

QUARANTINE

WALLFLOWER

On the politics and practicalities of developing new audiences for contemporary performance

An evaluation report of Quarantine's 2018/19 UK tour of Wallflower



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CAN YOU REMEMBER EVERY DANCE YOU'VE EVER DANCED?

Quarantine is an ensemble of artists and producers who make work which engages with everyday life in direct and radical ways. Formed in 1998 by co-artistic directors Richard Gregory and Renny O'Shea with designer Simon Banham, our work is created with a shifting constellation of artistic collaborators and drawn from lengthy and intimate research with its performers. Presented in original and often surprising ways, it aims to create the circumstances for open conversations between strangers.

In 2015 we created a show called **Wallflower**. The premise of **Wallflower** is simple: live on stage in front of an audience, a group of performers attempt to remember all the dances they have ever danced.

Memories of dancing alone all night at a party; of whirling across the stage at the Paris Opera Ballet; of silently, slowly revolving with a new lover on a canal boat at night; of a repeated tic – a bodily habit that feels like dancing; of walking alongside their mother; of racing with a dog across a beach; of dizzily spinning children; of weeping and dancing; of hitting the mark for Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker...

Wallflower takes three forms: a 90-minute version, a 5-hour durational version and, most recently, a 12-hour dance marathon – the dancers grappling with the effort of memory as bodies and minds tire, hurt, slow and repeat. From the audience, one performer documents each dance in an ever-expanding archive. To date we have archived 3,996 remembered dances.

Like much of Quarantine's work, **Wallflower** serves as a form of portraiture. Each night, the performers choose what they want to reveal, what story of themselves they want to tell. In the seats around the dance floor, the spectators bring their own histories, understandings and expectations. And somewhere between the spotlight and the side lines, **Wallflower** happens.

During 2017, we developed partnerships with GIFT Festival, Gateshead; New Adelphi, Salford; Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts (ACCA), Brighton; Square Chapel, Halifax; Creative Scene, West Yorkshire; Lancaster Arts, Lancaster; and Dance North, Findhorn, with a view to tour **Wallflower** in the UK in 2018/19. We were fortunate to receive an Arts Council England Strategic Touring grant and funding from The Foyle Foundation and The Sylvia Waddilove Foundation UK. This enabled us to subsidise presentation costs for partners and to purchase equipment, including a



Photo by Richard Kenworthy

portable lighting kit, which made it possible to tour the work to non-theatre venues and, significantly, it allowed us to dedicate resource to developing new audiences for **Wallflower**. We created a bespoke engagement programme to tour alongside the work, delivered by two of our artist and producers Sarah Hunter and Kate Daley (who is also a performer and stage manager in **Wallflower**), and Sarah took on the role of 'Audience Ninja' alongside producing the tour, to offer partners additional support with audience development.

What follows are some reflections from Quarantine and the project partners on what we did, what worked and what didn't, what we learnt and what we'll carry forward. This resource is not meant as a step-by-step template for audience development, but instead offers itself as a guide and a provocation about the politics and the practicalities of developing new audiences for contemporary performance.

"Watching the 12-hour version (which I did for around 11-hours in total), one becomes almost hypnotised. The improvisational and physical brilliance, and the charming informality, of the company combine mesmerisingly with the evocative power of memory and music."

– The Herald, April 2019

Cover photo by Simon Banham. All report photos by Kate Daley unless otherwise stated.



QUARANTINE, MANCHESTER

Sarah Hunter, Audience Ninja & Producer on Wallflower

Who we wanted to reach...

Across the partnership we had a shared ambition to reach audiences who were new to contemporary performance, to Quarantine's work and/or to the venue/festival presenting the performance. Our aim was to use the subject area of **Wallflower** - the broad use of the word 'dance' in the performance, and the way dances can act as a marker for different moments in our personal and collective histories - as a meeting point to engage people local to each partner. We wanted to meet people who might dance for pleasure but not engage with dance/theatre as an art-form, with a particular focus on reaching younger (16-24 years) and older dancers (60+). The partners also had additional audience development goals that were specific to their context (see partner reflections for more details on these).

Our approach...

