

WONDERLAND—THE FILM
a Dance Film Project by
Tallaght Community School Dance Team
in collaboration with filmmaker
Peter Kelly

PROJECT EVALUATION 2012



Funded by the Creative Engagement Scheme, managed by the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals

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An Roinn
Turasóireachta, Cultúir agus Spóirt
Department of
Tourism, Culture and Sport

WONDERLAND, THE DANCE FILM PROJECT

From February 14th – 17th 2012, dancers in the Tallaght Community School (TCS) Dance Team and their choreographer, TCS teacher, Louise Kelly collaborated with filmmaker Peter Kelly to create a dance film based on site-specific choreography inspired by their school setting, which they had developed with their teacher, Louise Kelly.

The original dance piece, entitled *Wonderland*, had been developed in 2011 by TCS Dance Team and Louise Kelly. The piece was inspired by work developed by Louise Costelloe during that year when she was the Dance Artist in Residence for RUA RED / South Dublin County Council under the Arts Council's Dance Artist in Residence Scheme. Louise Costelloe mentored TCS Dance Team and Louise Kelly on developing site specific work during her residency programme, *Architecture of Human Encounter*.



In response to *Architecture of Human Encounter*, the students and choreographer of the TCS Dance team created *Wonderland* with the site of their school environment in mind. Through their work, the dancers explored their own personal space and its relationship with the world. They determined that their theme of *Wonderland* could be a physical place or the place of the imagination. Both the title and the piece were chosen to inspire the audience to develop their own perspective. *Wonderland* was performed in Tallaght Stadium on December 9th to an audience of 42 people.

During that period, the students had viewed dance films by Costelloe's own mentor, Fearghus O'Conchuir in an exhibition in RUA RED, *Bodies and Buildings*. Through contact and discussion with South Dublin County Council's Youth Arts Co-ordinator, teacher, Louise Kelly and her students were interested in building on this work and creating a dance film within the school setting, which inspired their choreography. With the support of South Dublin County Council's Arts Office, Louise Kelly approached filmmaker Peter Kelly and proposed a collaborative dance film project that would take the choreography created for the original *Wonderland* project and adapt it for dance film. Louise Kelly applied and was awarded funds for the project from the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals' (NAPD) Creative Engagement Programme.

The aim of this proposed dance film project has been to further the learning of the students involved in working with dance artist and choreographer Louise Costelloe as well as to increase awareness of dance as an art form and its potential in other areas of the arts and build the profile of Tallaght Community School's creativity. This report presents learning gained from this project.

Participants

TCS Dance Team:

Over the years the TCS Dance Team have performed at a number of different events from school events to NOISEmoves Festival and Dublin Culture Night. They have appeared in various local and international newspapers and their performance was shown on two news segments on RTÉ for Dublin Culture Night.



Artist Peter Kelly and Teacher Louise Kelly discuss the film

TCS Dancers involved in the project were: Roisin Condrón, Tori Wong, Ornella Mazono, Olwyn Bell, Natasha McAuley, Angelika Palka, Abiola Busari, Wumi Asaolu, Oyin Adesina, Roxana Feraru, Linda Doyle and Louise Dunne. One student who had taken part in the previous dance project for Architecture of Human Encounter was unable to participate in the film project due to other commitments.

TCS Dance Team Choreographer Louise Kelly, BA, MA, HDip (Ed), ALCM (TD), Grad Dip (Dance) is a teacher of English, History, CSPE, SPHE and Drama in Tallaght Community School. She trained from a young age in a variety of dance styles as well as drama and singing. In 2005 she established the TCS Dance Team as an after school activity for the students of the school. As well as working with the TCS Dance Team as their Director and Choreographer, Louise continues to perform in Musical and Dramatic Societies and teaches dance classes and Zumba classes to adults and children.

Peter Kelly works as a freelance filmmaker and editor. Peter works extensively with young people through film. In 2008 Peter established FilmCircle, a mobile multi media company that specialises in filmmaking in schools. Since then Peter has helped hundreds of transition years to make dozens of short films. He has worked in the medium of dance film, with CoisCéim Broadreach, the Dunamais Arts Centre and South Dublin County Council as well as arts organisations and groups including Calypso Productions (Fantasies and Fears) and as an advisor in the area of youth film for The National Youth Council of Ireland and several local authority Arts Offices throughout the country.

