills grew; 99% said they were inspired by the experience; 99% inspired by the artists they worked with; 95% felt trust in the artists; 97% had learnt about the creative process of making work; 67% learnt new things from Dancers Toolbox.

The programme does provide skills training to a standard that fast tracks students into further/higher dance education but also creates mature 'learners' that have developed a range of attributes. One outcome of this is their sense of responsibility to 'give-back' to dance education and to enabling others. (See section 3.11)

3.8. Collaborating with Outstanding Artists

Each year a new Guest Artistic Director is selected to lead the company (Jasmin Vardimon 2012/13, Akram Khan 13/14, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui 14/15). These world renowned artists are selected from Sadler's Wells' Associate Artists or visiting companies and artists. For many of the choreographers, NYDC is the first project of its kind that they have worked on but it is through the strong relationship with Sadler's Wells and the respect for the quality of work produced by the theatre that they take on the role.

It is a crucial part of the process that not only are students taught by distinguished choreographers, but also by those who are professional dancers themselves, and connected to the Artistic Director's company and work. The high level of choreographic skill ensures that participants are stretched and are tested physically and intellectually and this is balanced with the artists' ability to shape the company and working practices. Company dancers are clear in expressing their 'buy in' to both the aesthetic vision of the choreographer and to their way of 'getting the best' from them.



Dancers in rehearsal

This comes primarily from a respect for their professional choreographic work and their working with the company as individuals as well as in a group. Evaluation showed that 94% of the dancers thought that the level of the artists was an important factor in successful learning \ experience and 86% agreed that they had achieved things that they didn't previously think they could achieve.

“During my time with NYDC we got to work with dancers that are actually part of the Jasmin Vardimon Company. We got to understand the process that you go through to create work, and that has definitely inspired me.”

NYDC Dancer

“They feel like they are a big part of the creation, it is not like I am the choreographer, or Akram is the choreographer but they are also the choreographers and they create things for themselves.”

Andrej Petrovic, choreographer of The Rashomon Effect, NYDC 2014

“Working with Akram Khan and his dancers enables me to gain from their incredible and inspiring knowledge and experience. The biggest thing I have taken from them is to allow myself to connect emotionally with movement creating a more real and raw performance, I will take this with me in my future as a contemporary dancer/artist.”

NYDC Dancer

Essentially these Guest Artistic Directors / choreographers and the artistic team are chosen not just because of their artistic ability but also their ability to create work which understands and identifies the individual participants' skills and potential and how each needs to be developed and to be pushed to achieve their best within a supportive framework. As mentioned before, the artists feel confident in demanding very high standards of work as they know the company members are being fully supported by the Sadler's Wells team. Dancers selected for NYDC arrive with very diverse training and dance styles including contemporary, hip-hop, ballet, salsa, ballroom and South Asian. Rather than create choreographic material in advance (with one exception, a restaging) the artists assess the contribution each dancer can make and then create the piece with their combined potential in mind.

“One of the reasons I took this role on was to be reminded of how it is to have an open body; to re-experience, re-ignite, re-visit my own body through watching them experience their bodies. We forget about the youth body and for me, now, it is very important to never forget that sense of openness you have when you are at that stage; to be reminded of the importance of not judging and being open to whatever comes, before specialisation closes those channels and information influences all our decisions. I think it's really inspiring to work with young people who are really open. It's amazing because they're ready to suck all the knowledge or information that you have in a space of a moment.”

Akram Khan, Guest Artistic Director 2013-14

“Throughout this process the dancers brought such a fresh energy and enthusiasm into the room and I found this very energising.”

Jasmin Vardimon, Guest Artistic Director 2012-13

“When I looked at NYDC, I saw a lot of colours and a lot of potential. I wanted to pass on knowledge of my creative process and the way that Eastman, my company works. Thinking about the company, it felt relevant to re-mount sections of Babel(words), Puz/zle, Loin and TeZukA and find ways for the material to belong to them; the imagery and elements can work particularly well with large groups of dancers and it is exciting to be able to use the size of the cast to amplify certain moments. It is a beautiful thing to see how these young dancers bring the material to life and how they are able to work within a large group yet still find their individual place and expression within that. This large group of dancers has enabled us to explore connections and borders, the idea of us all being connected, maybe being put with people not of our choosing but having to learn to give and take. So there is no room for personal issues or ego but plenty of opportunity for fun, dedication and hard work. This is the exercise of life.”

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Guest Artistic Director 2014-15

“This show is about the next generation of dancers. They are skilful, strong and ready for anything.”

Daily Telegraph, (11 April 2015) (Rachel Ward)

“NYDC’s work is unequivocally good for its young dancers, but it is also good for audiences, offering a rewarding tour around Planet Cherkaoui.”

The Guardian, (12 April 2015) (David Jays)

“One of the finest dance pieces I’ve seen, not just in the youth dance sector but anywhere, came from the National Youth Dance Company of England.”

The Scotsman - Commonwealth Youth Dance Festival - Tramway, Glasgow (12 July 2014)
(Kelly Apter)

3.9. Peer learning process

Due to the diversity of styles of dance and skills within each cohort there is a considerable amount of informal learning that takes place, not only within workshops and rehearsals, but also between students sharing solutions to choreographic problems. This is encouraged as it develops an understanding in the dancers of how to share their skills in a professional way. As the choreographers encourage students to develop their personal creative input into the work, they in turn have to negotiate their ideas within the company, thereby creating a peer learning context across abilities and dance styles, developing understanding and respect for others. During evaluation, 90% said they felt fully accepted as themselves at NYDC.



Company Dancers in rehearsal

“I think being in NYDC has helped show me so many different styles and everyone has something different. I acknowledge that more now and can put it into my own dance”.

NYDC Dancer

“We’ve bonded as a company. I feel a great sense of trust and understanding between us all. Different personalities and needs are respected. Living together helps dancing together. It gives us a greater sense of trust.”

NYDC Dancer

“Seeing another company member working so hard to get a move right just completely spurred me on and made me realise that you just have to keep going and keep pushing.”

NYDC Dancer

This peer learning is carried forward during the year as students return to their schools, colleges, CATS (Centres for Advanced Training), and share what they have learnt. Students indicated that they had received mixed responses to sharing in these contexts, some very welcoming to gaining new skills from NYDC participants, and others less so. Having identified this as a concern, it is specifically addressed by NYDC (see The Future, Section 6) and links directly to the ‘giving back’ agenda that is encouraged.

“At home, I teach other dancers in years 7, 8 and 9 and I now have the tools to be able to teach in a more confident manner. I have warm ups to teach and I have phrases to teach and it has given me a lot of material to share.”

NYDC Dancer



Company dancers breathing together on stage before a performance

“At a couple of moments I did feel a bit out of my depth because everyone was talking about their CATS (Centres for Advanced Training) and I don’t go to one, and I felt I was taking longer to pick up material, but it just gave me more determination as I’m not used to feeling one of the least experienced and I feel I will be able to bring this back home not just to dance but to everything I do.”

NYDC Dancer

Self-reflection, an analytical approach and peer learning as a defined element of the programme have been key to developing dancers’ understanding and integral to the strong impact of performances. The peer learning develops the ability to both learn from a group but also to pass on skills. The peer learning compliments the formal learning and is integral to the building of an inclusive company.

3.10. Creating a professional company environment

The creation of a professional company environment is a role shared by the Artistic Team and the Sadler’s Wells/ NYDC Team.

The role of the Associate Artists/choreographers has been covered in section 3.8, although the very careful selection of appropriate artists by the Director of NYDC and the Artistic Director and Chief Executive of Sadler's Wells, is critical to the success of the programme. At all times students are treated as professionals and react accordingly; at the same time, there is an understanding that this is a new experience for the majority and appropriate levels of support are needed. Expectations of professional behaviour, concentration and commitment are high and great care is taken to create an environment in which these can be met.

The programme requires substantial logistical support in terms of planning; working across the country with a network of venues and partner organisations. The team also aim to relate to each individual dancer and their families. This level of planning and care essentially feeds into the 'inclusive' nature of the programme, enabling all to participate. Parents/families have been involved in both seeing the work created and in providing feedback to the evaluators and the Sadler's Wells team. The professional environment also extends beyond the company to the working environment and production values, particularly with regard to the inclusion of the staff of Sadler's Wells. The lighting, sound, costume and stage management departments are directly involved and marketing and box office indirectly included.

"The generation of today are focused on self-expression, on 'I, myself and I'....the iPhone, iPad... there is a lack of coming together or opportunities to embrace the concept of 'we'. Perhaps learning a piece such as Vertical Road provides a bridge from self-expression to finding your own place within someone else's vision. I think this is the harder task, to not be able to tap into their own body and language but to find themselves through someone else's language, like an actor does. I try and support them in this transition and vulnerability through dialogue and by understanding the initial frustration they may feel, which I remember from my own youth."

Akram Khan, Guest Artistic Director 2013-14

"My idea of where my 'limit' is has changed. I can push myself a lot harder than I thought."

NYDC dancer

"Creating work, being professional and having independence - NYDC taught me that."

NYDC Dancer

Creating a professional company work environment promotes a strong, focused work ethic, enabling transformation and achievement, providing preparation for both future study and employment.

3.11. A culture of giving back

NYDC company members are encouraged to find ways to disseminate their new skills and knowledge as widely as possible. Throughout their year as a company dancer many members have returned to their schools/ colleges/ training schemes and have created their own work inspired by the NYDC Experience. Some even set up their own dance groups and workshops in response to what they had learnt.

Students 'give back' directly to the programme in more formal ways such as:

- Experience workshops: supporting Experience workshops; registering and welcoming participants; taking part in the session, including 'buddying' any dancers with additional needs; taking part in a Question and Answer session about their time with the company and their experiences; leading a backstage tour of Sadler's Wells and sharing their experiences of performing- as part of the final selection workshop.
- Hosting performances: both at the Premiere and on the National Tour, NYDC current dancers and Alumni have a large and integral part to play in welcoming guests and sharing their experiences of NYDC, both pre and post performance.
- Contributing to Dancers Toolbox Sessions: NYDC Alumni take part in Question and Answer sessions with current dancers, focussed on the next stage of their training and how NYDC has prepared them for this, including advice on auditions and application.

The culture of 'giving back' is taken seriously by students keen to contribute; they see it as a way of repaying for the experience and career opportunity they have been given, to stay connected to the company and to support newer company members.

"It's such a great feeling knowing that all the dancers are there for the same reason; sharing a love of dance and the goal of a future in dance."

NYDC Dancer

“His teachers came to watch our local performance and the whole school came to the premier and they were absolutely gob-smacked at the level of professionalism from all the dancers that they witnessed, they couldn’t believe that they had only been together for 4 weeks...I think this was inspiring for them to see.”

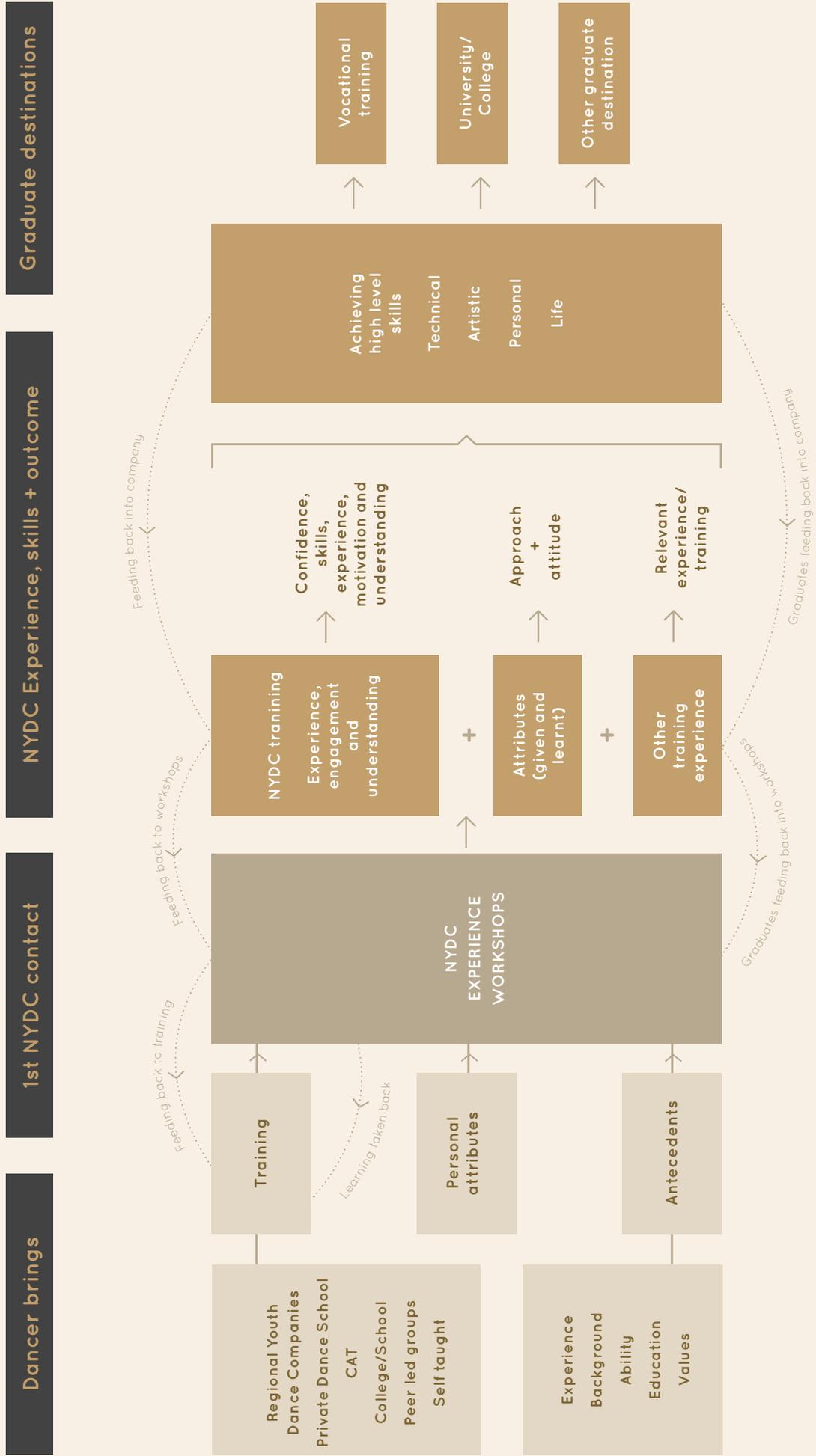
NYDC Parent



NYDC workshop

A culture of giving back means that dancers are aware of the public investment that supports their time with NYDC and of the many others who would like to be in their position. They aim to give the audience the best possible experience of the choreographer’s work, out of respect for the artist. They are articulate about their experience and the artistic process and take seriously their role representing NYDC, Sadler’s Wells, the Guest Artistic Director and, at times, Dance as an art form, assisting with workshops, recruitment, receptions and press interviews. There is also an awareness of the contribution and impact they can make to their local schools and communities.

Determinates contributing to successful cycle of development, personal progression and benefits for the sector



4. TESTING THE ORIGINAL AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME

During the first three years of NYDC, the original aims of the programme were tested with the dancers, artists, parents and Sadler's Wells. In this section, the original seven areas for analysis are considered. The detail of achievement varied each year and has been broken down into specific thematics to see in detail how those involved responded.

The use of *Grounded Research* was designed to encourage participants to openly discuss areas of the project and then to group the responses around the stated aims for evaluation.

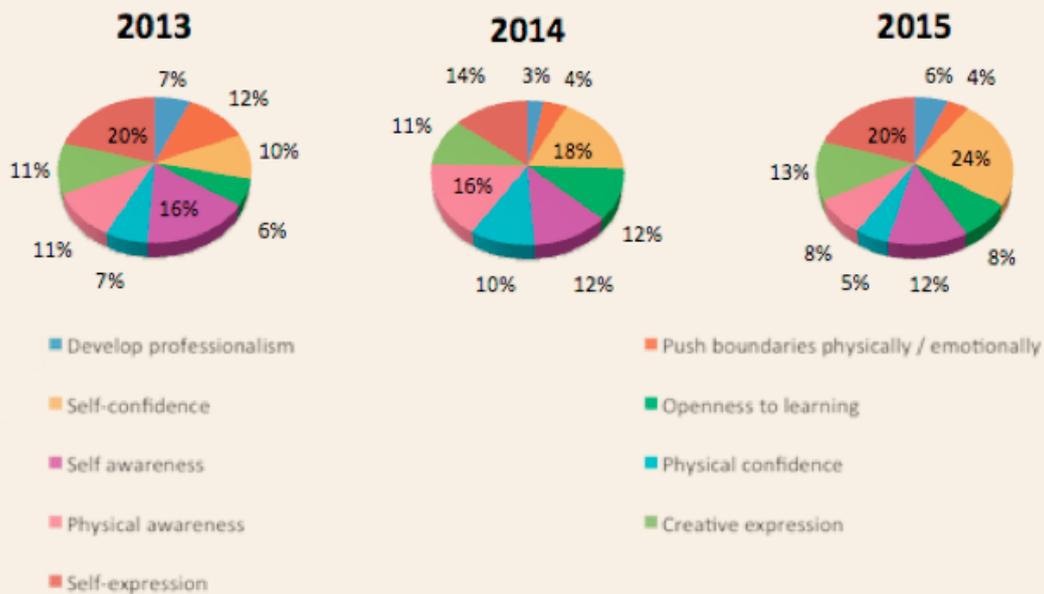
It should be noted, in relation to the seven aims, participants were not asked to grade or put in order of value; however, the degree to which they spoke about each area for which there is a title (created by the evaluators, such as 'confidence' or 'physical awareness') was noted and then given a numerical value relating to the number of times it was mentioned. This demonstrated their concern with each area and how important it was to them.