Between **January 2018** and **March 2019**, we worked with our seven partners to present **Wallflower** in **Brighton, Cleckheaton, Findhorn, Gateshead, Halifax, Lancaster, and Salford**. Along the way we made timelines of several lifetimes' worth of dancing; documented **93 remembered dances** - everywhere from hilltops and beachfronts, to living rooms, old school halls and once glamorous ballrooms - and performed a marathon **2,200 hours of dancing**.

We set out to create an audience development strand that could encourage deep engagement with the themes and form of **Wallflower**. Aware that our partners were from a range of contexts - including art centres, university campus venues, areas in the lowest 20% for arts engagement nationally, and rural settings, we aimed to create a model that was repeatable but with the flexibility to adapt to these different environments. To support this, we invested in the development of a strong partner network, facilitated through partner meetings at the beginning and mid-point of the project and a private blog that shared development in the project - both of which allowed for reflections on the learning and sharing of expertise.



The ways we met and worked with local people shifted depending on the context, but the overall approach can be broken down into five main stages...

1 Site visits and conversations with each partner organisation to develop an understanding of the local context: their reasons for programming Wallflower, the audiences they wanted to reach, the local social environment, and perceived barriers to engagement for their potential audiences.

2 Collaborating with partners to find up to 15 individuals in each location who wanted to share a dance from their own life with us. Kate and I met each person in the place where their dance had taken place (or in another location of their choice if this was not possible) and spent an hour with them - discussing their remembered dance and taking photographs of them remembering the moves. These were uploaded to www.wallflowerdances.com ahead of the performance and displayed on a screen in the foyer on the nights of the performance. Each person who shared a dance was offered two free tickets to the show. This stage relied on the local expertise of the partners and each took a different approach based on their knowledge of what might work in their area. Some examples:

SALFORD

Ashlee, who was recruiting participants, took a largely 'on the ground' approach - visiting local people in their places of work and at community spaces - and also reached out to people who were part of her existing networks, but might not usually come to see work at the New Adelphi. For example, a friend of her mum's who is a retired dance teacher, and students outside the School of Arts and Media.

HALIFAX

Ali reached out to people with both an existing relationship to Square Chapel and to dancing - for example, Maurice, one of the art centre volunteers who has memories of going dancing at the old ballroom in Halifax (which is now a McDonald's store room), and Angie, who works in the cafe and is known for dancing on the tables at the Christmas party. She also got in touch with key figures in the local dance scene, including Bazz from Bazzmatazz Dance Studios and Shantha from Annapurna Dance.

BRIGHTON

Laura decided to find participants through an open call - with a particular focus on reaching people beyond their existing mailing list. The response to this was positive and nine out of the sixteen participants were people new to the arts centre, but other partners reflected that this would not have worked so well in their contexts - see Cleckheaton below.

CLECKHEATON

Vicky was conscious there was not a pre-existing audience ready to engage with this kind of work as it is very different to what is currently on offer in the area. For this reason, Creative Scene built on connections with participants from other projects, encouraging them to take a risk on something new, and engaged a Producing Assistant to spend time with local groups. Personal relationships were key.

3 The delivery of up to two ‘Wallflower Gatherings’ in each place - informal workshops that invited local groups to ‘play the game’ of **Wallflower** and try to remember all the dances they’ve ever danced. The gatherings took slightly different forms depending on the group and the setting, but all of them aimed to open up a conversation about dance with people who were expert in their own experiences of this:

Can you remember your first dance?

Is there someone you love dancing with?

Is there a song you can’t resist moving to?

Do you have a signature dance move?

Is there a time you wanted to dance but didn’t?

When was the last time you were moving in a crowd?

Something about a dance from a funeral.

Something about dancing in private.

Our initial idea was that we’d hold open gatherings for whoever wanted to come along, but we tested this in Gateshead and found that it was mainly people already confident in engaging with the arts that attended, so for the rest of the project we instead asked partners to arrange for us to visit existing groups, which enabled us to meet a wider variety of people. We found ourselves at lindy hop groups, tap classes, an over 60’s morning rave, university of the third age groups, working with college students, and spending a morning with an international women’s group. Partners offered participants in the gatherings a ticket deal for the show – e.g. pay what you decide or 2for1 tickets.

4 Kate and I were at each performance, acting as a welcome to participants and as a link between the shared memories that were on display outside of the performance space and the form/content of **Wallflower**. In Lancaster we held a drinks reception for all the participants, which allowed them to talk to one another about the dances they had shared. Often, we found that participants stayed after the show for a conversation with us or with the performers.