His most recent own work includes Director of Photography on 'The Late Men' (2011) and Camera Operator/Editor for B.F.F. (2012) written and directed by Gary Duggan.

Project Objectives

Aim: to bring forward learning students have gained regarding site-specific choreography to the medium of dance film

Objectives:

- To build a relationship of collaboration between artist and teacher within the school
- To build the profile of dance and film as independent as well as joined artforms within the school
- To build spatial and visual awareness amongst students and teacher with regards to dance film as a specific art form
- To expand creative capacity of a youth arts group within a school by introducing them to a new art-form and professional arts practice and developing existing skills in their chosen art form
- To provide an opportunity for learning that crosses areas of the curriculum, introduces new skills and allows peer to peer learning

Proposed outcomes from project

- Greater physical, visual and media literacy amongst students
- Greater awareness of links between art forms
- How to create, refine and finish an accomplished work of media/art
- How to work collaboratively with other artists and group members
- To think and act with imagination



Students at work thinking about framing and scouting locations

Project Timetable*

Date	Activity	With who
Early January 2012	Planning meeting	Peter Kelly, filmmaker Louise Kelly, teacher Victoria Durrer, Youth Arts Coordinator, SDCC Young Dancers
February 14	Watch/learn about dance film as an artform; Learning about creating shots, location scouting, planning, meetings with group	Peter Kelly, filmmaker Louise Kelly, teacher Victoria Durrer, Youth Arts Coordinator, SDCC Young Dancers
February 15	Pre-production and further scouting, storyboarding, shot selection, production schedule	Peter Kelly, filmmaker Louise Kelly, teacher Young Dancers
February 16	Rehearsal and Film Day 1	Peter Kelly, filmmaker Louise Kelly, teacher Victoria Durrer, Youth Arts Coordinator, SDCC Young Dancers
February 17	Film Day 2	Peter Kelly, filmmaker Louise Kelly, teacher Victoria Durrer, Youth Arts Coordinator, SDCC Young Dancers
February/ March	Film day 1	Peter Kelly, filmmaker Louise Kelly, teacher Victoria Durrer, Youth Arts Coordinator, SDCC Young Dancers
February/ March	Editing Feedback	Peter Kelly, filmmaker Louise Kelly, teacher Victoria Durrer, Youth Arts Coordinator, SDCC Young Dancers
Friday, March 23 2012	Short listed and Screened for NOISE Flicks Film Festival	Attended by Louise Kelly, teacher All students involved in dance film project
April	Public Screening and Q and A with teacher and one participant for dance film screenings for NOISE <i>moves</i> Dance Festival.	

*** It should be noted that the entire project took place outside of school time. This includes planning meetings for filmmaker and teacher. Teacher and students participated in developing and shooting the film outside of school time and attended public screening events outside of school time. The school principal also attended one of these events.**

Roles

Roles and Responsibilities of the Artist and Teacher as well as South Dublin County Council's Youth Arts Coordinator were agreed prior to the commencement of the project.

Teacher:

- Dance development
- Liaise with students on attending
- Welfare of group
- Liaise with school on permissions
- Support the girls with getting any props/costumes needed
- Support filmmaker on getting music
- Photo permissions from the students
- Management of funds and payment of artist
- Attendance at all events, rehearsals, screenings
- Participation in the planning and evaluation process



Artist

- Lead on the creative development of the film in partnership with Louise and the students on the dance aspects
- Shoot and edit the film with music/sound
- Deliver copies of the finished film: 1 for each student; 1 for the teacher; 2 for Tallaght Community School; and 1 for South Dublin County Council
- Source and provide all necessary film equipment
- Attendance at all events, rehearsals
- Participation in the planning and evaluation process

Youth Arts Coordinator

- Monitoring and evaluation of the project (observation, interviews, questionnaires)
- Support the teacher on the Welfare of the group, in particular attending all sessions (bar Weds, Feb 15th)
- Help promote the project
- Carry out photographic documentation of the project

EVALUATION METHOD

An evaluation of the project was conducted by South Dublin County Council's Youth Arts Coordinator. This individual also served as a broker for the project setting up planning meetings and advising on the agenda.