The results of responses dealing with these areas have been put primarily into diagram or graph form to provide a quick point of reference; the graphs reflect the degree to which respondents spoke about each area. **Although the responses have been put into numerical form to provide a perspective on the achievement, the accompanying narrative is equally important.**

Some of these aims are essentially not within the remit of the student cohort and so they may have little to say or may take the conversation in a different direction. However their view on the broad range of issues was thought to be valuable and these focus groups may have helped them reflect on the process they had been through.

4.1. To nurture creativity, learning and an intelligent, thoughtful approach to dance practice as a preparation for high level performance

Dancers were asked what they feel they had learned through their NYDC Experience. The following skills were highlighted most:



NYDC members expressed how their creativity, confidence and self-awareness had grown through the programme with examples of specific outcomes of their learning and personal / professional growth. There is clear evidence of dancers engaging with critical thinking around their dance practice and creative processes involved in the piece. 18.4% talked about being pushed - physically and mentally - and that this had yielded positive outcomes in terms of their physical ability and self-confidence inside and outside of NYDC. Many cited examples of where they had applied new skills or tried new things as a result of greater confidence with 10.7% citing specific examples of this. It is interesting to note how these areas map to a large extent onto the diagram of attributes on p.41.

“I feel like I understand more things, I’m not necessarily wiser but I am more aware of things about myself, how much I have to / can push myself to find new things, to try to embrace emotion. I know that sometimes I won’t feel it, or feel like I have energy, but I know to trust myself that it will come.”

NYDC Dancer

“I learnt to value others and work as a team in all aspects of life. Learned this from the end of our piece, you can’t be selfish as you need to consider your peers as we dance as one body.”

NYDC Dancer

“The creative process has been an incredible experience. Understanding the concept of the piece is initially challenging but discovering, exploring and expanding everyone’s ideas is very exciting.”

NYDC Dancer

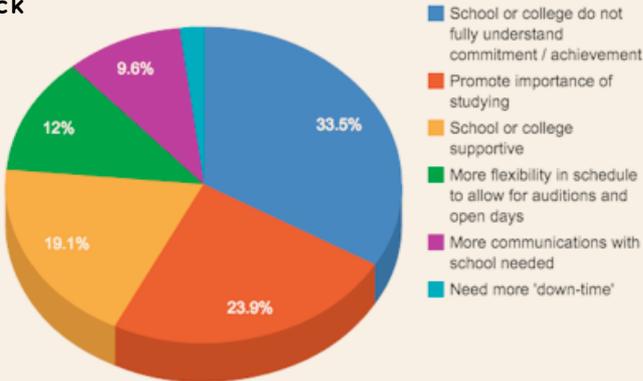
4.2. To include families, teachers and peers in each young dancer’s development

During evaluation interviews, parents/ guardians discussed the areas that gave them confidence in the NYDC Experience. This was not a direct question but an area of conversation. For example they were not asked a specific question on NYDCs role in care, but 19% brought this up as a key point for them and 76% stated that they now understood the professional development paths for their family member.

In 2013, the first year, there was a sense from NYDC students and parents that some of their dance and head teachers were not as aware of the work they were engaged in as they would like, and were not aware of the achievement of NYDC students. Parents felt that some direct communication from NYDC to head teachers / department heads was an appropriate way to explain both the level of commitment and the achievement of the student. Also, as can be seen from the schedules, some NYDC work was undertaken close to school examinations in the first year. Both areas were acted upon for 2014 with teachers receiving more information on the aims of NYDC and the 2014 schedule moved to accommodate school-work. It was clear from both parents and children that the structure and schedule had been improved over the 3 years to be more compatible with the academic year and vocational dance programmes.

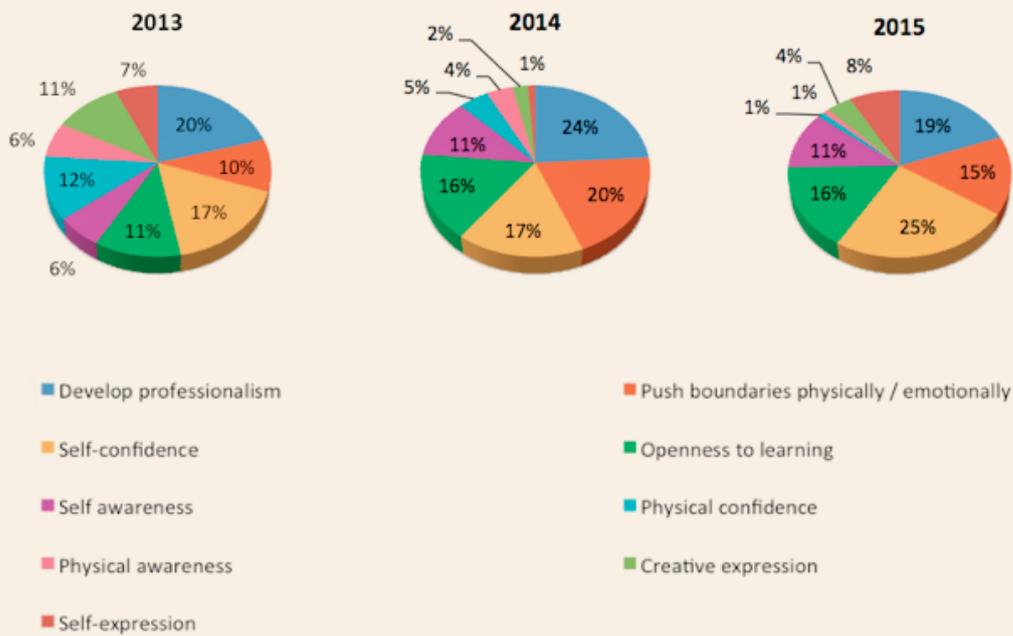
Another student suggestion was to distribute a video to the school that would illustrate the standard of work being developed through NYDC and the level in which they’d be working. The response to inclusion of peers and teachers is further covered in sections 3.2 and 3.9.

Themes mentioned in feedback on structure and support

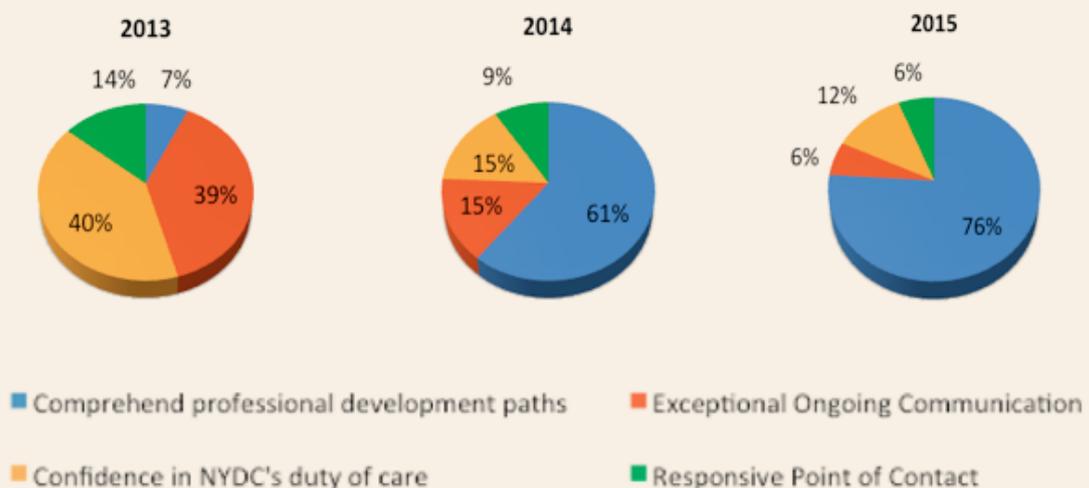


Parents noted a range of specific changes in their children since they had been part of NYDC. In particular, in that they become more professional, resilient, confident and self-aware. Greater professionalism (24%), self-confidence (16.4%) and self-awareness (11.1%) coupled with examples of emotional and physical boundaries having been challenged (19.9%) helped develop an ability to engage in critical thought around their practice. Greater levels of confidence also are likely to have contributed to an increased openness to learning.

Breakdown showing mention of theme indicators from 2013-2015



Further breakdown showing mention of theme indicators from parents 2013-2015



As can be seen over three years, the emphasis of parental response moved towards understanding the future potential for their family member. Parents found that access to professionals within the dance arena - choreographers and those running the programme - provided useful insight into career development pathways for their family member. By 2014, over 60% of feedback in this area related to the value of understanding dancers' future career options - they clearly have felt a need for information and case studies in this area and this is something NYDC has gone a long way to provide. They felt the programme was well organised and trusted in Sadler's Wells' duty of care.

"The frequency of contact was great. The availability of staff was exceptional. Having worked in the trade myself, it's not common for things to be that well managed."

NYDC Parent

"I had an awful lot of confidence in everything he was involved in - I didn't have to worry at all."

NYDC Parent

"You were made to feel part of it as a parent."

NYDC Parent

"In our case, they took very special care of our daughter's allergies, dietary requirements and that was brilliant. It was very well done."

NYDC Parent

4.3. To communicate a clear, encouraging and inclusive message about NYDC

The diversity of the company membership is a clear sign of the inclusive messaging delivered by NYDC.

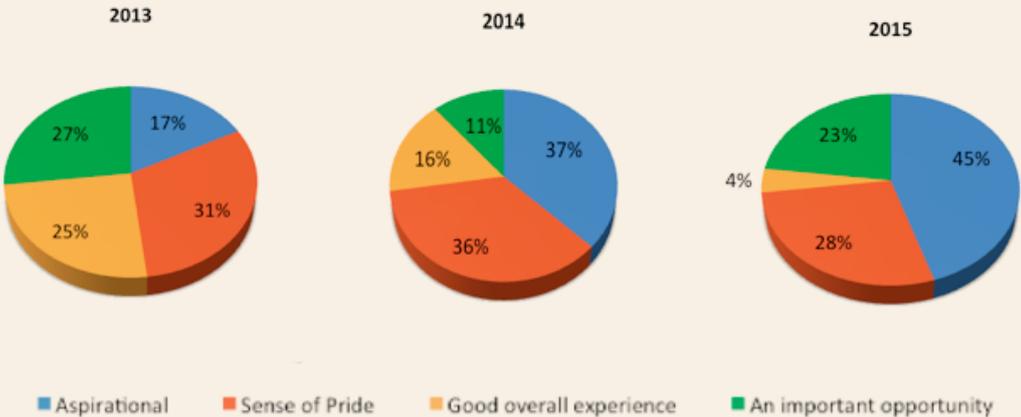
The company members were 100% positive about how they wished to communicate the impact of their own experiences with the next generation of company dancers. This broadly broke down into the areas overleaf, which are all part of an 'encouraging' message. The process of having current company members involved in Experience Workshops provides a positive message from one cohort to the next.

The group diversity is most effectively communicated through the performances and touring as the 'diversities' are apparent.

“Learning about other dancers’ backgrounds and training showed me that there are a huge number of training places out there, it doesn’t really matter where you train or what you train in, you can transfer to other styles.”

NYDC Dancer

Summary of themes mentioned by parents in relation to outcome of NYDC experience



NYDC has been an aspirational experience for parents as well as their children: they are part of a highly selective programme at a National institution, and they consequently have gained reinforcement of their belief in their child’s achievements and talent. Overall parents were very positive about their child’s experience in NYDC, believing it to be an important opportunity and good overall experience. It is noticeable that each year the ‘aspirational’ responses increased as both students and parents understood the potential of the programme in their careers. Seeing the progress of previous years was part of this process.

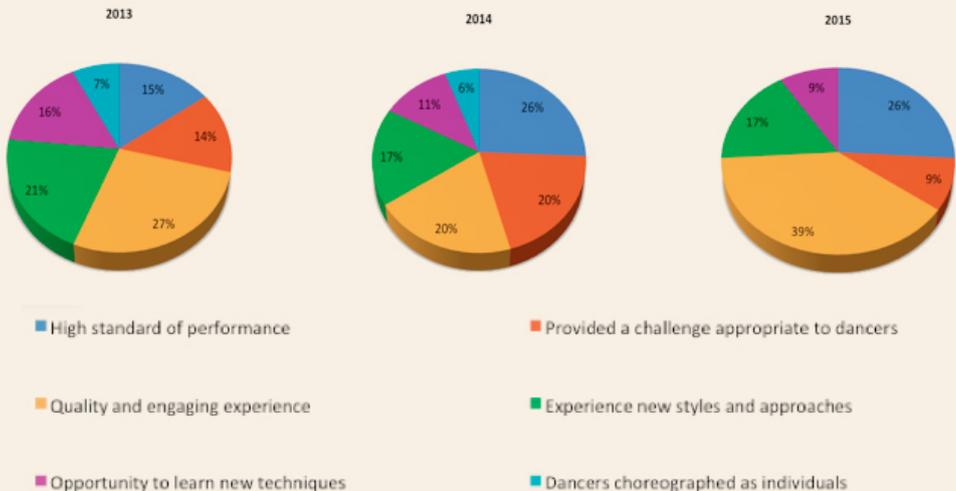
4.4. To seek maximum reach and impact for the company’s activities without compromising quality or depth of experience

The number of young people who have engaged with the company has far exceeded the original business plan agreed by Sadler’s Wells and Arts Council England, as has the number of areas visited.

Cohort responses throughout the evaluation focussed heavily on the quality and depth of the experience that they had. The following areas were mentioned again and again throughout the interviews as key values and approaches that were experienced throughout NYDC membership.

Parents and dancers frequently mentioned the high level at which NYDC were working - and it was felt that the challenges they undertook whilst creating the work were at an appropriate level. They were impressed by the standard of the performance.

Summary of themes mentioned by dancers and parents in relation to the impact of the experience



“Dancing every day was the highlight. I felt challenged and motivated every day.”

NYDC Dancer

“The residency challenged me on my technique and creative abilities and made me think in different ways to achieve my goals.”

NYDC Dancer

4.5. To collaborate with and add value to existing youth Dance networks and programmes

The cohort recognised the value that the NYDC team had created through good communication with dance networks, primarily from their own experience. Learning about training programmes could be subsumed into learning about ongoing opportunities but there was a sufficient number of responses to be able to differentiate.

As can be seen in The Future section of this report (p.63), NYDC is continuing to expand its reach across England and has identified where there are gaps in those registering for Experience Workshops and has taken measures to address them. The company has collaborated extensively with existing networks, but there is variation in the networks across the country. The activity of NYDC has, in part, exposed the gaps and areas of development in dance provision nationally and the NYDC Team is working to try to make sure that young dancers, regardless of geographical location in England, are still aware of the opportunity of being able to join the company.

Dance UK held an international conference in April 2015 aiming to cover all aspects of the Dance industry; NYDC led, hosted and curated a full day of the 3 day conference focused on all aspects of training and developing dancers, Emerging Artists: Training, Creativity & Choreography, thus fulfilling the company's role as 'The national flagship organisation for youth dance' (ACE brief).

"The positive role of the arts in our society is fundamental in providing young people with the skills they need to succeed in any walk of life. I think what has been the most powerful is other students being able to attend the performances, they were really inspired and excited about seeing what was achieved. It is very important that NYDC is there and that we in the South Asian dance sector will keep interacting with it."

Piali Ray, Director, SAMPAD

"My students return with new skills and confidence and a greater insight into professional practice and a working theatre. This is inspiring for the other students."

Robert Nicholson, former Course Leader of Dance, Lewisham College

NYDC has worked hard to collaborate with and add value to existing networks, investing intensive resource into areas identified for development. An example of this is Dance Whispers in Yorkshire and Humberside in March 2015:

Dance Whispers was a regional youth dance project for Yorkshire which nurtured young choreographers, provided crucial CPD for dance leaders and developed a stronger connection with the National Youth Dance Company across the region. The project enabled 10 young choreographers from across Yorkshire to create work on their youth dance groups in response to NYDC's work by Guest Artistic Director Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. The project was run in partnership with Yorkshire Dance and Wayne Sables and enabled stronger connections across Yorkshire as well as raising aspirations amongst young people in the region and encouraging a new generation of young artists.

The project involved:

- 2 NYDC partners in Yorkshire- Wayne Sables and Yorkshire Dance
- 9 regional youth group leaders
- An artistic team supported by NYDC and led by Joss Arnott
- 9 youth dance groups involving 10 young choreographers and 1 assistant choreographer
- 2 visits to Sadler's Wells and NYDC
- 14 participatory sessions
- 8 Regional exchanges
- 9 Devising weekends- young choreographers creating their own work
- 135 participants
- 2 public performances at the Stanley and Audrey Burton Theatre, Leeds on 12th July 2015
- 423 audience members

At the evaluation meeting on 10th July 2015, the regional partners agreed that Dance Whispers had been an extremely successful project, further establishing NYDC as the flagship youth dance company; setting standards and raising expectations of youth dance, sparking the imagination of young dancers living in Yorkshire and allowing even more young people to engage with the company.