5 We put in place consistent strategies for monitoring who we had reached as participants and as audiences: feedback and monitoring forms for participants; data cards given out post-show to audiences; informal post-show conversations; and Audience Finder surveys sent out following each performance.

The tour came to an end with our first ever 12-hour version of **Wallflower** in Findhorn on the 22 March 2019. The remembered dances of our participants continue to be shared on the Wallflower Dances website.



Photo by Richard Kenworthy

WHAT WORKED?

- Using everyday spaces ‘where dancing takes place’ to deliver the gatherings and document remembered dances made access easier for people who might feel less comfortable attending cultural venues. For the same reason, where possible, we also presented Wallflower in non-theatre spaces where people might go to dance, including Universal Hall, Findhorn, and Cleckheaton Town Hall, Kirklees.

- Approaching audience development as an opportunity to build relationships with people rather than as a numbers game. Where we were able to spend time with people and invest in them and their stories, we found that they became the more invested in the experience and more likely to attend the performance.

- Working with the partners in each location and valuing their expertise - we would not have had the local contacts or knowledge to deliver this activity without them.

- Offering two free tickets to people who shared a dance with us for the Wallflower Dances website and displaying their dances in the foyer alongside the performance. The exchange here was clear: you tell us a story and we give you tickets to the show and share your contribution as part of this. Free tickets meant that economic barriers were not an issue and people felt able to ‘take a risk’ on seeing something new. The uptake on these tickets was high and 66% of participants brought someone along with them, further extending our reach.

- Being flexible wherever we could in developing bespoke offers to help overcome barriers for specific groups. This included: covering the cost of an older person’s dance group to see the show in exchange for feedback; hiring a mini bus to bring members of a local person’s dance group from a rural area to the venue; offering reduced price tickets to a local group one of our partners was developing relationships with and having a post-show conversation with this group; holding a VIP

drinks reception for participants to welcome them to the venue; and trialling our first ever BSL interpreted Wallflower.

- Where we were able, presenting Wallflower in non-theatre spaces worked well – for example, in the beautiful Cleckheaton Town Hall. Being able to test presenting Wallflower in these spaces on this tour and having the portable lighting kit that supported us to do this, opens up possibilities for alternative venues for future tours.
- Working in areas identified as being in the lowest 20% for arts engagement nationally (Active People Survey), such as Gateshead, Salford and Kirklees, meant we were able to meet people that don't ordinarily see this kind of performance but had an interest in dancing and a willingness to try something new:

"I was at St Paul's Church at the jumble sale... and I overheard this woman saying that she was looking to talk to Mr Wyatt (he's the vicar there – he knows everyone) about dancing and so I said: 'I don't mind telling you about when I used to go dancing.' And she asked if I would meet some people from Quarantine the following week to talk about dancing have my photo taken, and I said yes, I'd bring my daughter too.

"The first ten minutes of the performance I was thinking 'what on earth is going on here?'. But once you'd grasped it, it was easy to go along with what was happening. You began to care about the performers and want to know more about them. I found myself wanting to laugh and cry along with them, and often I just wanted to get up and dance with them.

"I have thought about it since, because it was a different experience to ones I'd had before. Overall, I'd say it was good. I'm glad I did it. I've been thinking about my own dances a lot too..." - Participant, Salford.

Of the 70% of participants who took part in our evaluation by filling in feedback forms, 73% said they'd not taken part in anything like this before and 91% said they'd like to take part in similar activities in the future. Though the numbers vary from site to site, overall, we were delighted with what we achieved:

- 58% of participants were from our target age ranges
- Our average audience capacity across the tour was 78%
- 76% of our audiences were new to Quarantine's work
- 53% of our audiences were new to the presenting venue or festival

We collected postcode data from 63% of participants and 23% of audiences and commissioned The Audience Agency to run a profiling report to help us further understand our reach. The data showed that, across the tour, 74% of our participants and 62% of our audiences were from low or medium engaged segments of the Audience Spectrum.