This evaluation is intended to serve as a document of the work carried out and the learning outcomes achieved by those involved.

Evaluation Objectives

To assess

- Greater physical, visual and media literacy amongst students
- Greater awareness of links between art forms by students
- Students' understanding of how to create, refine and finish an accomplished work of media/art
- Students understanding of how to work collaboratively with an artist and the group members
- Students engagement in thinking and acting with imagination
- The experience of working with an artist / with a teacher

Method

- Observation of 4 out of 5 project sessions, including the film shoot
- Focus group discussion with students prior to and at the close of the project
- Discussions and questionnaires with the artist and the teacher



FINDINGS

Resources/Challenges:

As the TCS Dance Team is an extra-curricular activity all work takes place outside of school time in the Teacher and Students' personal time. Project planning began in January, but the bulk of the project took place during the mid-term break. Deciding the allocated time period for the project was offered by the teacher to parents. This period of time was decided as parents did not wish the 3rd Year students to work after school over several weeks as they had supervised study in preparation for Mock Exams. This meant that the teacher and the students worked during their own time in the holidays outside of the school schedule. This presented opportunities and challenges to the project, which are detailed below.



The support of the Local Authority Arts Office during the project was important. The Arts Office encouraged the development of the project on from previous work carried out with the school's dance programme and assisted with the forms and requirements for the funding application process for NAPD. The Arts Office additionally provided film equipment, as well as welfare support for the students during the project.

Opportunities	Challenges
<p>Working in the school outside school opening hours and across a week allowed the students a 'special' opportunity to explore parts of the school they had not previously. It added a special element to a school-based project. In addition, it gave students creative freedom to explore the school and have the time and privacy to think about and make the film as they had the school largely to themselves over a few days.</p>	<p>Taking place during holiday time from school. Teacher and students did not have a Mid-term break.</p> <p>Teacher also had mock examinations at this time of year normally corrected during personal time. This was an added pressure as further time also had to be given to this during the holidays.</p> <p>As the majority of students were in an exam year time had to be taken to fully inform parents of the advantages of taking part in the project. This being said despite the fact that all of the work was being done during personal time, during the holidays, one parent would not allow her daughter to participate in the project.</p> <p>Students had a very intense period of work during the Midterm break and did not have as much time to dwell on ideas as they would have over a period of several weeks.</p>

The timetable was tight. There was a lot to be accomplished in translating the previous Wonderland performance into a film. All of the students, the artist and the teacher pulled together and worked well in order to finish the piece, but this did lessen the opportunity for students to learn more about film and dance film in particular. An intensive working period is beneficial to accomplishing a film, but more learning might have occurred if there had been time allowed for a few more introductory and conclusion / editing sessions with the students.

Sharing/Dissemination:

The completed film was entered into South Dublin County Council’s NOISE Flicks Film Festival in March 2012. An independent panel of judges made up of professionals from the film industry awarded the film ‘Best Idea’. The film was screened for a public audience of parents, friends and young filmmakers.

In addition the film was screened in a dedicated programme of Dance Films, both professional and youth-based for South Dublin County Council’s NOISEmoves Dance Festival. During this time the teacher, Louise Kelly and one of the students took part in a Q and A with other dancers and filmmakers as part of the event. A representative from NAPD and the TCS Principal as well as the CEO of Dance Ireland attended this event.

Learning Gained in Filmmaking for Students:

While the students were not directly filming the project themselves, but were the subject of the filming, they did receive an introduction to filmmaking: gaining awareness of framing shots, the importance and impact of lighting and angle. They also learned what it was like being in a film and how it is a very different art form to a live performance and the level of focus and concentration needed.



Appreciation and Awareness of the Art Forms for Students:

Screen dance or dance film is dance made especially for the camera or screen. It brings dance making/choreography together with the practice of filmmaking.

The main focus is the movement which can be from any style of dance but the rhythm and vocabulary can extend into the editing, spaces that are chosen to work in, props and inanimate objects.

This can initiate an exciting collaboration between the language of dance and the language of film, opening up possibilities of how we see dance in different spaces. It can show dancing bodies in new and imaginative ways through the relationship between bodies, camera and editing.