When asked what aspect of Dance Whispers has been the most valuable, Tom Bowes, group leader for NSCD Youth Dance Company said:“.. *Watching NYDC. For some of our participants, this was their first experience of watching dance. We do not have the funds to arrange trips similar to this, so this was an invaluable experience. The group gained a lot from watching a high standard, quality piece performed by young dancers of a similar age to themselves.*”

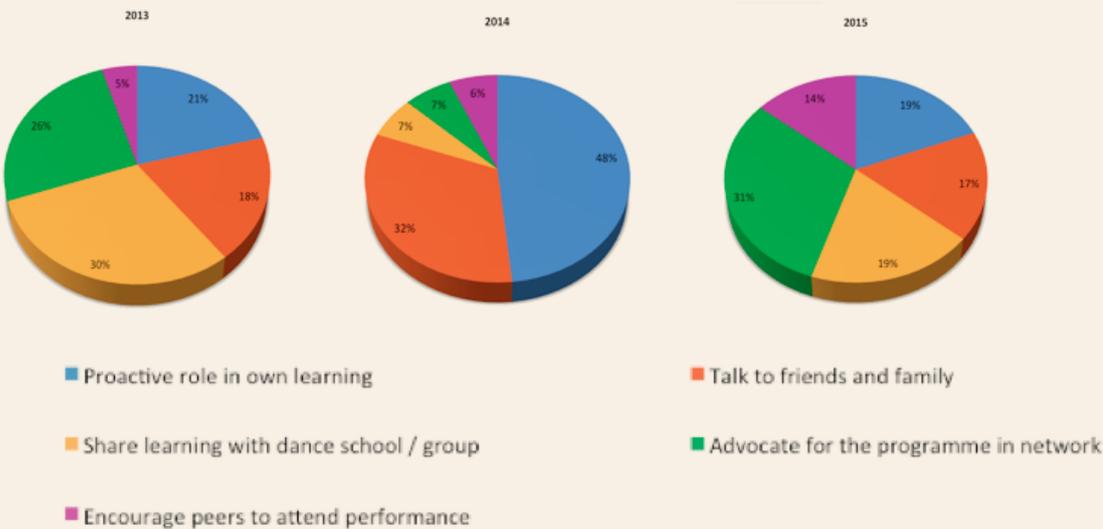
“All the dancers benefitted... from seeing NYDC perform. I didn't realise the effect it would have on them, but seeing the company perform in the matinee really gave them some fire in their bellies which they brought to their own performance on the evening.”

Stephanie Potter, Group Leader, Hype Youth Dance Company

4.6. To share results and learning widely across the youth Dance sector

The cohorts of dancers see themselves as key ambassadors across the sector and through this they will continue to ‘learn’, by communicating their experiences and learning in a range of contexts through their early careers.

Themes mentioned by dancers in relation to being ambassadors



In 2014, 48.4% indicated they felt that they had had taken a more proactive role in their own learning. This strongly suggests that the programme provides dancers with the tools and confidence to do so. There are some clear examples of company members who have taken their learning and utilised it in their own dance networks / schools in order to pass on their experience and knowledge. This indicator had almost doubled from the previous year - showing that NYDC dancers were taking a key role in their own learning and taking responsibility for the progression of their career. In 2015, the indicators show a more altruistic focus – a stronger bias towards knowledge sharing and advocating for the programme in the dancers’ networks. See section 3.11 on ‘giving back’ (p. 48).

4.7. To utilise Sadler’s Wells full range of resources to enhance the learning and experience of NYDC members

As can be seen from the pie charts overleaf, the most mentioned resources were that of access to dance professionals and the experience of working at Sadler’s Wells. Some of the discussion focused on functional areas in terms of training; however there was also discussion on the overall ethos of the building and companies working there. Working in the same environment as high level national and international companies communicates a seriousness approach to work.

Themes mentioned in relation to available resources at Sadler’s Wells



The prestige of NYDC’s association with Sadler’s Wells is important, with 60% of 2013 comments in this area mentioning the association. This is still evident but much less important by 2015, as the experience of working at a high level with access to professional dancers, choreographers and the learning team had become the key response by 2015, therefore clearly valuing the professional process they had gone through.



Excerpt of Vertical Road, choreographed by Akram Khan, restaged for NYDC 2014

5. CONSOLIDATING THE FIRST THREE YEARS: APEX RISING

Apex Rising marked the end of the first three years of funding for NYDC and celebrated some of the most innovative and exciting dance being performed by young dancers and created by world leading choreographers. The two diverse programmes captured the power young dancers have in shaping the future of dance and featured performances from the National Youth Dance Companies of Scotland and Wales, plus international guest group, Groupe Grenade. In addition, the four works created during the first three years of NYDC were performed again- the first time that the work of world leading choreographers Jasmin Vardimon, Akram Khan and Sidi Larbi Cherkoui was performed side by side. The event provided students with a further professional experience and a return to the main stage of Sadler's Wells.

Apart from sharing contemporary work across youth companies, it gave an opportunity to bring back together three cohorts of NYDC and to ask the dancers to reflect on the NYDC process they had been through, as well as considering the impact of restaging their previous work. The result was that the dancers viewed their time with NYDC as a very positive experience which had a strong impact on them. It was also interesting to see that the learning of the 'short, high intensity' programme had stayed with them, now enhanced by their subsequent training.

"I felt really excited but nervous, it was nice to have had a bit of space from the piece so you could feel like you had learned from the last residency and premier experience and work on some of those aspects."

NYDC Dancer

"To find a new depth in the emotion and allow myself to become more involved. I was surprised how naturally the movement came back to me and how it felt. I was surprised how I can give more physically even with the time off in between."

NYDC Dancer

See Appendix 7, p.100, for further analysis.

See full programme details at www.sadlerswells.com/whats-on/2015/national-youth-dance-company-apex-rising/

6. THE FUTURE

Areas of on-going action identified by the report for further development.

6.1. Company reach

As can be seen from the statistics (p.11-13) and the maps (p.14), NYDC has reached a diverse group of young dancers across the country. Over a three year monitoring period, it is clear that the picture grows and develops year on year and in order to see the full view of the company, all three years must be taken into consideration. There are still some cold spots across the country, this could be due to existing infrastructure, limitations and geography in more rural areas, plus variations in population. NYDC has undertaken development work both in the north and south west to reach potential students and encourage further engagement.

The development process is ongoing and has already had an impact but it is resource intensive. NYDC works with existing networks and since its inception a growing awareness of NYDC activities has meant that the number of applications is building from new areas, but this could still be developed further.

A compelling reason for having a greater pool of applicants is that there will be a greater chance that outstanding talent will have the opportunity to emerge.

6.2. Schools liaison

As identified through interviews with company members, some dancers found their schools supportive of both NYDC and their ambitions whilst others did not fully understand the significance of the opportunity. This has been recognised and now teachers of all company members are sent a letter at the start of the year with company dates and information about Arts Award. They also receive the NYDC newsletter and are invited to performances, across the country. NYDC is also seeking ways to further involve teachers.

6.3. Creative Networks

NYDC prioritises work with existing networks, however one unexpected, positive outcome of creating the model for NYDC with a strong regional focus means that year on year more organisations are proactively seeking contact (also from outside England).

To maintain those contacts for the benefit of creating more opportunity and access for young dancers across the country, it will need a conscious decision to invest in keeping and developing them through a positive response and offer of partnership. Currently demand is greater than the resource available. However, seeding networks that develop and uncover talent in more remote areas may be a cost effective way of ensuring equitable access.

6.4. Renewal

Establishing effective systems that work, includes a need to disrupt and renew those systems, this ensures relevance to a shifting profession and ever changing social context. The rotating Guest Artistic Directors/choreographers take the company in a different direction each year and the ongoing inclusion of the dancers' opinions, perceptions and suggestions in the creative work is an important factor in avoiding stagnation.

NYDC currently undertake internal feedback sessions on a regular basis and so are swift in taking action to make the learning process as effective as possible. In the longer term, to serve the students well and maintain current standards, it is essential that NYDC has the resource to continue as a reflective, learning organisation, coupling sustainability with refreshment and re-thinking.



(in between), choreographed by Jasmin Vardimon, 2013

6.5. Communication of the design of the programme

While taking on the need to renew identified overleaf, it is also a need to communicate the design and implementation of the programme, from selection processes, through the learning strategy and curriculum, to the 'giving back' of alumni. This student centred approach is, from all evidence, delivering highly its key aims. The model that has been created over three years has itself gone through a 'learning' process and will continue to evolve. There is always a danger with a good practice of wanting to 'transfer' it or 'roll it out'. In this case, given the unique context of the programme and the way it is taught, that may be difficult. However the thinking that has gone into creating the programme should certainly have a wider audience and could no doubt be used in different ways. Rather than 'scaling up', there may be a way of replicating parts of the process. There is also the potential for others to understand the learning strategy and use it in a different context; this might be best achieved through a CPD programme for those in dance education.

One of the original aims of the project was –'To share our results and learning widely across the youth Dance sector'. While many in education and specifically dance education are now aware of NYDC, they may not be so aware of the unique model being used and how this multifaceted approach works. This should now be a multi-agency challenge to achieve this aim, finding a way to develop the full value of what has been created.

6.6. Choreographic practice

While the programme is led by choreographers of international standing, students are given the opportunity to contribute to creation of the new work. They experience this as individuals and as members of a team negotiating group responses to challenges. What has emerged from this process is that there is a strong demand from this group to develop their choreographic practice. This could have considerable benefits in the long-term for the sustainability of their careers and in the short-term increase their training and employment potential. NYDC are currently developing choreographic modules for current members and alumni.

6.7. Advocacy

NYDC as a national flagship organisation. Currently NYDC is creating and representing best practice and the achievement of young artists, raising standards and aspirations, and with a responsibility to reach young people across all regions.

This is achieved by maintaining relationships with proactive organisations at all levels while finding ways to invest in new ones. An ever increasing number of organisations are proactively seeking contact with NYDC. It will require action and resources in the future to maintain the very positive relationships that have flourished whilst still developing in new areas. NYDC and its funders may need to consider the best way to deal with this growing demand.

It should be noted that the students in the company are already excellent advocates for the experience they have had. This is addressed specifically through the Dancers Toolbox sessions where they gain the skills and confidence to articulate what they have gained. They are keen to contribute to the promotion and profile raising of the NYDC programme and the value of youth dance.

6.8. Future research

Soon the first cohort of NYDC will have completed their training programmes. To fully understand the impact of NYDC at a national level the company members need to be tracked to see their employment destinations and to gain feedback on how the qualities and skills gained in NYDC have impacted on their subsequent training and employment. This would not be that difficult to achieve as NYDC has maintained contact with the majority and alumni are actively engaged with the current cohort. Tracking could be mainly online and participant led. This would seem to be essential in reporting back against the original aims.



The Rashomon Effect, choreographed by Andrej Petrovic and directed by Akram Khan, 2014

A secondary and different area of research could be to consider how the *Learning Strategy* created by NYDC could be applied to other contexts or performance forms such as theatre. There could be considerable potential here.

7. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

National Youth Dance Company Assessment Criteria

Each criteria is marked 1-3, resulting in an individual map of attributes and skills.

1. A distinct movement quality, ability to capture the essential qualities of a range of dance styles

1. Notices different styles and adapts own movement accordingly
2. 1 + reflects suggested nuance, dynamic and timing
3. 1 + 2 + adds appropriate detail

2. Ability to communicate and express through movement and physical presence

1. Transmits dynamic qualities
2. 1 + engages and holds attention
3. 1 + 2 + through use of varied dynamics and expression

3. Musicality; rhythmic response

1. Notices and replicates/responds to suggested phrasing and timing
2. 1 + expressive and dynamic quality of rhythm and sound
3. Responds well to 1 + 2 in instruction and music, also finds individual response and timing within set parameters

4. Co-ordination

1. Can simultaneously perform different actions with different body parts
2. 1 + whilst moving through space and monitoring spatial awareness and design
3. 1 + 2, include differing dynamics simultaneously to produce a cohesive whole with depth of movement and physical expression

5. Willingness and confidence to embrace new experiences and ideas

1. Joins in fully with tasks; responds to suggestions and comments
2. 1 + contributes personal ideas and creativity
3. 1 + 2 + a courageous approach, pushing into new territory

6. Desire, motivation and commitment to participate in an intensive dance programme

1. Evidence in personal statement
2. 1 + full commitment; evidence in process
3. 1 + 2 + feedback from dancers during the day

7. An interest in a professional career in dance

1. From application, activity and statement; combination of: current activity, aspirations, plans to enter full-time training; self-identified talent and aspirations; tenacity

8. A good 'match' for the programme offered and stated aims

1. Able to attend all activities and full commitment
2. 1 + contribute to group, creative ideas, accept and respond to correction and suggestion
3. 1 + 2 + a strong individual presence in performing/working space; ability to engage

APPENDIX 2

Experience Workshops Guest Panel Members 2012/2015

The following artists have joined the NYDC Experience Workshops as guest panel members between 2012-2015.

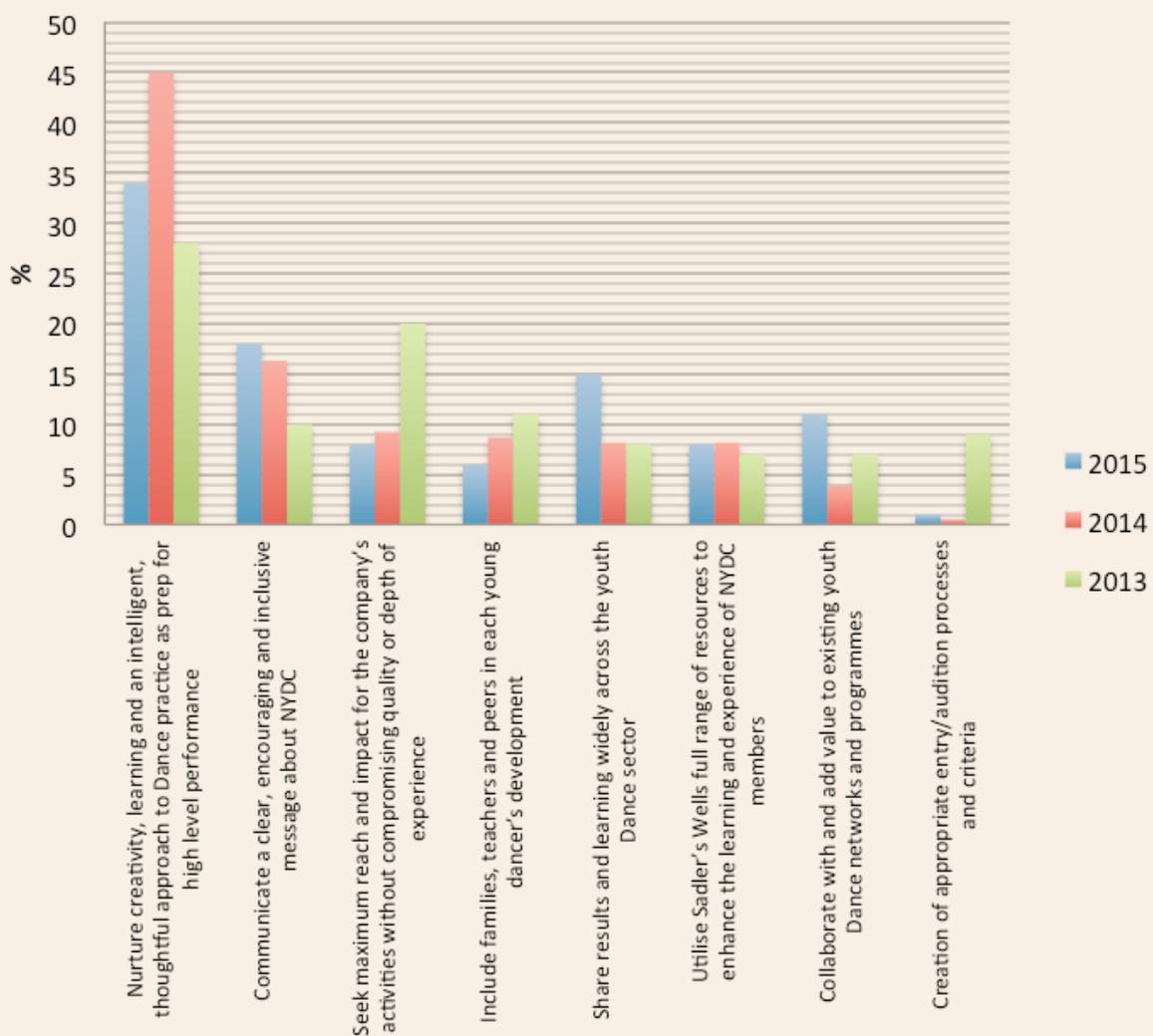
Guest	Company
Joss Arnott	Artistic Director, Joss Arnott Dance
Lucy Bennett	Artistic Director, Stop-Gap Dance Company
Tim Casson	Dance Artist, Jasmin Vardimon Company
Gavin Coward	Dance Artist, Ballet Lorent
Claire Cunningham	Dance Artist, including Wayne McGregor Radom Dance and Eastman
Tom Dale	Artistic Director, Tom Dale Company
Mafalda Deville	Dance Artist and choreographer, Jasmin Vardimon Company
Robby Graham	Artistic Director, South Paw Dance Company
Robert Guy	Dance Artist, Wired Aerial
Benjamin Dunks	Artistic Director, Attik Dance
Adrienne Hart	Artistic Director, Neon Dance
Dawn Holgate	Former Dancer with Phoenix Dance Theatre and Course Leader at Leeds City College
Gurmit Hukam	Rehearsal Director, Akram Khan Company
Amit Lahav	Artistic Director, Gecko Theatre Company
David Lloyd	Dance Artist, Jasmin Vardimon
Liv Lorent	Artistic Director, Ballet Lorent
Rosie Kay	Artistic Director, Rosie Kay Dance Company
Chris Marney	Dance Artist, including Matthew Bourne New Adventures
Marie McCluskey	Artistic Director, Swindon Dance
Dixon Mbi	Dance Artist, including Russell Maliphant
Claire Morris	Co-Director, Fallen Angels Dance Theatre
Kerry Nicholls	Director, Kerry Nicholls Dance
Tiia Ourilla	Northern School of Contemporary Dance
Mickael Marson Riviere	Dance Artist, founder of Company Decalage
Shane Shambhu	Director, Altered Skin
Paul Smethurst	Dance Artist, including Matthew Bourne New Adventures
Shannon Parker	Dance artist, including San Francisco Ballet and Northern Ballet
Pete Shenton	Director, New Art Club
Kenneth Tharp	Chief Executive, The Place
Sharon Watson	Artistic Director, Phoenix Dance Theatre