Photo by Richard Kenworthy

THE CHALLENGES

- Quarantine's capacity: While collecting remembered dances worked well as an audience development opportunity, it was also time consuming and required two people to be in residence for around five days in each location, plus an additional two days of time for writing up and adding content to the website. We are a relatively small team and managing a seven-partner project, working across a variety of contexts all with different needs, required a lot of our human resource.
- Partner's capacity: This kind of bespoke audience development work requires 'on-the-ground' support and knowledge, and while all the partners appreciated the value of this, none of them had dedicated roles within their team that could commit their time to the work, meaning they were trying to deliver this in addition to their existing workload (and of course, **Wallflower** was only one show out of their programme for that season). We responded by trying to be as flexible as we could be, but it nevertheless raises questions about how to conduct locally responsive audience development in a funding climate in which resources are always stretched.
- The gatherings didn't work so well as the one-to-one audience development activity. People who took part in these were less likely to attend the performance than those who had shared a dance for the website. Reflecting on this, we feel that the link between the gathering and the invitation to see the performance was not clear enough and participants were not given enough incentive to 'take a risk' on something new.
- Presenting **Wallflower** in non-theatre venues 'where dancing happens' was more difficult than we had first anticipated. Some partners explored community or leisure centres as potential sites for the work, but the footprint required was not big enough. In Lancaster, we had hoped to present the work in the Winter Gardens in Morecambe, however, the venue did not have enough existing infrastructure (e.g. seating banks, a working bar) for this to be possible without the partner incurring significant additional costs.

● Data collection: as a result of updates to GDPR, which mean people have to 'opt in' to share data, there were a number of situations where data sharing was limited because people had not selected this option, meaning venue/festivals could not share all of the box office data with us. We took a number of steps to mitigate this, such as making it clear to people how their data would be used and being selective about the questions we asked, but the issue was consistent across the tour. We found we were able to collect the most data when we did this directly (e.g. through data cards post-show or printed out participant feedback forms).

● Data resistance: where we did not collect data from participants and audiences, it was because they chose not to share this information with us. Where possible, we spoke to participants to understand their perspective on this and uniformly people told us they were tired of being asked to fill in forms for every activity they take part in and feel like they are being 'put in boxes'. We really understood this, because we feel it too. It's left us wondering if there are more sensitive and meaningful ways to collect feedback. Having spent an hour with someone engaged in a conversation about a dance memory from their life, it often felt like it interrupted the experience when we then had to ask them to fill in a form to evaluate their experience of taking part.

● We were only able to work in this way because we had an ACE Strategic Touring Grant. Touring in the UK has become a challenge because of constraints on venue and festival programming budgets. With this grant, as well as covering costs associated with audience development, we were able to subsidise the costs of **Wallflower** for presenting partners, which in most cases enabled them to take a risk on programming something new, without knowing there was a guaranteed audience for this, because the box office risk was lower. While this has been a great opportunity, it raises questions about sustainability, as without similar funding in place (which is a significant amount of work to secure and to report on), this model becomes hard to replicate.

Learning we would pass on to others trying to do similar work or achieve similar aims:

- Be ambitious, but also be realistic about capacity.
- Approach audience development like you would building any other relationship - give it time and care, meet people where they are at, find shared points of connection, be curious. Accept that not everyone likes the same things. Some people won't be interested in what you're doing and that's OK.

And some questions that remain:

- Are we, as a touring company, best placed to lead on audience development projects?
- What kinds of audience development work are sustainable in our current climate?
- How can we work with partners to create the most joined up approach?
- How might systems need to change to better support both programmers and audiences to take a risk on something new?

Photo by Rosie A Powell





Coordinating tickets for the show – the durational nature of the work made ticketing tricky to oversee and manage.

What remains? (i.e. has there been any longer-term impact for you/your organisation?)

Doing the audience development work for Wallflower has helped to focus my attention on the need to engage audiences at much earlier stages in the process and in more varied ways before you can expect a return. It takes a long time to build audiences. Also, to really challenge myself more on who work might be for and who it could reach.

What piece of learning would you pass on to others trying to do similar work/achieve similar aims?

Persevere. Take time. Build trust with audiences. Find very quick, simple ways to describe the show in a sentence and to explain how they can get involved. Don't muddle this! Be as clear as you can with audiences on how and why you want to involve them.

"Wallflower has helped to focus my attention on the need to engage audiences at much earlier stages in the process and in more varied ways before you can expect a return. It takes a long time to build audiences..."