It can transform the original choreographic ideas and material, offering huge scope for imagination bringing dance, drama and film together to create a piece of work that contains the kinetic excitement of dance, the resonant images of film and visual art and the connection of place and narrative.

Overall Learning Outcomes of *Wonderland*, the film:

- Greater physical, visual and media literacy amongst students
- Greater awareness of links between art forms
- Social and personal development and sense of achievement
- An introduction to what's involved in creating, refining and finishing an accomplished work of media/art
- A further understanding of collaborative work with other artists and group members
- To think and act with imagination

The project helped the dance group to expand their repertoire and see how they might develop future dance pieces differently. The teacher involved felt that the project provided a situation in which students had the space to experiment with the relationship between dance and film.

Students engaged in personal and social development during the project

Team work is often important in filmmaking. For *Wonderland*, students were broken into pairs and groups of three to examine how their dance pieces might work in different architectural spaces and how they might be framed by the camera.. These were shared with the wider group and brought together into one film as a cohesive whole. The negotiations of the choreography as well as the types of spaces in which the students might perform required students to listen to and share ideas with one another. The film shoot itself required a great deal of patience and respect for other as well as commitment from the group. Observation of the students during the filming showed the students were very involved and interested in the project. They were patient and respectful of one another and worked well as a team. These skills are important in the

personal and social development of individuals and a key aspect of developing a creative dance film.

The project had strong cross-curricular elements for students

In considering how they might present different movements for film rather than performance, students were considering architectural design, visual composition (of camera shots) and the impact of that design on our impression of movement and person to person interaction. They began to look at the design of choreography in more direct relation to space and how that can be communicated through the medium of film.

Below is a table of the curriculum links in particular subject areas for the Leaving Certificate covered by this project.

Subject Area	Range of skills and competencies which should be developed by students for Leaving Cert	Area from project involved
English	Students should encounter a range of texts composed for the dominant purpose of communicating information, eg. reports, records, memos, bulletins, abstracts, media accounts, documentary films. Film studies is part of the Comparative Study of the examination.	Review of dance films at the start of the project
Art	Observation History and Appreciation of Art	practical observation and examination of designed spaces and their features Review of dance films at the start of the project
Geography	To develop a knowledge and understanding of a selection of contrasting physical and human (social, economic, and cultural) environments and of the relationships that exist between them. To promote an awareness of the spatial, structural, and temporal patterns of environmental phenomena, both physical and human, at a variety of scales, and to realise that these patterns can change with time.	practical observation and examination of designed spaces and their features and how people might expect to interact within them and how this can be reinterpreted, reimagined or recommunicated by way of dance film

Students developed learning in Key Skills during the project

During the project, students exhibited skills developed in ways that reflect the key skills framework developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). These skills are: information processing, communicating, being personally effective, working with others, and critical and creative thinking. The table below details the elements and learning outcomes presented by the NCCA and how this dance project ‘hit’ those areas.

Key Skill	Element	Learning Outcomes	How the project 'hit' this skill
Information processing	Accessing information from a range of sources	recognise the wide range of information sources that is available both within their schools, at home and beyond	Through taking part in sharing events involving the wider community as a result of the project. The students are more aware of other opportunities open to them.
	Recording, organising, summarising and integrating information	use systematic observational and note-taking techniques identify main ideas in a text using both prior knowledge and clues within the text (e.g., headings and sub-headings, paragraphing, conclusions) create summaries of information in their own words	Through completing worksheets and discussing ideas in relation to creating a dance film Through observing and commenting on different settings and framing of dance pieces Through examining dance films reflecting personally on their own viewpoints and sharing through group discussion Through discussion of choreographic decisions with outside evaluator and Filmmaker
Critical and creative thinking	Examining patterns and relationships and classifying and ordering information	explain the relationships between wholes and parts systematically examine similarities and differences as the basis for comparing and contrasting	Through discussion and review sessions with the teacher, filmmaker and outside evaluator Through the repetition of dance moves and sections within different settings
	Identifying and analysing problems and decisions, exploring options and alternatives, solving problems and evaluating outcomes	recognise that problem solving and decision making can be approached systematically predict the likely consequences of options and alternatives and systematically examine the pros and cons of each	In selecting sites for the dance film
		recognise the impact of real-world constraints	In developing a dance piece to be performed in a non-traditional performance space (i.e. not a theatre stage), during a specific and tight timeframe
		evaluate outcomes of solutions and decisions both in the short and long term	Through discussion of choreographic decisions with outside evaluator and filmmaker, through participation in a Q and A with the public