APPENDIX 3

National Youth Dance Company Parent feedback 2013, 2014 and 2015

Overview of Parent Feedback: 2013, 2014 and 2015

The following report details feedback from NYDC parents in 2013, 2014 and 2015. This information was gathered through a series of Focus Group Interviews with parents/guardians of company members at the end of each company cycle and tested against the original aims of the company. The use of Grounded Research was designed to encourage parents/guardians to openly discuss areas of the project and then to group the responses around the stated aims for evaluation. **It should be noted, in relation to the seven aims, parents/guardians were not asked to grade or put in order of value; however, the degree to which they spoke about each area for which there is a title (created by the evaluators) was noted and then given a numerical value relating to the number of times it was mentioned. This demonstrated their concern with each area and how important it was to them.**



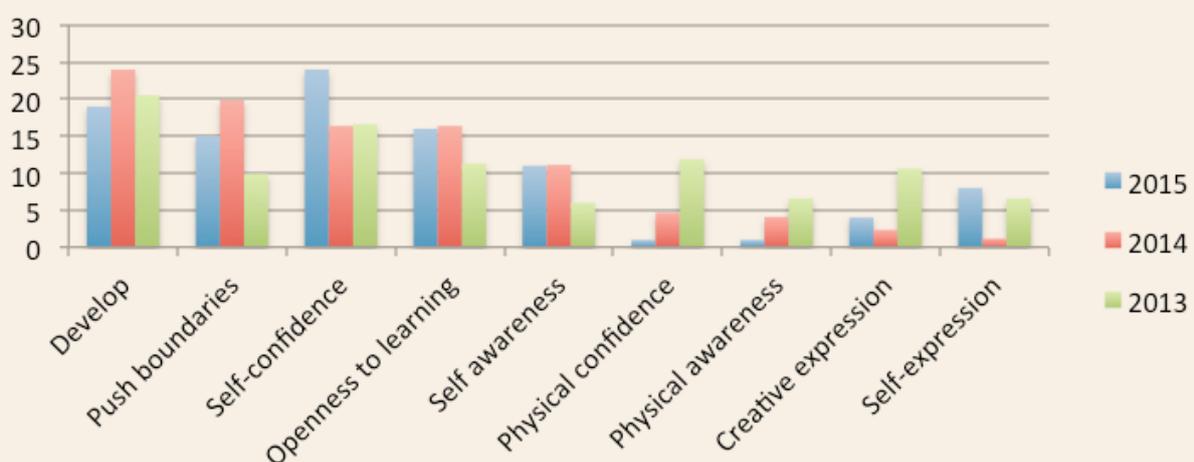
The results of responses dealing with these areas have been put primarily into diagram or graph form to provide a quick point of reference; the graphs reflect the degree to which respondents spoke about each area. **Although the responses have been put into numerical form to provide a perspective on the achievement, the accompanying narrative is equally important.** Some of these aims are essentially not within the remit of the dancer cohort and so the parents may have little to say or may take the conversation in a different direction. However their view on the broad range of issues was thought to be valuable and these focus groups may have helped them reflect on the process they had been through.

This chart shows the weighting of discussion with regard to positive indicators within the company aims. This shows for example, that much of the discussion in 2015 - 45% - resulted in parents referencing examples of how their child's creativity, learning and critical approach to dance practice had been built. This demonstrates overwhelmingly that parents recognised positive change in their child's personal and professional development.

The following chart shows the same data from 2014 and 2015, compared with the data acquired from parents in 2013. It shows a marked increase in the aim 'Nurture Creativity, Learning and an Intelligent, Thoughtful Approach to Dance Practice as Prep for High Level Performance'. Whereas the previous year indicators had been more evenly spread across the aims of the programme, in 2014 there is a clear bias towards parents perceiving the impact that NYDC has on the physical and emotional development of their children, coupled with the very strong sense that it is developing their professionalism:

Nurture creativity, learning and an intelligent, thoughtful approach to Dance practice as prep for high level performance

Summary of Indicators within the theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015:



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

In 2014, parents noted a range of specific changes in their children since they had been part of NYDC. In particular, in that they become more professional, resilient, confident and self-aware. Greater professionalism (24%), self-confidence (16.4%) and self-awareness (11.1%) coupled with examples of emotional and physical boundaries having been challenged (19.9%) helped develop an ability to engage in critical thought around their practice. Greater levels of confidence also are likely to have contributed to an increased openness to learning.

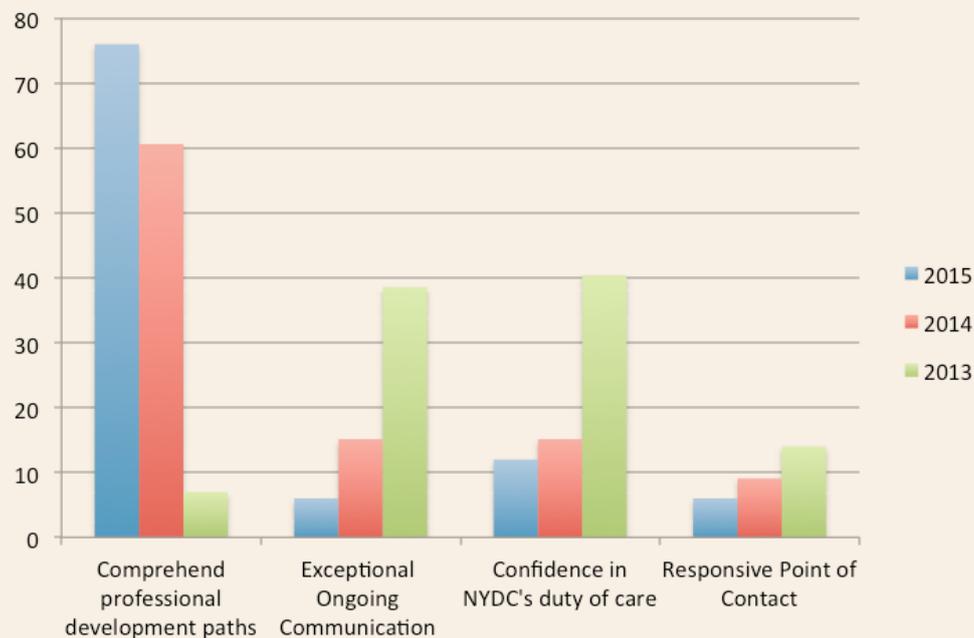
"...you get to know people here and they expect an understanding, a standard, and they expect them to turn up for every rehearsal and be fit and be healthy and be tuned in very rapidly and be able to understand instructions...he has been doing a lot more choreography because of this."

"Dance that's challenging and also the creative work. A lot of them hadn't had the chance to do a lot of creative work before, but working with Jasmin meant they were doing stuff they'd never dreamt of doing -pushing their physicality to an absolute limit and finding that they could do it."

"NYDC has taught my son that it is a very physically demanding job and so he has got to keep fit. The physical aspects I think have been brought out a lot more and so he does try to implement the regime when he does come back home, and I think that has made him aware that his body is fragile... you have always got to be in tip top condition and he realises now because of NYDC, you really have to apply yourself long term and it is not just a game and a performance anymore."

Include families, teachers and peers in each young dancer's development

Summary of Indicators within theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

Parents found that access to professionals within the dance arena - choreographers and those running the programme - provided useful insight into career development pathways. Over 60% of feedback in this area related to the value of understanding dancers' future career options - they clearly have felt a need for information and case studies in this area and this is something NYDC has gone some way to provide. They felt the programme was well organised and trusted in Sadler's Wells' duty of care.

In 2013 there was a sense from parents that some of the external teachers were not as aware of the work their child was engaged in with NYDC as they would like, also some NYDC work was undertaken close to important school examinations.

Both areas were acted upon by NYDC for the following year, teachers receiving more information on the aims of NYDC and the year schedule moved to accommodate school work. A change in response can be seen in 14/15.

“It was nice to have the meeting we had before just to get to know everybody and the company support team, I had an awful lot of confidence in them”

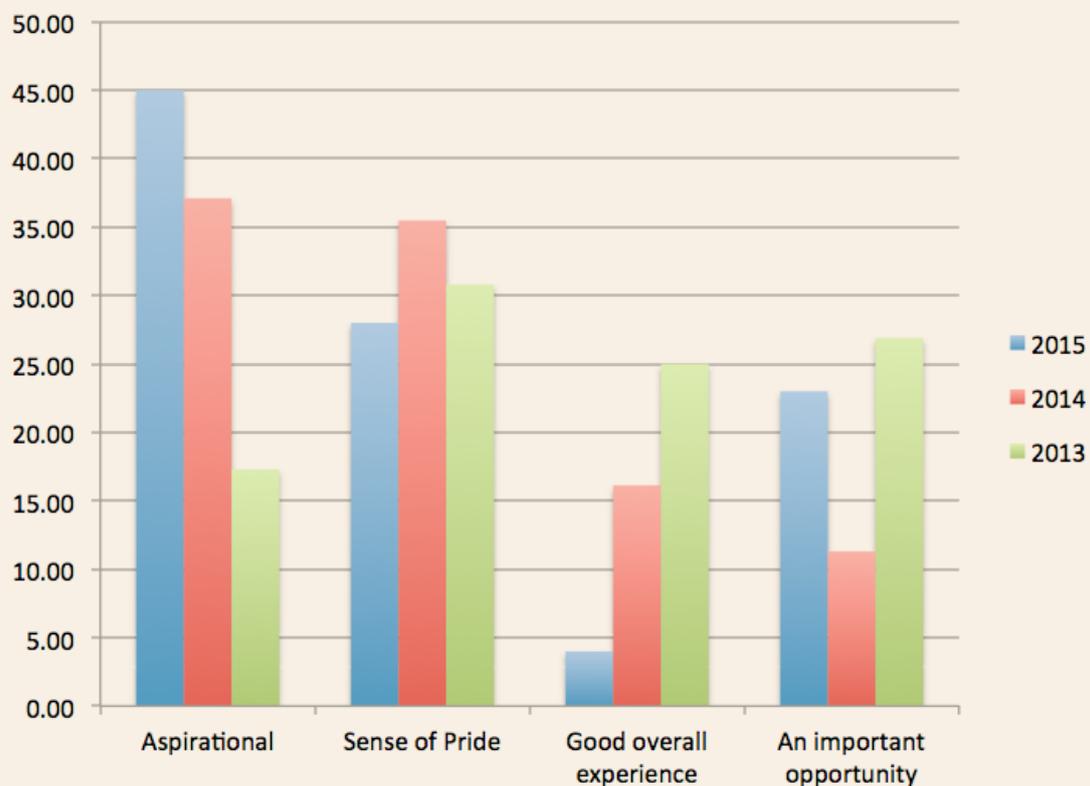
“I just want to say I have been very impressed with all the organisation with getting them from A to B and my daughter has benefited from that in that she is now a whiz at getting cheap train tickets - but I think just the sheer organisation and the different companies and different places.”

“Having the schedule out and pretty fixed so far in advance made it possible. It gave us time to put things in place and work out how we could manage.”

“We’ve both come to see dance performances at Sadler’s Wells so we’re into dance, but it’s more than that. We’re beginning to see all the elements that go into it. If you’d asked me before what I thought about a career in dance, I would have hesitated to answer as a parent but now I’ve learned a lot about it.”

To communicate a clear, encouraging and inclusive message about NYDC

Summary of Indicators within theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



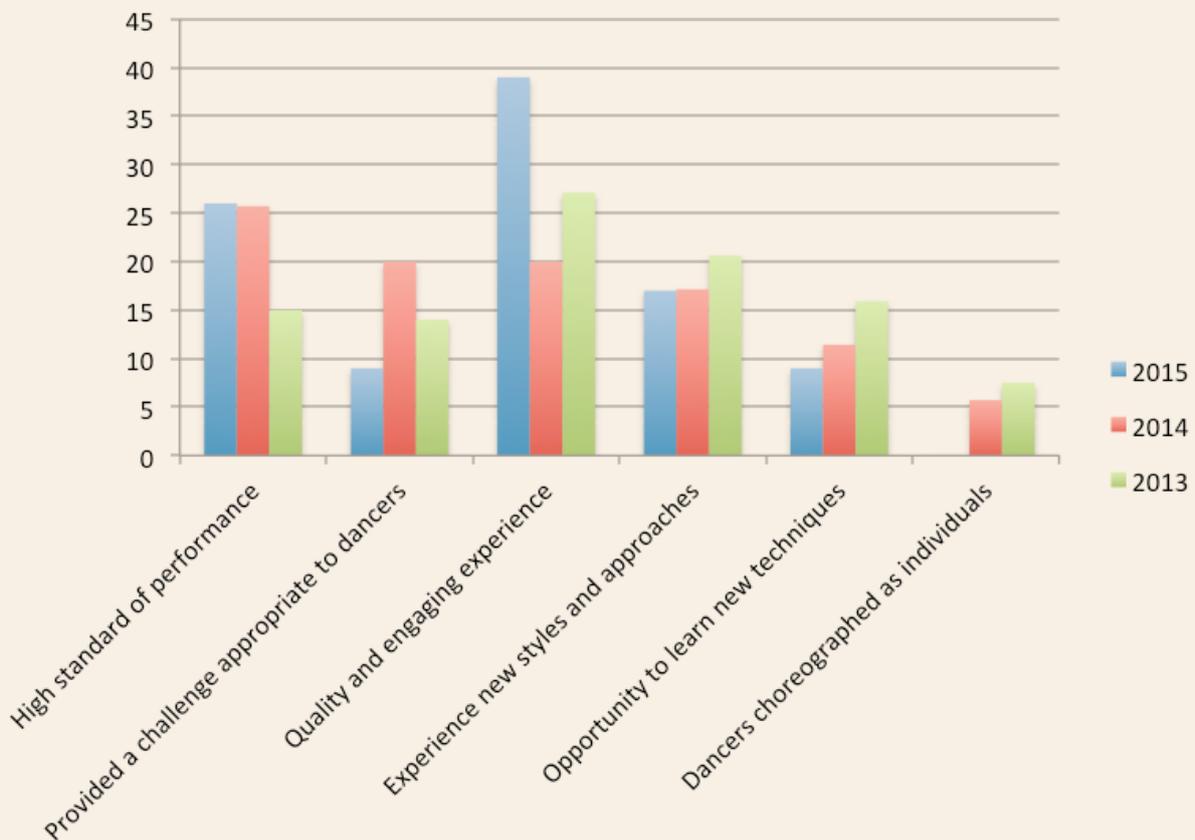
Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

NYDC has been an aspirational experience for parents as well as their children: they are part of a highly selective programme at a National institution, and they consequently have reinforcement of their belief in their child’s achievements and talent. Overall parents were very positive about their child’s experience in NYDC believing it to be an important opportunity and good overall experience (27.4% mentioned this).

“It was at that point [after the audition] that I realised that it was 30 out of 300 people and I thought “oh wow” and it gave me more confidence to feel that yes, she could do it, and always seeing the whole process and again the commitment as everyone is saying and just the sheer...you know, I think in the early process she said that Akram Khan wanted the company to be like his actual company and work to that level and that gave me confidence, I think.”

To seek maximum reach and impact for the company’s activities without compromising quality or depth of experience

Summary of Indicators within theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

Parents frequently mentioned the high level at which NYDC were working - and it was felt that the challenges they undertook whilst creating the work were at an appropriate level. They were impressed at the standard of the performance and the individual support each dancer was given.

“You think that because there are so many of them that it will be a lot to work with, but we felt they were all really treated as individuals. The staff really knew them.”