GIFT 2018, GATESHEAD

Kate Craddock, Festival Director

Why did you programme Wallflower and what audiences did you hope to reach?

I have long been a fan of Quarantine's work, so the opportunity to present the company was firstly really exciting. The concept was also one I loved – it is easy to grasp, and the gist of it is easy to describe to audiences. I was hoping it would be a great hybrid piece for attracting audiences from both dance and visual arts backgrounds, particularly as we had BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art as the venue, and we were programming the durational version of Wallflower, which I thought would translate well for their existing audiences.

What approach(es) to reaching people worked well in your context?

Word of mouth. Talking to people about the idea of the show. Sharing dances for the Wallflower Dances website also helped spread and generate interest among different groups – and had a small impact on tickets, but perhaps not as wide as we'd hoped for given the labour involved in setting these up.

What was challenging?

Attracting people to the first gathering was challenging as we did this via an 'open call'. We discovered that it needed more context around it, something more longitudinal I think. It was too snapshot/flash of activity as opposed to something more sustained.



NEW ADELPHI THEATRE, SALFORD

Niki Woods, Artistic Director

Why did you programme Wallflower and what audiences did you hope to reach?

Although I hadn't seen the show before I booked it, I loved the idea of it. I love Quarantine's work and was finally in a position to book. Wallflower was a particular challenge for us as we're a new venue; only just (at that time) starting to programme touring work. I wanted to attach this piece to several modules/assessments to enrich the curriculum and I hoped to reach 'regular contemporary theatre goers', so as to help place New Adelphi Theatre as a venue to visit.

What approach(es) to reaching people worked well in your context?

Running the MA residency worked well to reach the postgraduate community. This connection also resulted in our MA students, who were creatively responding to Wallflower, showing some work in the atrium alongside the performance and this brought their audience too. Recruiting people to share dances for the Wallflower Dances website was tricky, I think we (I) underestimated how difficult it would be to reach people, particularly in the community. It felt a little 'cold call', so reaching people within the wider university became our strategy.



Reaching the student audience works if the show being presented is linked to a module in some way. This worked well and in one module in particular, the assessments were much stronger than the previous year.

What was challenging?

The logistics of our systems – perhaps we tried to do too much: the audience development work; a residency with the MA students; filming the show for Digital Theatre+; a prep and redress of the performance space (we didn't use the auditorium and instead used the stage area to create both the performance space and the seating around it); dealing with the Salford bar, and health and safety for a food stall we set up in the foyer. However, this really did help me push the systems, so now we are able to think beyond the space limitations or know that even when health and safety might be problematic it doesn't mean we can't find a way around.

What remains? (i.e. has there been any longer-term impact for you/your organisation?)

The 2nd year students who saw the work, now in their 3rd year, are making interesting work. It did help build community and there seems to

be a legacy of 'we did it for Wallflower' so we can do it for 'x'.

What piece of learning would you pass on to others trying to do similar work/achieve similar aims?

The Wallflower Dances were a really nice idea for audience development – in future I'd focus on these and the wrap around activity of that. I think trying to find people to contribute to 'something' when they haven't heard of the 'someone' who's doing the 'something' is very difficult. I'd suggest some pre-engagement, but it takes time and you have to know the group you're trying to reach so it doesn't feel 'cold call-y'.

"Reaching the student audience works if the show being presented is linked to a module. This worked well and in one module in particular, the assessments were much stronger than the previous year."



SQUARE CHAPEL, HALIFAX

Ali Ford, Theatre Programming and Development Co-ordinator

Why did you programme Wallflower and what audiences did you hope to reach?

We are always looking for innovative new ways of maintaining and developing new audiences – whether that is through taking accessible work into non-theatre spaces (Other Rooms) or making new work more affordable and less ‘risky’ for audiences with a ‘Pay What You Can’ price tag. Alongside the reputation of Quarantine amongst contemporary theatre audiences, the participatory aspect of Wallflower paired with our strong track record of delivering meaningful community outreach and engagement work made the ambition of engaging both new and existing audiences with something new and different feel achievable.

We hoped to reach some of those audiences who currently engage with our community outreach programme, including Afternoon Dance, Cube Choir, Square Circle (painting, weaving and calligraphy), all of which are aimed at older people; and street dance, youth theatre etc. for younger people – participants who we struggle to engage through our professional programme.