Key Skill	Element	Learning Outcomes	How the project 'hit' this skill
Critical and Creative thinking (cont.)	Thinking imaginatively, actively seeking out new points of view, problems and/or solutions, being innovative and taking risks	<p>recognise that different mind-sets are associated with different forms of thinking (e.g., letting ideas flow, building up associations, suspending judgment in order to produce ideas, are often associated with creative thinking)</p> <p>be willing to take risks and to learn from mistakes and failures</p> <p>be persistent in following through ideas in terms of products and/or actions</p>	<p>Seeing the different impact of site on choreography and of film on choreography based on site and interaction, adjusting that from developmental phase to film shoot</p> <p>Through developing a new piece of work, dance film, outside of usual repertoire</p>
Communicating	Analysing and interpreting texts and other forms of communication	<p>analyse texts from several perspectives (e.g., intended audience, genre, viewpoint of the author, cultural/historical viewpoint)</p> <p>identify and explain their own personal responses to text and other forms of communication</p>	<p>Through using and being included in decisions about the type of framing involved in filming</p> <p>Through making decisions about the sites for filming different aspects of the wider dance piece</p> <p>Through discussion of dance films and review of their own dance film during the editing period</p>
	Expressing opinions, speculating, discussing, reasoning and engaging in debate and argument	<p>recognise the importance of speculation and argument as forms of dialogue for learning and for leisure</p> <p>be sufficiently open-minded and curious to engage in speculation and argument</p>	<p>Exhibited by way of evaluation process and in team work involved in filmmaking</p>

Key Skill	Element	Learning Outcomes	How the project 'hit' this skill
Communicating (cont.)	Engaging in dialogue, listening attentively and eliciting opinions, views and emotions	<p>listen attentively to what others have to say</p> <p>elicit opinions, views and emotions from others through the appropriate use of questioning and responding strategies</p> <p>respond perceptively to contributions made by others</p>	<p>Through discussion of dance films—students didn't always like what they had viewed but were able to articulate this through critical examination and be open to what others have to say</p>
	Composing and performing in a variety of different ways	<p>identify a range of genres, their purposes and styles</p> <p>compose in a variety of genres, showing the capacity to plan, draft and revise</p> <p>express meaning and emotions through a range of performances (e.g., visual art, drama, music, design and graphics)</p>	<p>Keeping a tight schedule during the film shoot and understanding the pressure for everyone to finish, but still have time to work creatively on the piece</p> <p>to challenge themselves to work in a new medium with a abstract rather than narrative message</p>
	Presenting using a variety of media	<p>identify the main purpose of a communication and relate its form and nature to the purpose</p> <p>identify the main purpose of a communication and relate its form and nature to the purpose</p> <p>explain and justify choices</p>	<p>Through discussion about the storyboard</p> <p>Through consideration of where to place certain pieces and in what order they should be put in the final edit.</p> <p>Through gaining an understanding of costume and lighting choices</p>

Key Skill	Element	Learning Outcomes	How the project 'hit' this skill
Working with others	Working with others in a variety of contexts with different goals and purposes	<p>recognise that working with others is an intrinsic part of home, school, work and leisure</p> <p>recognise the need to respond flexibly in different contexts</p>	Through continuing to work together as a dance team on the development and performance of a dance film and to attend events outside of school to showcase that work
	Identifying, evaluating, achieving collective goals	<p>work in pairs and larger groups to plan the work of the group</p> <p>co-operate with other members of the group to identify collective goals</p> <p>co-operate with group members to identify how different roles can contribute to the overall goals</p> <p>communicate ideas and needs within the group</p>	The decision of where to place choreography was developed through pair work and wider group work. The final piece reflects both aspects with small paired performances happening as well as who group performances. The group was incredibly involved in decided the places in which they should happen and why. Group exhibited an understanding of how location and framing affects the audience's interpretation of the piece
	Identifying responsibilities in a group and establishing practices associated with different roles in a group	<p>help to break tasks down into parts as a way of sharing the work of the group</p> <p>take on the responsibilities of the role whether as a team member or a team leader</p> <p>recognise how his/her role blends with the responsibilities of others in the group</p> <p>express views about how the work of the group is progressing</p>	The group exhibited understanding of the tight time frame of the project and the types of responsibilities needed for filming, such as maintaining continuity, and helping one another with this.