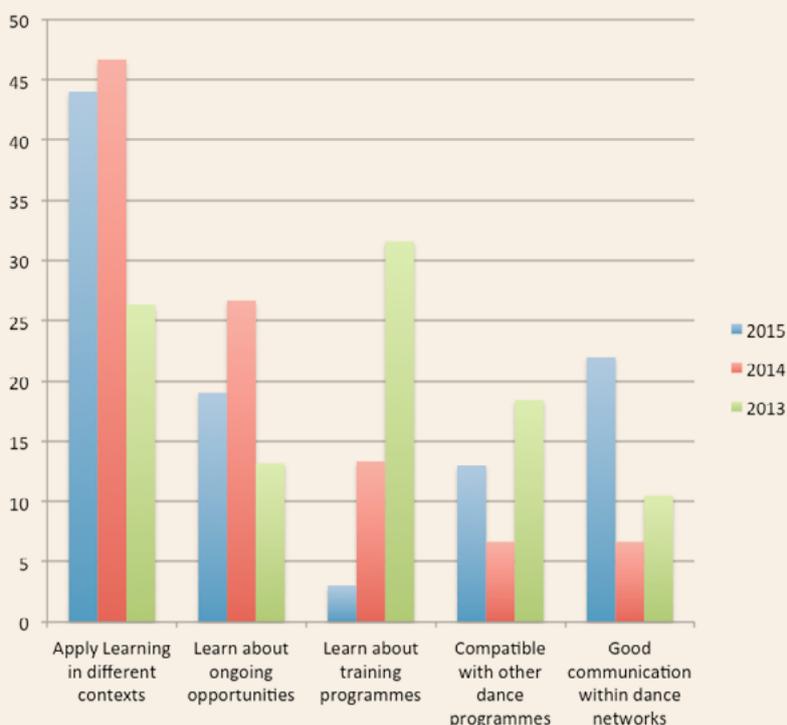
“Which I think goes back to the bit that you were saying about Akram wanting it to be like his professional body of dancers, and I think that is what they have taken away...that level of performance.”

“We feel really proud of what they have all achieved and it feels like it is the first time we have watched it tonight, but we went to see the performance in Birmingham...I was in tears even though it was the fourth time because to see everybody’s face and the passion that every single one of them had was so moving.”

“I think they learn from each other as well, don’t they? and I think as well in those videos that are sent and they can critique each other in a nice way, I think that is very positive that they are able to talk to each other and do that sort of thing.”

Collaborate with and add value to existing youth Dance networks and programmes

Summary of Indicators within theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

In 2014 46.7% of feedback received in this area related to the application of learning acquired from NYDC in new areas – a similar level in 2015. Finding out about next steps was also deemed an important outcome – and it was felt that the progression of dancers onto the next stage of their training was attributable to their NYDC experience.

“It is testament to how many are going on to dance colleges. I mean there was what – only two or three who aren’t going to pursue the dance further? I mean that is testament of the success of it, I would say.”

“It’s a bridge between CAT and dance school.”

“Our daughter had to do her A Levels at the same time and so she had to be aware that if she had time she had to do dance and then studying and she did actually do very well in her A Levels and she managed with that time management skill she learnt.”

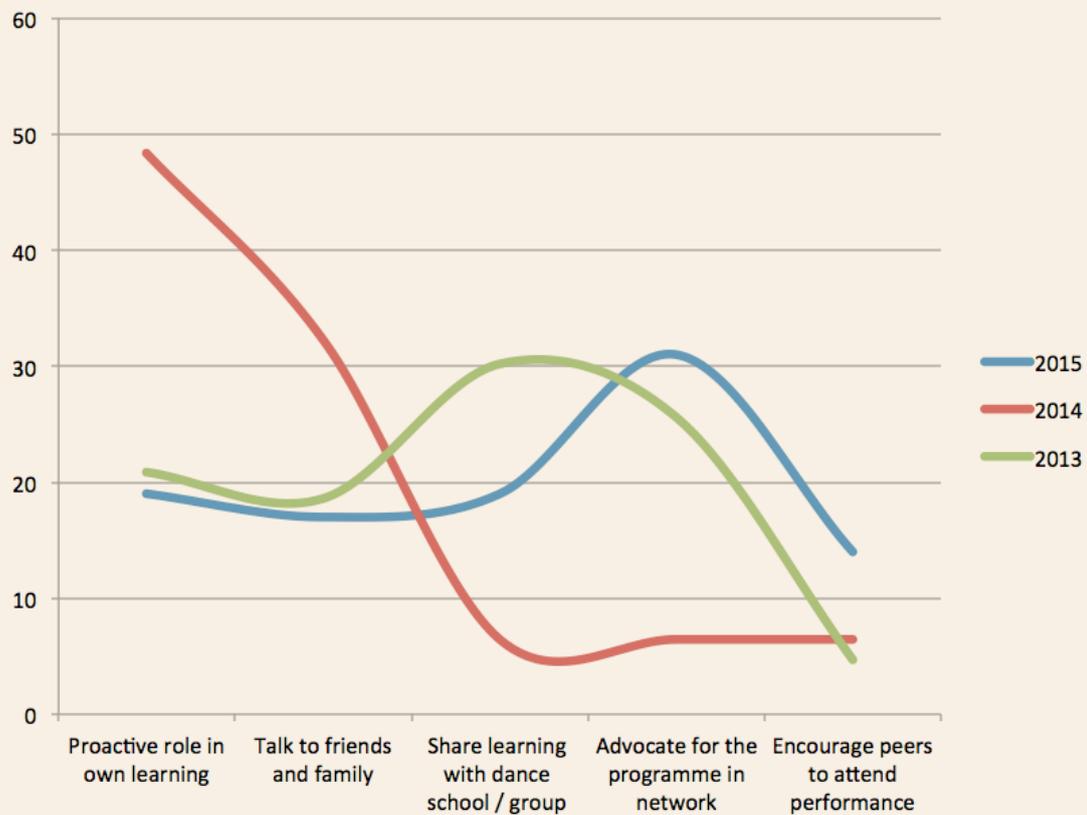
“[she] was so enthusiastic about being at NYDC and it helped her get into a conservatoire after that and so that was fantastic...”

“It has been a profile raiser for her college and her dance school, to say they have a student in the National Youth Dance Company- it gives accreditation to her original training as well- they have been really proud”

“After each residency he goes back and he goes through everything he has learnt with the rest of the class. They have been studying Akram in school and he has actually been working with him so can share all that info.”

Share results and learning widely across the youth Dance sector

Summary of Indicators mentioned within theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

In 2014, 48.4% indicated they felt that their child had taken a more proactive role in their own learning. This strongly suggests that the programme provides dancers with the tools and confidence to do so. There are some clear examples of company members who have taken their learning and utilised it in their own dance networks / schools in order to pass on their experience and knowledge. This indicator had almost doubled from the previous year - showing that NYDC dancers were taking a key role in their own learning and taking responsibility for the progression of their career. In 2015, the indicators show a more altruistic focus - a stronger bias towards knowledge sharing and advocating for the programme in the dancers' networks.

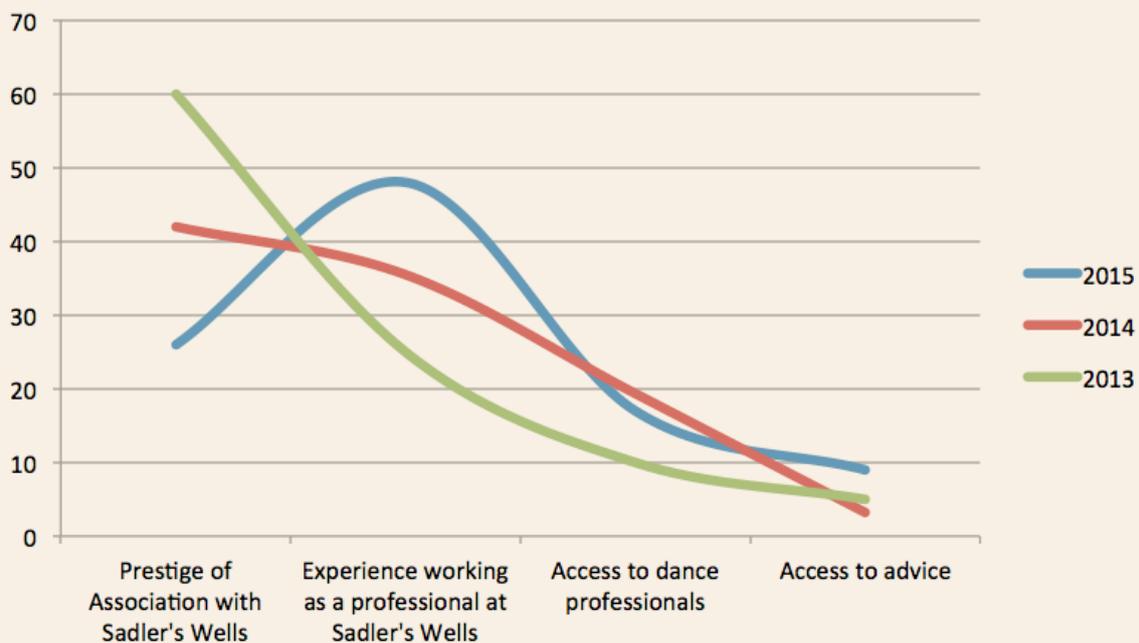
“Our daughter is part of a dance group and because of what she learned here she was able to organise her class mates into a show. They did three or four shows and it really worked well. The school said it had been fantastic having that kind of input from here (NYDC). To be able to share it with other young people.”

“Go back five or six years ago - boys that danced, especially if they did ballet, it really wasn't the in thing to do...[he] has been so lucky and no one has ever taken the mickey out of him or been horrible to him and in [his] secondary school...[he] helped set up with a another boy a new boys' dance company in year 8...now they have pretty much got as many boys as they have girls. The boys love to dance because they see what he has done and it has been brilliant hasn't it? The school can't believe, and they have got boys now wanting to do dance more than the girls are, which is great.”

“I get emotional now. I think it is wonderful to see the passion that they have all got and I think that has impacted on us very much as a family seeing as, like you say, dancing is quite an elite career and whatever but it has made us realise that we are right to support and push him to do it.”

To utilise Sadler’s Wells full range of resources to enhance the learning and experience of NYDC members

Summary of Indicators mentioned within theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

The prestige of NYDC's association with Sadler's Wells is important to parents with 41.9% of 2014 comments in this area mentioning the association as affirming their child's talent / career choice – and again in 2015 this is strongly evident. The experience of working at a high level with access to professional dancers and choreographers raised aspirations and 'pushed them to the next level'. The 'prestige' aspect has increased on 2013 and it is possible that this is because NYDC has acquired greater reputation in the dance sector in its own right, as well as having the affiliation with Sadler's Wells.

"And I think if you say they are a part of NYDC and they are based at Sadler's Wells some people go 'oh, Sadler's Wells'. Oh that must be good. So it is that link, it is that, yeah."

"I think that has had a big impact on us and kind of like put the icing on the cake for the last few years."

"Yes I think the word professional, and I have got to answer this as we are from the Midlands, but yeah when he kind of got invited to join and it was like a real professional outfit and he has been in dance about 6 years but he had this kind of like "Oh, I am in London that is where all great dancers are", and I don't know, but rightly or wrongly, yes it just pushed him to the next level."

"They look at these teachers and whoever they have had teaching them has been amazing and so fit and healthy and I think Jasmin Vardimon's group last year and amazing dynamic dancers that could do amazing things and he was in awe of them, but he wants to aspire to that which is good."

APPENDIX 4

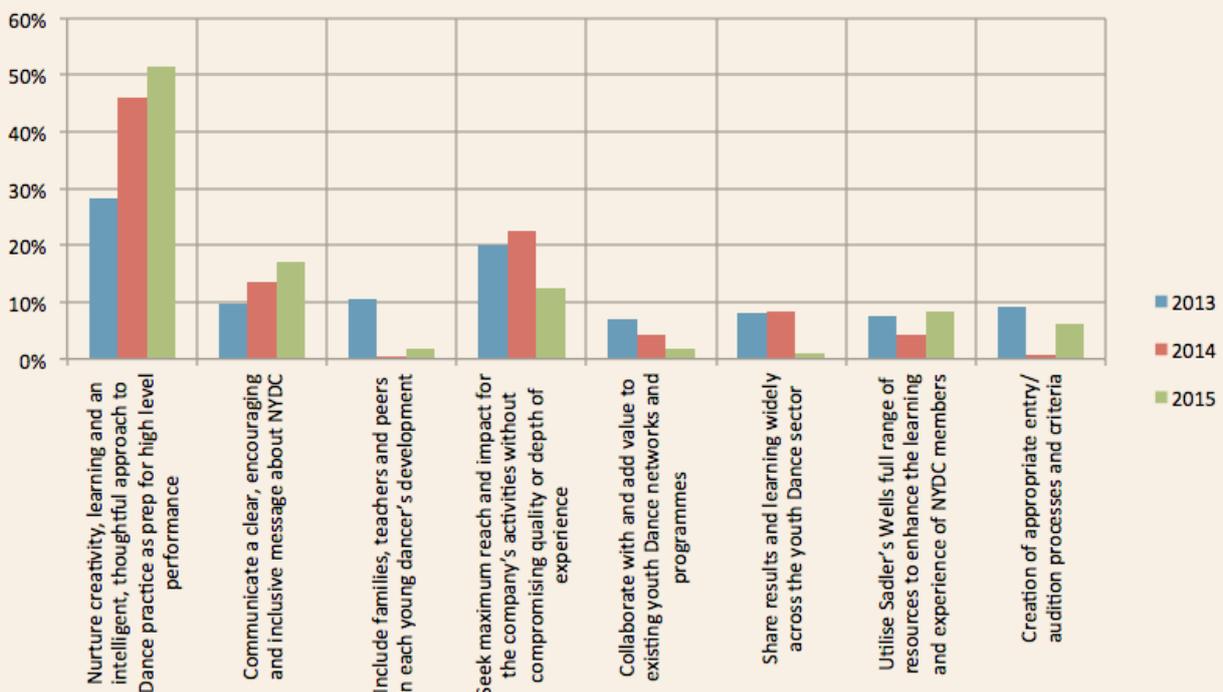
National Youth Dance Company Cohort feedback 2013, 2014 and 2015

Overview of Dancer Feedback

The following report details feedback from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd NYDC cohorts (2013-15) against the seven key aims of the company. This information was gathered through a series of Focus Group Interviews at the start of the tour and at the end of each company cycle. The use of Grounded Research was designed to encourage participants to openly discuss areas of the project and then to group the responses around the stated aims for evaluation. **It should be noted, in relation to the seven aims, participants were not asked to grade or put in order of value; however, the degree to which they spoke about each area for which there is a title (created by the evaluators) was noted and then given a numerical value relating to the number of times it was mentioned. This demonstrated their concern with each area and how important it was to them.**

The results of responses dealing with these areas have been put primarily into diagram or graph form to provide a quick point of reference; the graphs reflect the degree to which respondents spoke about each area. **Although the responses have been put into numerical form to provide a perspective on the achievement, the accompanying narrative is equally important.** Some of these aims are essentially not within the remit of the student cohort and so they may have little to say or may take the conversation in a different direction. However their view on the broad range of issues was thought to be valuable and these focus groups may have helped them reflect on the process they had been through.

Summary of Indicators across Themes (%)

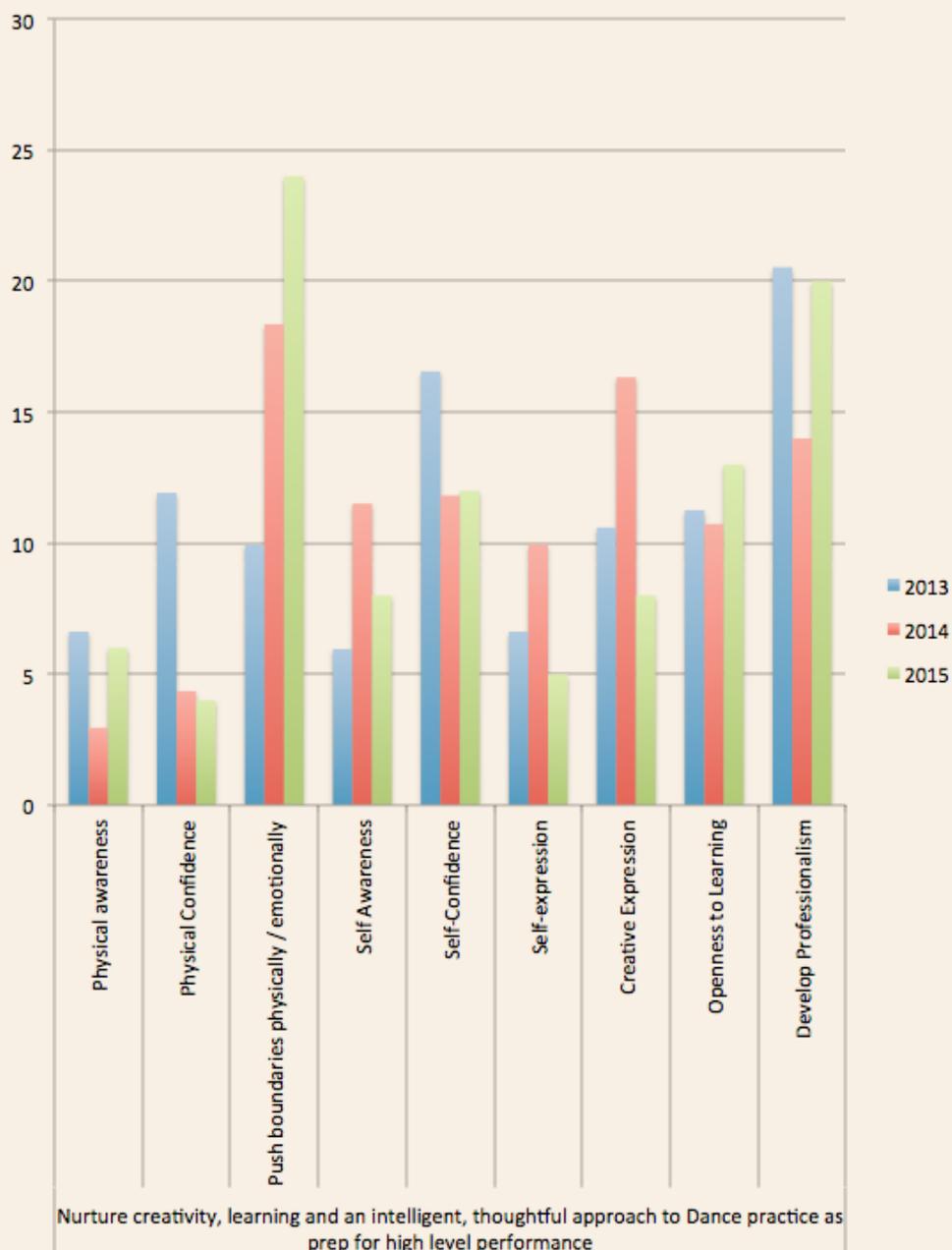


The following chart shows the weighting of positive indicators taking from discussion with NYDC cohort members categorised within the original aims of NYDC.