We liked the idea of offering two types of performance (a ‘pop in’ durational performance and the more traditional 90-minute experience) in order to suit different schedules and needs.

What approach(es) to reaching people worked well in your context?

The joint, personal approach to collecting remembered dances from the local community coordinated between Square Chapel and Quarantine worked really well – all participants were extremely generous with their time and story contributions and in turn felt valued by seeing their stories exhibited on the screen at Square Chapel over the performance weekend, and in the online archive.

The range and diversity of individuals whose remembered dances we collected was wide and representative, and this felt like an important thing to achieve. Connecting with the One Voice group (a creative steering group made up of local women representing the various cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds of women in Calderdale) was a particular success – not only did one of them share their remembered dance for the exhibition and archive, but they also came along to watch the performance as a group, and had a lively and positive discussion about it in the bar after the show, giving some wonderful feedback in response to the work.

The network of partner venues was also a hugely valuable resource – having other organisations and individuals who were working to achieve the same thing was brilliant.

What was challenging?

Although the participants we selected for the Wallflower Dances felt like the right group of people, this didn’t necessarily have the effect we had hoped on reaching audiences for the show. Not all of them were able to attend the performances or use their complimentary tickets to offer to friends, and there were some cultural barriers (such as Shantha from Annapurna explaining that it’s unlikely her Indian community would ever attend a performance like this, not because they don’t have the money or time, but simply because they wouldn’t choose to spend it in this way).

I think there was perhaps a missed opportunity in connecting the participatory/outreach work with the actual performance – we had lots of feedback that suggested audiences and participants would have welcomed an opportunity to share their own memories of dance during the performance



which, despite the interactive feel of the form and design (thrust staging, performers sitting with audience etc.), ended up feeling quite distanced from the idea of participation that the ‘Wallflower Dances’ work had promoted.

The concept of a durational performance was new for most Square Chapel audiences and I think although the work and format of this felt highly accessible once you were in it, communicating this concept to audiences was more challenging, and the durational performance was definitely harder to sell than the 90-minute version.

What remains? (i.e. has there been any longer-term impact for you/your organisation?)

We still have good connections with all of the participants who contributed remembered dances to the archive, and one in particular regularly talks about his experience of Wallflower – I think the process of returning to the site of his dance (his school) to share a story for the Wallflower Dances website and being listened to, valued and publicly acknowledged was really important for him and has had a long-lasting effect.

It has also sparked two other projects based on a similar model of engagement and participation:

‘30 stories’ showcases unique stories and images uncovering the life-changing moments that Square Chapel has helped to create over the last 30 years.

‘Stories Are Edible’ is a project to curate a cookbook made up of stories and recipes from 15 different people/groups in Calderdale, celebrating the diversity of the people who live here and the food they eat.

What piece of learning would you pass on to others trying to do similar work/achieve similar aims?

Collaboration is key – I felt the shared ambition and joint approach between Square Chapel and Quarantine, alongside the insight and support from the wider partner network, was crucial to making the project successful.



Photo by Rosie A Powell

LANCASTER ARTS, LANCASTER

Alice Booth, Creative Producer

Why did you programme Wallflower and what audiences did you hope to reach?

We programmed **Wallflower** because I have always been a strong supporter and lover of Quarantine's work - particularly the really thoughtful and sustained ways they work with 'ordinary folk'. They love to enter the minds and worlds of the people they work with in really gentle and generous ways, and it makes for great theatre. I had seen the first ever outing of **Wallflower** at HOME in 2015 and it really blew me away. It is one of my favourite Quarantine shows. A group of people on stage excavating their past for all the dances they've ever danced... from the wild to the intimate to the ridiculous. It took me on a huge emotional journey... dance, in the widest sense, punctuates all of our lives in so many ways, and mine is no exception. I wanted to share this journey with the people of Lancaster and also really welcomed the additional support from the Quarantine team to reach new audiences. At Lancaster Arts, we knew that lots and lots of people in Lancaster dance, but many never come and see dance at the theatre (never mind at Lancaster Arts). There are loads of amateur dance groups, tea dances, dance therapy classes, kids dance sessions - you name it... as well as all sorts of dance societies across the university. This was an opportunity to find out who was out there and also have a different sort of conversation with them... not just about their favourite dance form... but also about the ways dance may have played a role in who they are or have become.