Key Skill	Element	Learning Outcomes	How the project 'hit' this skill
Working with others (cont.)	Developing good relationships with others and a sense of well-being in the group	<p>listen carefully to other points of view</p> <p>develop empathy and see alternative perspectives</p> <p>express emotion in appropriate ways</p> <p>help others to feel included in the group</p> <p>help motivate the group to persist in the face of difficulties</p> <p>celebrate the achievements of the group</p>	<p>Through discussing work viewed</p> <p>Through discussing and helping make decisions about filming locations and new presentations of the choreography</p>
	Checking progress, reviewing the work of the group, and personally reflecting on one's own contribution	<p>keep to deadlines and agreed plans</p> <p>monitor progress in the group against agreed plans</p> <p>participate in evaluating the outcomes against the collective goals</p> <p>reflect on their own contribution to the group and identify strengths and weaknesses</p> <p>identify ways of further improving their skills in working with others</p>	<p>Through discussing work viewed</p> <p>Through discussing and helping make decisions about filming locations and new presentations of the choreography</p> <p>Through seeing the project through to and attending and speaking at final showcases</p>

Key Skill	Element	Learning Outcomes	How the project 'hit' this skill
Being personally effective	Being able to appraise oneself, evaluate one's own performance, receive and respond to feedback	<p>identify their own aspirations and what they would like to achieve</p> <p>set time aside to take stock of current achievements and, with the help of others, to engage in an honest appraisal of their strengths and weaknesses</p> <p>show the resilience to receive and make sense of feedback</p> <p>identify areas for action and move on</p>	Through participating in evaluation meetings and reviewing the work created
	Being able to assert oneself as a person and to become more confident	celebrate their achievements	<p>Pride expressed at public screenings</p> <p>Volunteering and requesting to show the film to their peers in class who were not involved in the project</p>

Students' overall enjoyment/experience of taking part

Students enjoyed developing dance in a different way and working with a professional artist. They were highly committed to finishing the film and went through much repetition of dance pieces to do so. The Filmmaker working with the group felt that they exhibited a great amount of creativity in selecting locations for filming and considering how those locations should be represented (framed) on camera.

Experience of the Partnership between Artist and Teacher

The filmmaker enjoyed the experience of seeing a contemporary dance group in a school setting and working with the students and teacher on realizing a transformation of their dance piece into a dance film work.

Additionally the teacher felt that the filmmaker had a great deal of understanding regarding the context of school-based projects. The project required flexibility and sensitivity to the timetable of the students' mock exams and the mid term break in addition to allowing the creativity of the students to have time. The filmmaker addressed these issues with consideration. There was a great rapport between artist and students.

There was genuine discussion and collaborative engagement observed between the artist and teacher. This work centered on addressing the time constraints but also gaining an understanding of how the art forms might work together. There is interest in working together again in the future.

CONCLUSION



Overall, *Wonderland*, the film project, provided students with new opportunities to learn across curriculum areas and outside the normal school timetable.

Having the opportunity to screen the work publicly and in different contexts such as dedicated film festival and a dedicated dance festival allowed the students an opportunity not only to celebrate and get acknowledgement for their work but also to discuss it with peers and professionals interested in both art forms. This allowed the students the chance to see their own work in a wider artistic (and professional) context.

Finally, NAPD's Creative Engagement Fund provided an opportunity for the students and teacher to take a previous piece of dance work and extend the learning potential as well as stretch the students and teacher's imagination. The project challenged students and teacher to think and approach the art form of dance in a new way, considering positioning, framing and the placement (and even existence) of the audience anew.

Support is needed within the school to continue such work. Oftentimes, the delivery of such projects is dependent upon a dedicated teacher who is willing to work outside the allotted timetable. More support would provide great opportunities for teachers and students to fulfill their creative potential and apply curriculum learning in ways that will reinforce it.