As with the feedback from parents, NYDC members clearly communicated the programme’s success at developing dance skills, critical thinking, professionalism and confidence and other creative / physical skills - 46% of discussion during focus groups was recorded in this area.

Nurture creativity, learning and an intelligent, thoughtful approach to Dance practice as prep for high-level performance

Break down of Indicators within the theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

NYDC members expressed how their creativity, confidence and self-awareness had grown through the programme with examples of specific outcomes of their learning and personal / professional growth. There is clear evidence of dancers engaging with critical thinking around their dance practice and creative processes involved in the piece. 18.4% talked about being pushed - physically and mentally - and that this had yielded positive outcomes in terms of their physical ability and self-confidence inside and outside of NYDC. Many cited examples of where they had applied new skills or tried new things as a result of greater confidence with 10.7% citing specific examples of this.

"I like the fact that [reviews] called it dark or it seemed to have kind of dark things within it because it is a change. People often think "Oh youth. They are going to do a dance about what they get up to at home, or what they get up to at college and boy and girl relationships" and I like the fact that it is not like that at all. Obviously we have been pushed out of our comfort zone doing the piece and I don't feel when I am doing the piece like a youth dancer, I feel like a professional dancer which is good, and obviously the reviewers have seen that because they have named it something that is obviously out - or they would have thought was out of our reach.

"I think Koka [rehearsal director] said something to us when she first taught it to us that when she did Vertical Road it taught her something that she would take forever...she explained it that it taught her something that made her think differently and I think having to get underneath the skin of this piece and going through it emotionally because we had days of it being emotionally, physically, tiring and getting into the mindset of it as a group, has taught us so many different things."

"It has given me confidence to try new things more. Normally I'd look at something and go 'I wouldn't be able to do that' and if I tried and failed I'd say 'no I can't', but then I thought that at the start of this experience and seeing Vertical Road I thought I am never going to be able to do that. I will never be able to get close to that and then you build up to it and you get closer and closer and so with other things than dance I can actually try and eventually it will happen."

"I think this experience has made me stop looking for approval. Yeah I think sometimes when I used to dance, I danced because I wanted my teachers to be happy with the piece. Or I wanted my mum to like the piece or something like that but now I just look for my own approval, I want to do it and that goes with other things like work, if you have an idea that you think is right then you need to stick behind that."

“You know that one person is not going to make the dance and one person is not going to break the dance. You are a company and so without one person it can all fall apart so knowing that, everyone knows that if they are feeling bad they still have to be at their best otherwise someone is going to get hurt or you are not going to be moving on as quickly as you can, and knowing that if you back out it is going to affect the whole group you keep up with it. So things like trust and stuff, you know you just have to have it.”

“...with interviews and things like that and even in Toolbox, everyone gives different ideas...for me I have found that I can now give ideas where I would just sit there and let everyone else pass on ideas and if I had one I would just keep it, but now I can sort of voice it. It is all stuff like going out of your comfort zone and like I know with any subjects at school, I can go and do this differently or challenge myself a bit more...I think the thing that has massively changed is sort of pushing yourself. Like before, I used to sit back and I feel out of breath - I might as well just stop - but with doing this piece and you realising you just have to go on...it has changed me with my classes and stuff like that.”

“I remember February we had a sharing and they wanted people to talk and like do a small presentation beforehand and I remember like they asked for volunteers but I felt embarrassed but now I would be happy to do that and there have been more and more opportunities come up where I have taken that and its, yeah it has made me articulate.”

“I think that the skills that we learnt...a lot of people in other industries are looking for that as well. They want people that can stand up and talk about something that they believe in or can put on stage and express themselves and they don't feel embarrassed to try out new ideas and things, and so I think those things like you were saying that knocks down the barrier, where people, like, in academic subjects they kind of reach a barrier where they are, like, the cleverest person, but if you have that imagination barrier knocked down you can, it becomes more free in whatever you are doing.”

“I feel like I understand more things, not necessarily wiser but more aware of things about myself, how much I have to/can push myself to find new things, to try to embrace emotion. I know that sometimes I won't feel it, or feel like I have energy, but I know to trust myself that it will come.”

“To find a new depth in the emotion and allow myself to become more involved. I was surprised how naturally the movement came back to me and felt. I was surprised how I can give more physically even with the time off in between.”

“I’ve pushed myself way further than I thought I was capable of and have reached levels I didn’t think attainable. My perseverance and motivation have improved so much which has really helped me, not just in dance but in everything I do. I’ve definitely changed as a dancer/worker/student/person!”

“At a couple of moments I did feel a bit out of my depth because everyone was talking about their CATS and I don’t go to one, and I felt I was taking longer to pick up material, but it just gave me more determination as I’m not used to feeling one of the least experienced and I feel I will be able to bring this back home not just to dance but to everything I do.”

“I think we work well to support each other, being on tour means we’re all focused more on how we perform and everyone continues to help each other improve.”

“Seeing another company member working so hard to get a move right. It just completely spurred me on and made me realise that you just have to keep going and keep pushing.”

“I feel that I’ve pushed myself as a dancer and as myself with dance even though we’ve all been exhausted, we’ve worked through it and kept on going. As a person this residency hasn’t been as hard, I haven’t missed home as much as last time. I feel like I could continue for more days.”

Dancers felt proud of their achievements - and described the experience to date as being aspirational. This enabled them to talk with confidence about their experience with NYDC - publicly and within their networks. Again this links with ‘pushing boundaries’ and the confidence building potential of this.

“We do a lot of speaking; we do a lot of things here. We went to parliament and talked to the MP’s and we have done loads of sharing, presentations and talks to the audiences, I think that in itself adds a lot of confidence in me because I learn to speak out and then as well as that we are going on stage and being judged for what movement we do. Everything we do is being judged but I think if we can do that then talking about something is easy.”

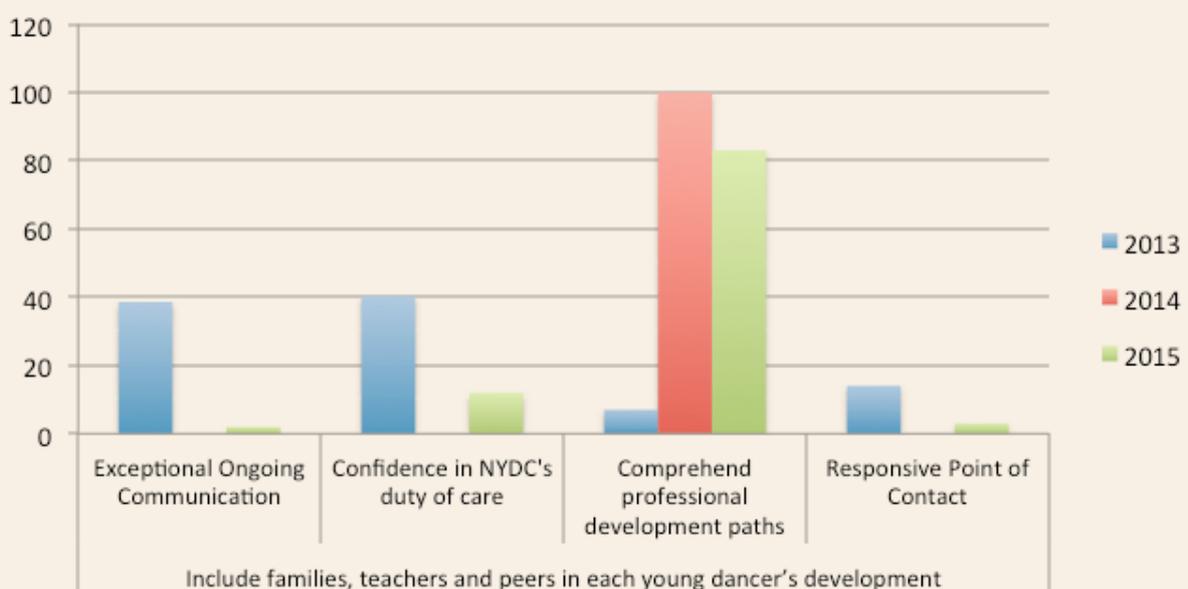
“I feel that is what helped me out the most and I think that was the biggest achievement at NYDC is the whole characterisation. At home I remember last year when we all had colds and coughs and someone asked what about if I sneeze on stage and she was like “you won’t because you will be so in it that you won’t”. It is so true. Sometimes when I did stuff at home I would cough, but here I feel like I am in another world. I feel like I am someone else...”

“It frustrates me that in a couple of subjects I do at school it is just like the teacher gives you stuff, a PowerPoint presentation, talks at you, doesn’t really engage with you or asks for your thoughts and your ideas and you come out thinking: ‘I didn’t really know anything and all I am doing is just memorising stuff’. Here we go deep into things, we discuss it and come out feeling ‘wow that was good’.”

“Last year when I had to take on the character, a character that was very different to what my personality was and in having to do that it made me much more confident. We have also had to speak a lot, we had to do lots of interviews and talk to the press and presentations, it made me much more confident in speaking because I wasn’t very confident in doing that before. This year I am choosing a different path and I have had to do a lot of interviews, I’ve enjoyed them because I love sharing my experiences and NYDC has made me so happy about all the things that I have done... In my academic interviews I just want to tell them about all the academic stuff and all the extracurricular stuff that I have done. I’m so eager to share it.”

Include families, teachers and peers in each young dancer’s development

Summary of Indicators within theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

Note that in 2014 the emphasis of the conversation was on professional development paths, the other areas did not come up but that does not mean that the dancers felt negatively about these areas, the emphasis was elsewhere.

To communicate a clear, encouraging and inclusive message about NYDC

Summary of Indicators within theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

The company members were 100% positive about how they wished to communicate the impact of their experiences. These broadly broke down into the areas above, which are all part of an 'encouraging' message. The process of having the last year's cohort involved in Experience Workshops is just one way, but another important one is in providing a positive message from one cohort to the next and to a wider community. The group diversity is most effectively communicated through the performances and touring as the 'diversities' are apparent.

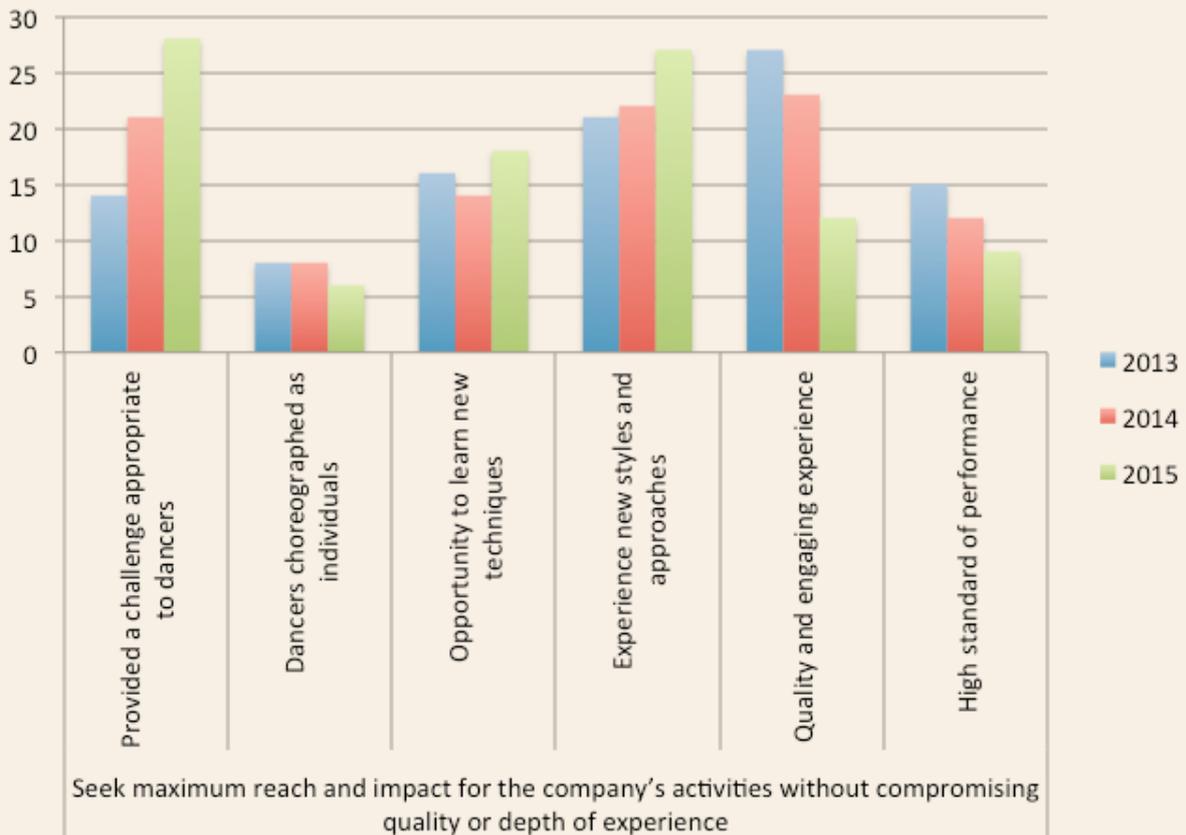
"We may have been born in different areas of England with different backgrounds and circumstances, but we are all born with the same passion."

“I think being at NYDC has helped show me so many different styles and like everyone has something different and I sort of acknowledge that more and you can put that into your own dance. I think you become less about yourself and what you are good at, and more focused on what everyone else is and you try and learn.”

To seek maximum reach and impact for the company’s activities without compromising quality or depth of experience

Cohort responses concentrated on the quality and depth of their experience. The percentages relate to how much they mention these areas as part of their positive experience. The reach and impact are covered in this section.

Summary of Indicators within theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

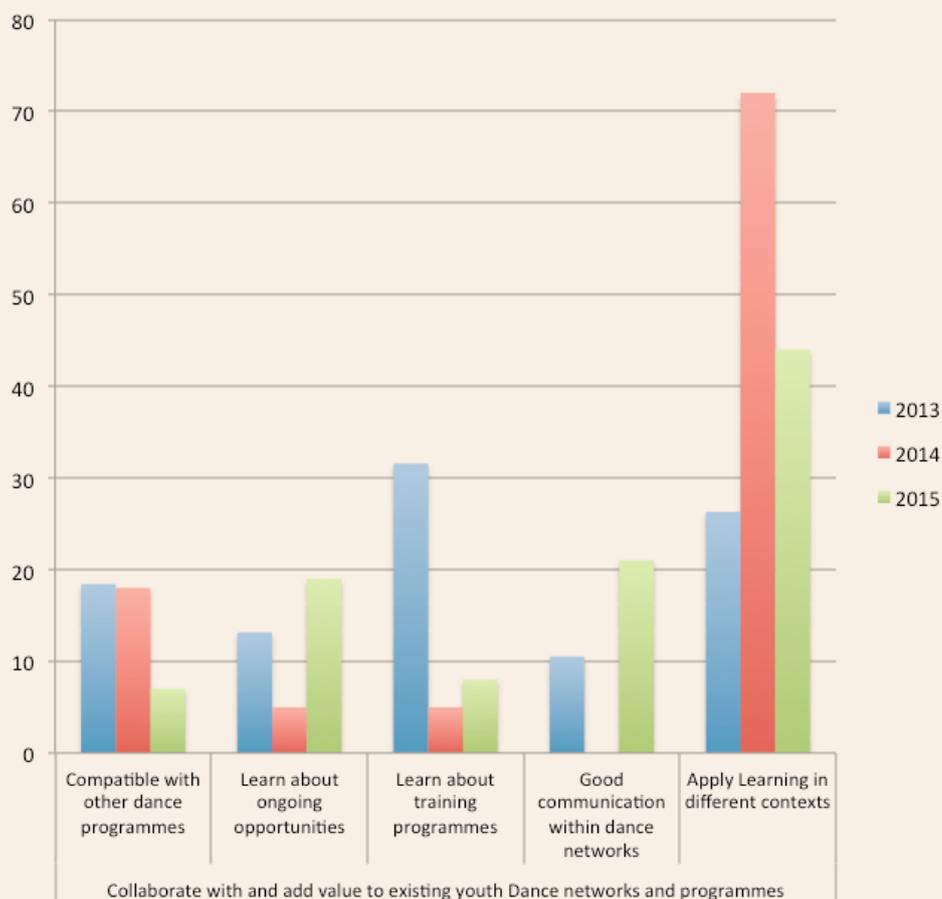
"I feel like before NYDC I was quite a selfish performer and it was all about me and how I looked and how the audience would react and if it was good enough, but coming here it is about we serve the piece rather than showing off and when we are serving it, it is like, you just forget everything outside and it is just purely in the moment."