What approach(es) to reaching people worked well in your context?

We mostly made contact with people through word of mouth and warm contacts. I contacted people who knew people who knew people... and in that way reached potential participants that I may not have reached otherwise. We also did a small amount of work via social media, but the results really came from extended relationships.

It was also about finding the right language to talk to them about what their participation would look like... and what the show was. This was definitely most successful with the individual participants who shared remembered dances. Sarah really supported this. The key was making the

people I approached feel clear, comfortable and excited about taking part... and that made them willing. The support from Sarah was second to none... consistent and helpful at all stages. It was particularly useful to utilise her learning from previous outings of Wallflower on tour.

What was challenging?

The usual challenges of persuading people to take part in things... people not getting back to me, people saying they want to take part and then pulling out at the last moment... that sort of thing. But on the whole the process was so well structured and supported that there were very few hitches.

We found that the majority of people who took part in the remembered dances came to the show, whereas fewer gathering participants came along. That was disappointing. We could have found clearer incentives for the gathering participants to come... and that is definitely something to think about in the future.

What remains? (i.e. has there been any longer-term impact for you/your organisation?)

What delighted us was seeing a packed audience for the show from a range of backgrounds and interests - it really was a very diverse crowd and a very warm audience. The fact that those taking part in the remembered dances were invited to bring a guest was a great way of really broadening the audience and making sure there was new blood in the house.

We have built up strong relationships with those that took part and are continuing to work with many of them on other projects. We are getting better at making our audience feel important and invited, and this project was a key part of that journey.

What piece of learning would you pass on to others trying to do similar work/achieve similar aims?

Be really clear about what you are asking from your participants. The more detail you can provide for them, the better. Keep your language simple and understandable. Make sure the invitation and the exchange are really clear (What are you getting? What are they getting in return?)

Start early and follow a structured process. We had a tricky timing issue since the performance was in February - it meant that participant recruitment straddled Christmas. All the detailed research (what dance groups were out there, where they met and what time, who ran them) had to happen before the break, as well as tentative early contact. Then the follow up-calls and face-to-face meetings happened in the new year.

We hosted a reception for participants before the show - a glass of bubbly and some snacks, as a way to make them feel special, and part of something. I would definitely recommend that!

"Be really clear about what you are asking from your participants... Keep your language simple and understandable. Make sure the invitation and the exchange are really clear..."

CREATIVE SCENE, WEST YORKSHIRE

Vicky Holliday, Senior Producer

Why did you programme Wallflower and what audiences did you hope to reach?

We programmed **Wallflower**:

- To help us test with Kirklees Town Halls whether we could extend their programme offer to include high-quality contemporary performance and see if current town hall audiences would try something new.
- To attempt to engage local people in a contemporary dance-based experience that they may have not had the chance to do before.
- To build relationships with individuals, businesses and dance schools in Cleckheaton to engage them in future programming.

The audiences we were hoping to reach were:

- Existing town hall audiences - who might usually attend amateur musical or dance performances or attend classes there.
- Contemporary performance/dance audience of West Yorkshire - to build Cleckheaton as a place they might visit in future for performances
- Audience spectrum groups Trips & Treats and Dormitory Dependables as they represent approximately 42.5% of audiences in the area of Cleckheaton, Liversedge and Gomersal.

Photo by Rosie A Powell



What approach(es) to reaching people worked well in your context?

25% stated they had heard about the performance via word of mouth and a further 29% identified Creative Scene/audience development activities, highlighting that it was the personal approach that was most effective. These were either via the 1:1 activity (collecting remembered dances from individuals) or through our Producing Assistant going to spend time with groups.

What was challenging?

The meeting of two different approaches - Town Halls (commercial comedy and bands) and Quarantine (contemporary performance) meant that expectations around production were very different including allocation of venue staff, availability of rostra, capability of technical equipment, etc.

Two audiences: Local people not engaged in this type of art and West Yorkshire's dance audience required two different sets of messaging. Those not engaged require a type of language that relates to them.

Both sharing remembered dances and gatherings proved difficult for us to arrange and it felt difficult to translate these into audiences. They felt disconnected from the show and participants wanted to see their stories more clearly shared at the performance.

"Invest in individual relationships and make sure the connection between engagement activity and the performance you wish participants to attend is really clear and appealing to them."

What remains? (i.e. has there been any longer-term impact for you/your organisation?)

The learning that we gathered through the project was the most valuable legacy:

- Refining our approach to engagement, defining clear connections between engagement and performances.
- Providing more precise brokerage between arts companies and venues, particularly when it comes to practical and technical expectations/requirements.

Our town hall partners valued the space being used differently; "it opened our eyes to what we've got and what can be achieved".

What piece of learning would you pass on to others trying to do similar work/achieve similar aims?

Invest in individual relationships and make sure the connection between engagement activity and the performance you wish participants to attend is really clear and appealing to them. Keep as much flexibility around your engagement approach as possible - different people, groups will have different wants and needs.

DANCE NORTH, FINDHORN

Diane Smith, Producer / Karl Jay-Lewin, Creative Director / Gail Sneddon, Dance Development Officer

What approach(es) to reaching people worked well in your context?

It was wonderful to have Quarantine so dedicated to the audience development for **Wallflower** and sharing that responsibility with the producing company is a great way to work.

The individual dances and additional ticket invite worked well for us; this often encouraged a small group to attend with that person. If I remember correctly only 2 of the individual dancers did not attend.

Approaching pre-existing groups that we already had a relationship with worked best for us in terms of getting people to come along to the gatherings.

What was challenging?

We did one open-call gathering event, and it was challenging to get people to come along. Perhaps



because it's quite a new thing to ask people to do and people don't really know what they're going along to or what to expect (although we thought it was clear on the call out).

We did a workshop session with the University of the Highlands and Islands Drama students. This was successful and the leader of the course was really excited to have the company come in and work with the students, but this did not result in the students making the journey to Findhorn to see the work, even though we also offered free transport from the college. I asked for feedback in regards to this from the head of department and she did mention it was a really busy time for the students with exams. It was disappointing for us that they didn't attend as we packaged the workshop together with the performance.

When we put the call out for individuals to share remembered dances with us there was not much response - it was challenging to get people to understand what we were asking them to do. Although none of the information suggested that people needed to



dance, individuals still thought this was what we were asking of them, which was a barrier to people getting involved. The most successful approach was via telephone to people we had an existing connection with.

What remains? (i.e. has there been any longer-term impact for you/your organisation?)

We're beginning to build a relationship with the University of the Highlands and Islands.

The ladies at the Duffus Be Active Life Long group, where we did a gathering, still talk about the wacky performance they went to see. They went back afterwards and told the rest of the group how much of a good day they had.

What piece of learning would you pass on to others trying to do similar work/achieve similar aims?

Work with groups and individuals that you already have a connection with and build their interest in coming to experience something new.

Do a number of sessions running up to the event.

"Work with groups and individuals that you already have a connection with... The most successful approach was via telephone to people we had an existing connection with."

Selected audience feedback from across the tour..

“Very unexpected, new experience. We're used to dance only. This was more theatre. It was interesting. Stimulating. Some lovely individual performances.”

“Watching Wallflower is like getting into a deep conversation at a house party – you know it's 3am but you still don't want it to end”

“Unusual. Bizarre. There from about 7-8pm. Thought provoking. Not joyful. Not beautiful. Not enough dancing.”

“Beforehand I was dreading it as it was my first durational piece and I wasn't sure I'd get anything from it. I stayed for the whole 5-hours – the numb bum was worth it. I left taking away so much more than I expected!”

“I just loved the space to watch all these different bodies moving over such a long time. They were exhausted by the end and I felt like I had gone through that with them – vulnerable and generous, I'll think about it for a long time”

“Was way too 'arty farty' to be enjoyable. How can running around the room, climbing on a speaker, recounting a meeting with an old man in a supermarket or a striptease be classed as entertainment?”

“We didn't know what to expect but found it to be an interesting approach. What will stay with me from the whole experience is the energy of the artists, my interview (for the Wallflower Dances website), and the chance to read other people's memories of dance.”

“It took me about 15 or 20 minutes to get in to it and to understand what was going on, but then I was just in it.”

“It's less like being at the theatre and more like being at an aquarium and watching the fishes. It was very human.”