"And you want to bring the group with you; if you feel the energy you bring it together it is not just you trying to do it yourself."

"I feel like I have discovered/realised more authentic, worthwhile, earthier qualities of life or ways of thinking. Mostly about energy (meditation walk, breathing) and enjoying being in physical contact with people."

Collaborate with and add value to existing youth Dance networks and programmes

Summary of Indicators within theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

As can be seen from the previous chart, the most mentioned references were around NYDC members applying their learning within contexts outside of NYDC.

“I teach as well and I think after NYDC I have a lot more input in what I can teach now as well instead of being told. I have my own ideas and I am confident enough to do it.”

Dancers reported a shift in focus from the individual to the company, evidencing critical engagement with practice. Dancers found the programme challenging in a positive way - the challenges were felt to be achievable and appropriate and helped develop a sense of themselves as emerging professionals. Experiencing new styles and approaches was deemed important - dancers felt they learnt new skills and techniques that they could utilise within and outside of NYDC. Additionally, learning new things and being pushed outside their comfort zones made dancers feel they would be more receptive to trying new things outside of NYDC.

“I think being at NYDC has helped show me so many different styles, everyone has something different and I acknowledge that more and you can put that into your own dance. I think you become less about yourself and what you are good at, and more focused on what everyone else is and you try and learn and stuff.”

“I think - and this sounds a bit way off - but I think it is like everything. Everything you want, you had, and then you come to NYDC...it has gone up another level and I understood what a professional is. I thought a professional was in a sense working hard and trying to get the best out of it, but you come to NYDC and you are made to work harder than you have ever worked at more or less professional standards.”

“It was about the whole being in character thing. I find it really hard to put into words because my musical theatre teacher came to watch it and she was like “yeah really good acting skills” but to me that wasn’t acting that was something so different from acting but I don’t know what it is. It is not acting.”

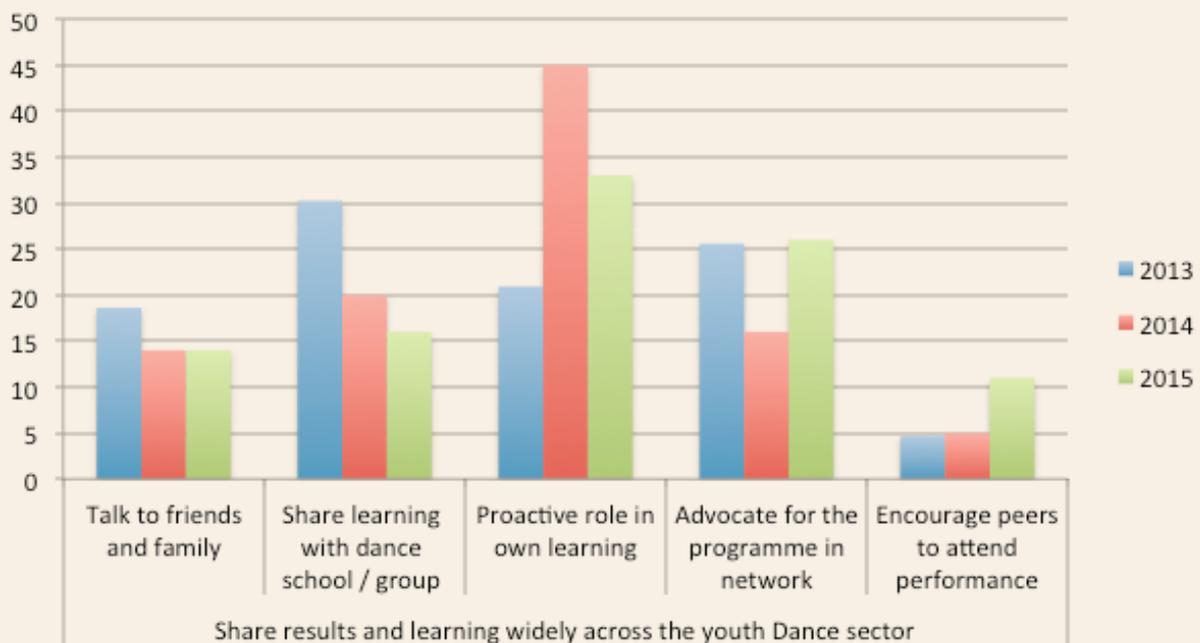
“If someone came to school and does a workshop and they are doing this weird thing and...’this is weird I am not doing this’. Now it is okay, I will give this a chance. I will actually give it a go because you found things here (NYDC) that you thought were weird at first, so it has given me openness.”

“Becoming and adopting the mentality of a professional dancer. Building a network.”

“You get to be a ‘dancer’ before you have even started training, it gives you an opportunity to see what life will be like and assess what it is you want to do.”

Share results and learning widely across the Youth Dance Sector

Summary of Indicators within theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

“What I learn here I take back home and teach other people and so I share my learning experience with other people when I go back and so I have something to give rather than just say ‘I am with National Youth Dance Company - you are not allowed to know what we do’. It is rather that I share my experience and like to encourage people to join it and audition and stuff...”

"[In college] It is difficult because you will get the ones that don't really want to be there, but then you will get the ones that are really, really motivated. It is really mixed I think, but depending on what environment you are in; if you are in a sixth form environment it is different because most people don't really know what they want to do but when you are here everyone is motivated, everyone wants to be here. Everyone wants to work hard. We all know that everyone is willing to work hard and we just feed off each other, but when you go back it is different. It is very different...I showed our warm up to some of the sixth formers back home and they are like 'yeah, yeah that is really, really amazing' and that motivates them when they learn new things and I think...it is a big cycle."

"Like you said there is an extreme. It was the older ones that didn't really want to know but some of the younger ones, like, an old dance teacher I had for 11 years she asked me to come to her end of year showcase and I sat in front of all the little kids and told them all about NYDC. A couple of them came and watched it and they were just like 'you can actually do that. You can work with professional companies'. They were really shocked but happy that from a little local community you can progress from that to NYDC. They liked it and things so, and I was like, I hope it is still running 10 years from now when they audition so they have got something to inspire them and something to teach them so much of what they (NYDC) have taught us."

The level of resource provided by Sadler's Wells coupled with the high profile choreographers and high quality artistic direction meant dancers were proud to be part of NYDC and they aspired to highest level of attainment that they could as a consequence. Indicators considered the unique opportunity of being able to experience working at a near professional level at a National Dance institution, and cited the prestige of working at Sadler's Wells as an important factor.

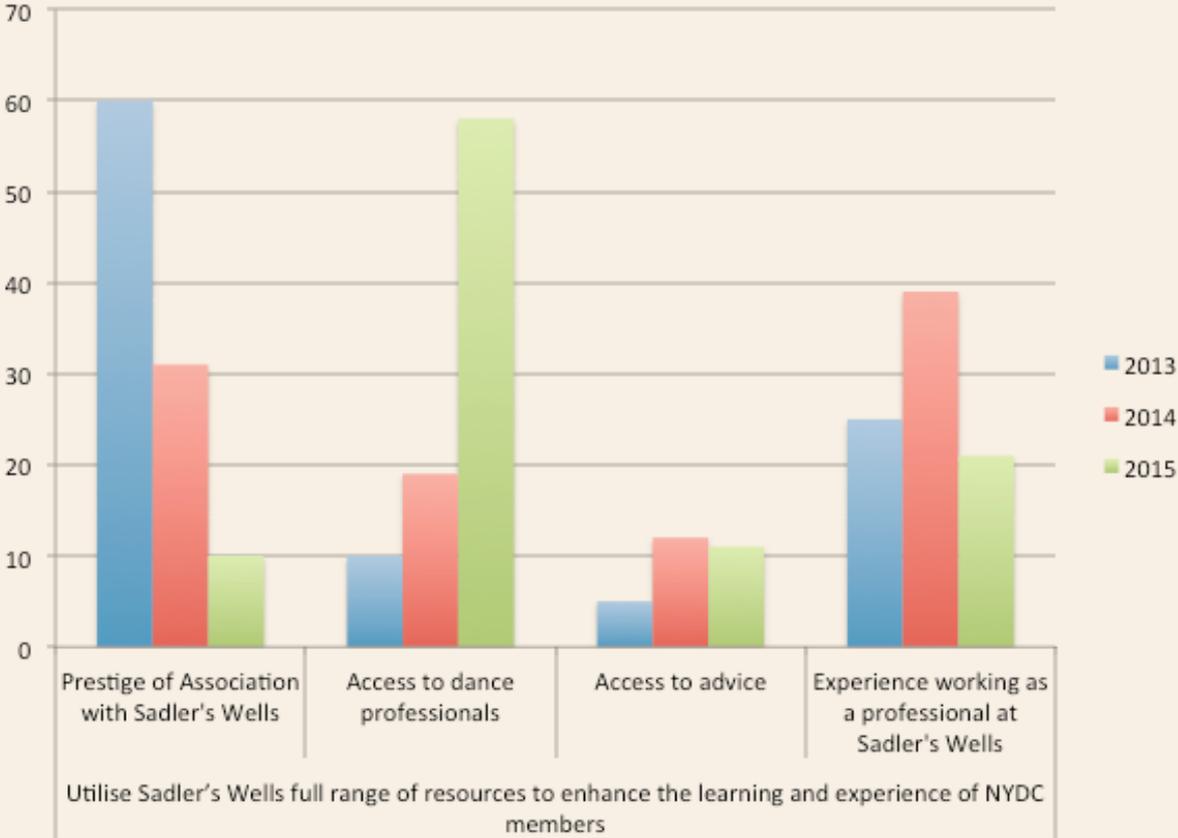
"I think the facilities are incredible and working in the studios and the people that we work with as well and the environment."

"I think everyone is really striving to get it done. We all wanted a good piece. We all wanted it to look professional and good and make Sadler's Wells look good and make the National Dance Company look good. At college some people will just act as if I will do it if I want to, but when anyone comes here we all want to be on time. They all want to learn the movements and so we all want to be actually together as a company."

"I feel like I have changed. I want more from what I had being here. I find it really different...it makes me want more and that is why I want to go on to further training."

To utilise Sadler’s Wells full range of resources to enhance the learning and experience of NYDC members

Summary of Indicators within theme for 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

As can be seen from the chart above, the most mentioned resources were that of access to dance professionals and the experience of working at Sadler’s Wells. Some of the discussion focused on functional areas in terms of training; however there was also discussion on the overall ethos of the building and companies working there. Working in the same environment as high-level national and international companies communicates a seriousness approach to work.

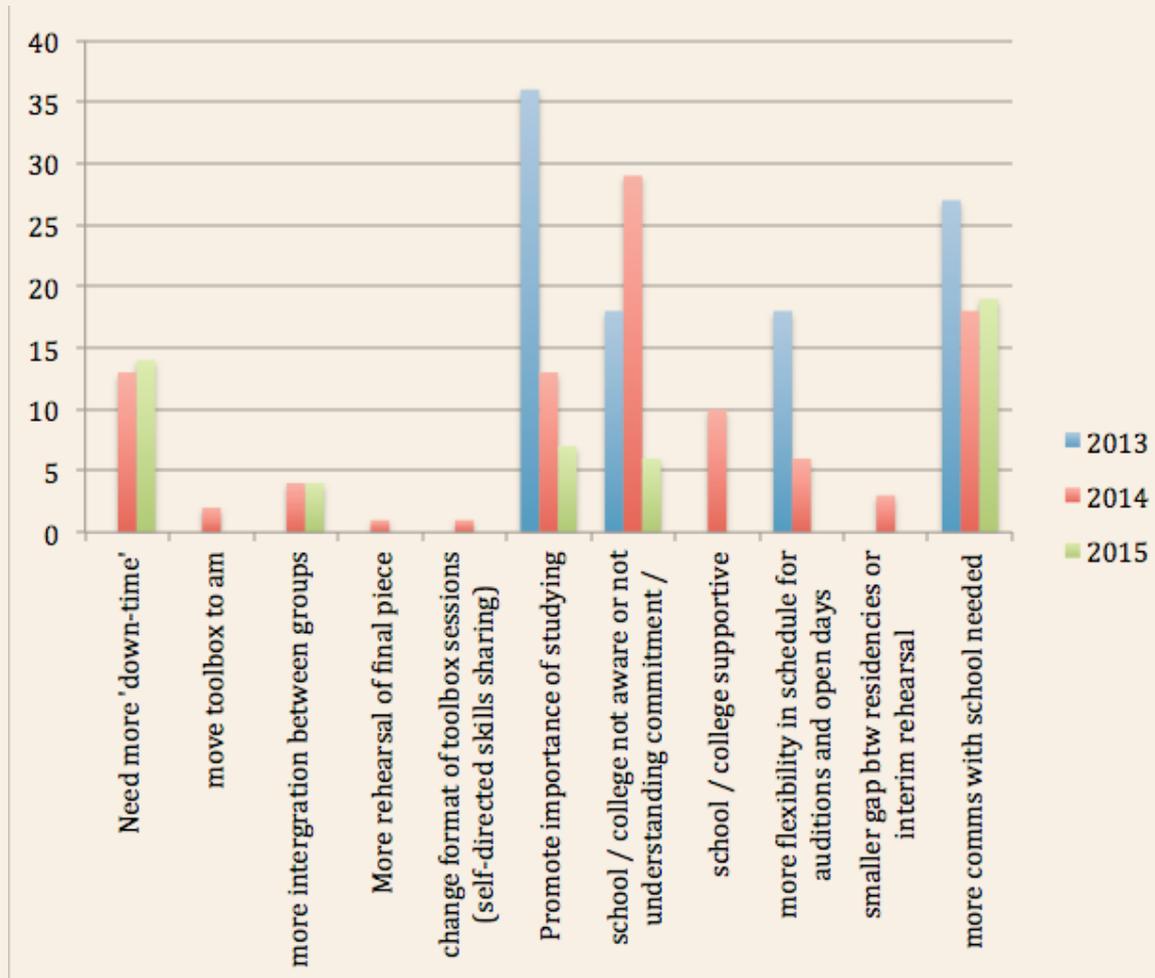
APPENDIX 5

National Youth Dance Company Feedback on Structure – 2013, 2014 and 2015

Overview of parent and dancer feedback

This report contains feedback from NYDC parents and dancers with regards to the scheduling, structure and timeline of NYDC. This information was gathered through a series of Focus Group Interviews at the start of the tour and at the end of each cycle, with suggestions for potential changes.

Feedback on Structure, Schedule and Support



Parents in 2013 had raised several concerns about timing conflicts for CAT (Centre for Advanced Training) students and for those undertaking A-Levels. This was much less of a concern in subsequent years as the structure and schedule were adapted from year two onwards to accommodate school work. It was clear from both parents and children that the structure and schedule had been improved over the 3 years to be more compatible with the academic year and pre vocational dance programmes. The challenge of balancing NYDC commitments with Academic / Vocational study was still recognised over the next two years but was largely seen as a positive challenge for NYDC members.

Participants were most concerned that schools and some of their vocational dance programmes (or dance school) did not understand:

- a) the level of commitment required for NYDC in terms of time and energy
- b) their achievement in having got a place in the company

The general feeling was that they'd like more communication to happen between Sadler's Wells and the school / institution - so that the school fully comprehended how it might support the student and had the opportunity to promote the performance (and achievement) within its own network of staff and students. This was acted upon for 2014 with teachers receiving more information on the aims and structure of NYDC.

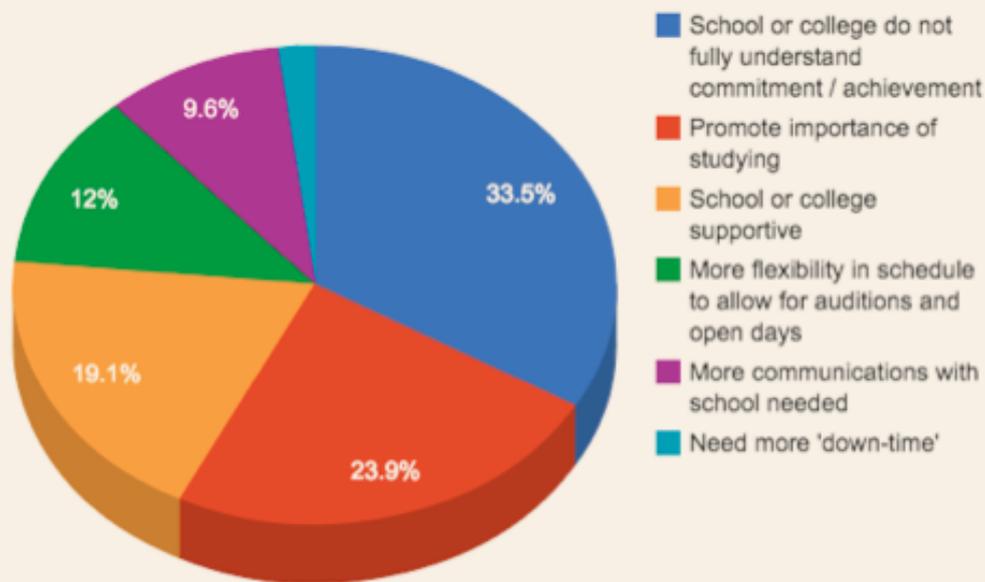
"I think it is hard for people outside NYDC to understand what NYDC is and so it seems that they don't appreciate it, and if you like try to talk to them about it they don't actually understand it and so they don't want to know in a way, but I think it is something that you just have to know inside it is for yourself."

"...there are obviously things that I would like to change...but I think if those things had changed, would it have worked out in this way? Like, this is our own experience of NYDC. If everything had been perfect for us would we have pushed ourselves harder, or as hard? It is kind of hard to say really because you don't know if we would have the same piece."

"...just to add on to that, after Toolbox we do want time to relax and so we are going to see each other and then we have to check in. There is no time at all after you have showered and eaten and done Toolbox and then the chaperones and company managers are getting frustrated with us because we are not in our rooms, like, sleeping and we just need that time just to relax."

“I think that we had Toolbox sessions in the evening that gave us lots of different other skills other than dance and I think quite a lot of us were really, really exhausted from a long day of dancing and not paying much attention to, and there was a lot to get out of those sessions but we weren’t paying much attention just because we were so physically tired so maybe if the tool box is in the morning when our minds are like refreshed and you think and your body is not tired and so you could do the academic stuff in the morning and then you could dance all day and then just go to sleep when your body is tired.”

Feedback on Structure and Support



Feedback often pointed to schools not understanding the commitment involved in the NYDC residencies and performances. It was sometimes felt that beyond the dance teachers the school was not aware of the achievement of NYDC participants and parents felt that some direct communication with head teachers / department heads was an appropriate way to explain both the levels of commitment and the achievement of the child. Another suggestion was to distribute a video to the school that would illustrate the standard of work being developed through NYDC and the level in which they’d be working.

“Even that very short video that they have at the beginning before they dance that would be quite nice actually to show to schools because it is not spoiling it and it is not showing what they are doing but it actually is nice because obviously the youngsters talk on it and what they have achieved. I think that would be good to send that to schools it is only 5 minutes long.”

This also applied to those who are in dance groups outside of NYDC. It seemed most were supportive and aware of NYDC, but sometimes dancers received a negative response to absences:

“Talking about days in between, [she] is involved in a company at home- she has missed a lot of that anyway and any extra day missed would be ‘oh another day missed’ and the company director going ‘Are you in this company or not?’”

Parents also cited a degree of concern about their child understanding that it was important to continue making an effort in regard to their academic studies, although this was balanced with a feeling that the schedule from year two onwards was timed to compliment the academic commitments of dancers. Parents were keen that their child could see alternative career choices in dance - either as an alternative plan, or as a post-dance career - and encouraged to understand that academic achievement would be valuable in this context:

“[she] was so enthusiastic about being at NYDC and it helped her get into a conservatoire after that and so that was fantastic but it is definitely, her grades have just gone on a slippery slope down since this, but that is because she sort of thought there is no reason in doing this because ‘I know now what I am going to do in the future’...”

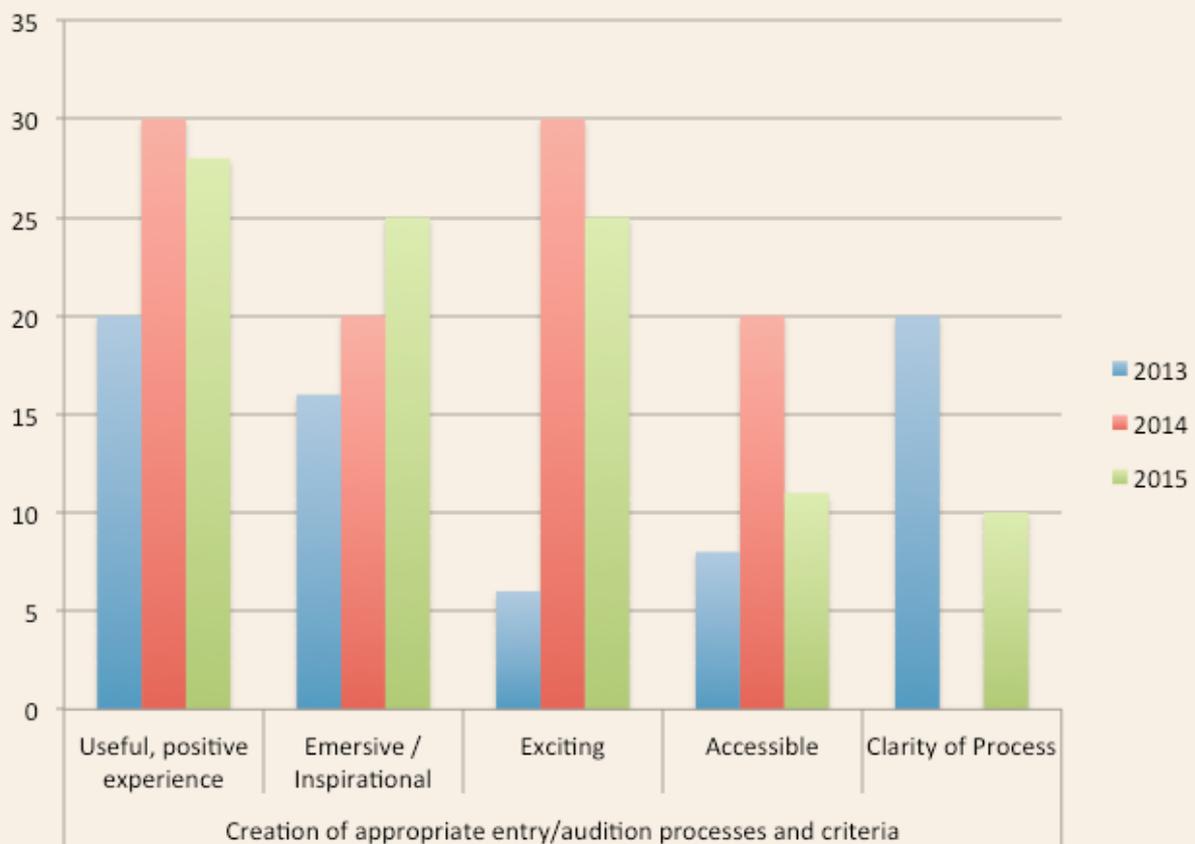
“Our daughter had to do her A Levels at the same time and so she had to be aware that if she had time she had to do dance and then studying and she did actually do very well in her A Levels and she managed with that time management skills she learnt.”

“I mean, mine, I think she was that tired that when they had down time and I think they had that half an hour back in their rooms she was just pleased to be back in her room so that she could rest, relax and give me a call and let me know how she was getting on, and then she was right like and that would be it. That was her little unwinding time to herself and she didn’t care who she was sharing a room with, she just needed that little bit of time to herself.”

APPENDIX 6

National Youth Dance Company, stakeholder feedback on NYDC Experience workshops, identifying the most valued aspect for participants.

Summary of Feedback, 2013, 2014 and 2015



Breakdown of feedback against theme indicators from 2013, 2014 and 2015

“Really enjoyed the experience workshop, although I was quite daunted when we had to get up and improvise as I’d never really done that before, especially in a situation where it was more important and wasn’t just for experimentation. However I wasn’t yet entirely sure what NYDC was, etc., so wasn’t sure what the workshop would mean. Final selection was so exciting and really, really enjoyed it. Wasn’t very nervous because everyone was so friendly and welcoming.”

Workshop Participant

“Regardless of the outcome, I wanted to thank you all as I know that she loved the workshop and it has inspired her with her current choreographic project on her CAT scheme.”

Parent of Experience Workshop participant

“I think there was a great deal of organising behind the auditions because they were almost an end in themselves. It wasn’t just a case of seeing whether they could dance. They were workshops - they made friends even at that stage as well. She said ‘even if I don’t make it through that stage, this is fine for me. I’ve learned a lot.’”

NYDC Parent

“The Experience Workshops have been amazing because they give a taste of what NYDC is about and give access to the NYDC artists. Workshops linked to performances build this even further, the fact that it is young people presenting that work, therefore having a far reaching effect on other young people- to see their peers, their age group perform such quality work has huge impact”.

Eddie Copp, Artistic Director of CAPA College, Wakefield, Yorkshire.

The entry criteria and audition process were not explicitly discussed by parents during the 2014 focus groups, however, they were alluded to as being overall a positive experience.

Not all parents had been involved in the entry / audition process. When understanding the competition for a place in NYDC they felt an affirmation of their child’s talent and commitment.

APPENDIX 7

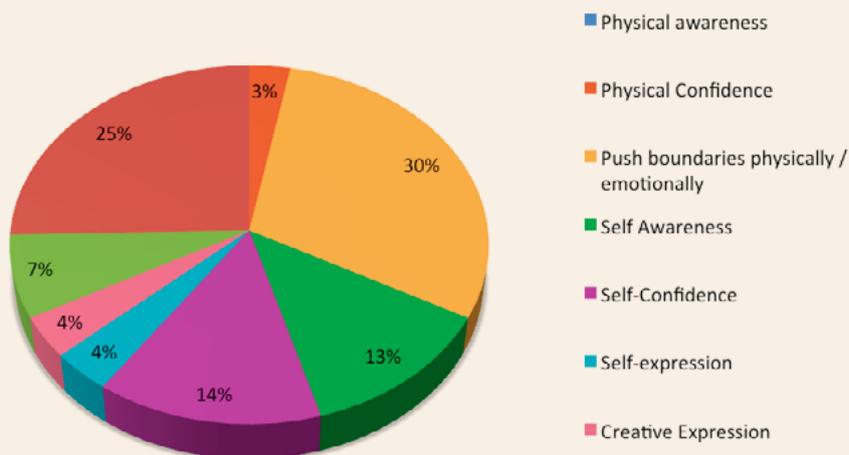
Participant Feedback- Apex Rising, 2015

Retrospective views from NYDC Dancers- cohorts 2012-15

The analysis of Apex Rising was based on two methodologies, firstly three annual cohorts of students completed an online survey to make sure that the greatest number could contribute. The survey asked a range of questions which were purposefully directed to enquire into the areas of response that had been highlighted by the Grounded Research of the previous three years.

They were not directly addressing the original 7 aims of the project as the dancers would not be able to do this. Therefore the intention, as before, was to elicit those areas that students felt best able to address whilst also highlighting what they thought was important in relation to their learning, developing skills and maturity. The second method was subsequent to gaining the results of the survey to group them within a framework. The responses are displayed with the titles of the original aims where appropriate and provide a structure for a large and comprehensive survey. As before, the diagrams note the amount that a particular theme was mentioned.

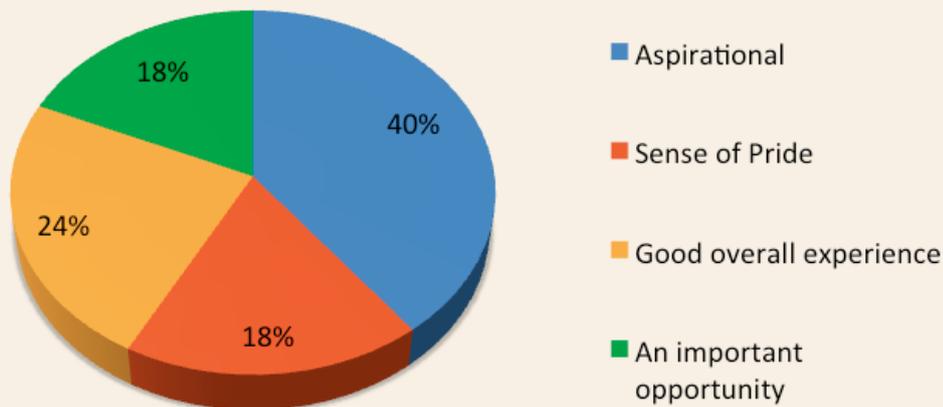
1. Nurture creativity, learning and an intelligent, thoughtful approach to Dance practice as prep for high-level performance



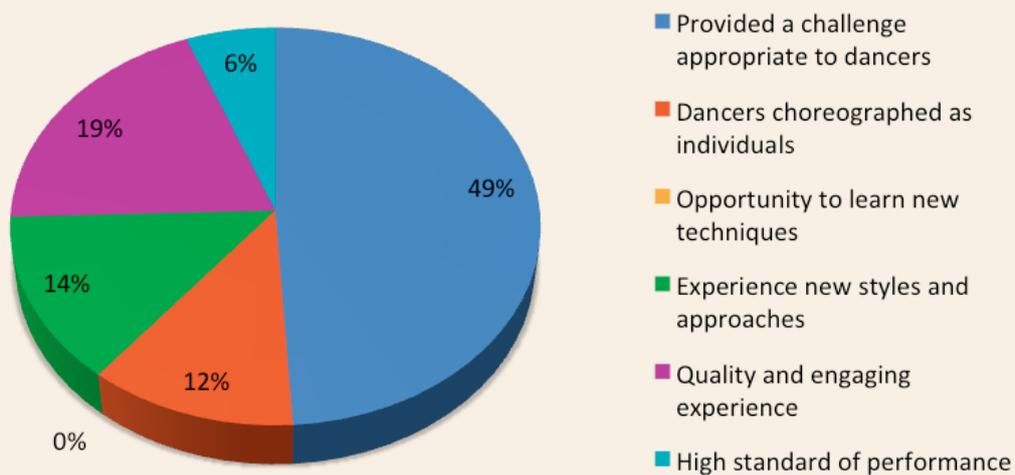
2. To include families, teachers and peers in each young dancer’s development.

Note: Questions relating to this aim was not directly part of the online survey, however as can be seen in the responses to aims 5 and 6 there is considerable overlap relating to their dance education and development of networks.

3. Communicate a clear, encouraging and inclusive message about NYDC

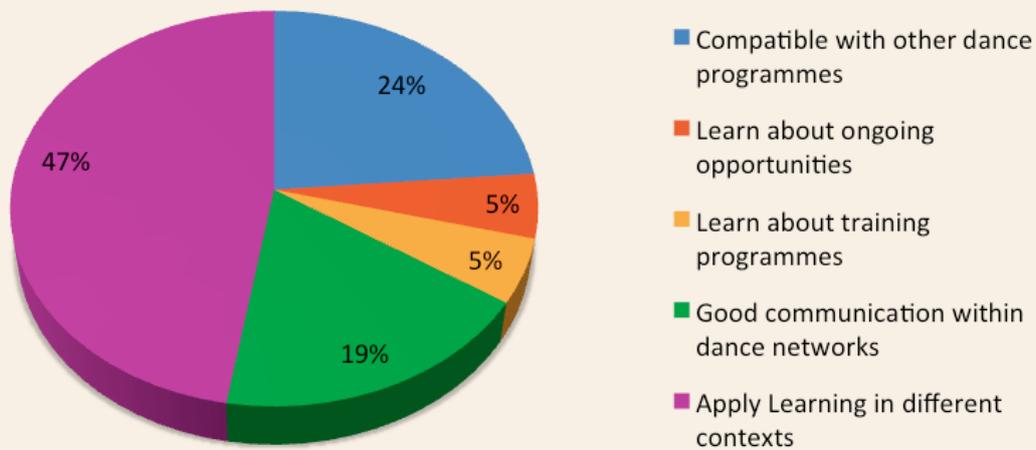


4. Seek maximum reach and impact for the company’s activities without compromising quality or depth of experience

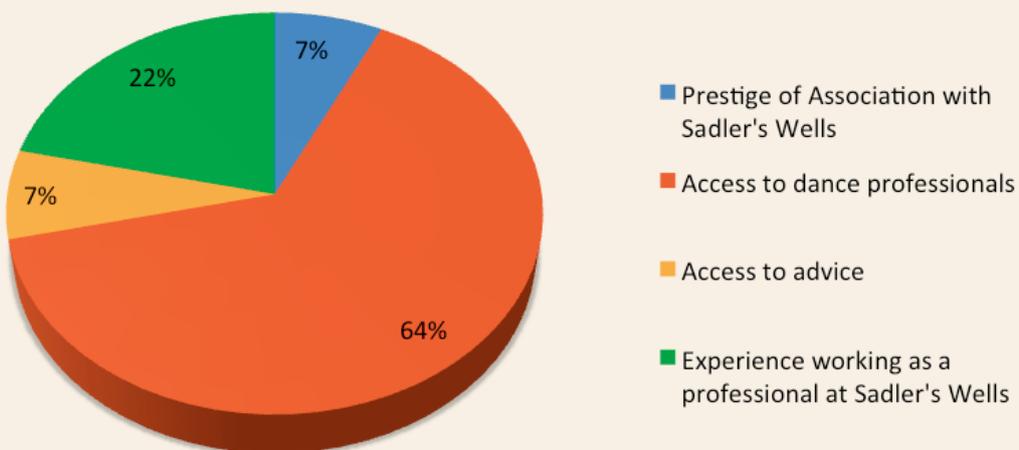


5. Collaborate with and add value to existing youth Dance networks and programmes

6. Share results and learning widely across the youth Dance sector



7. Utilise Sadler's Wells full range of resources to enhance the learning and experience of NYDC members



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