

TAN DANCE – INTERGENERATIONAL DANCE PROJECT

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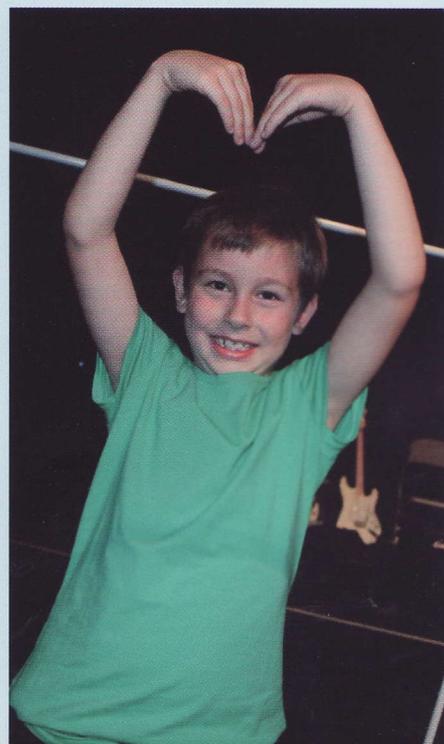
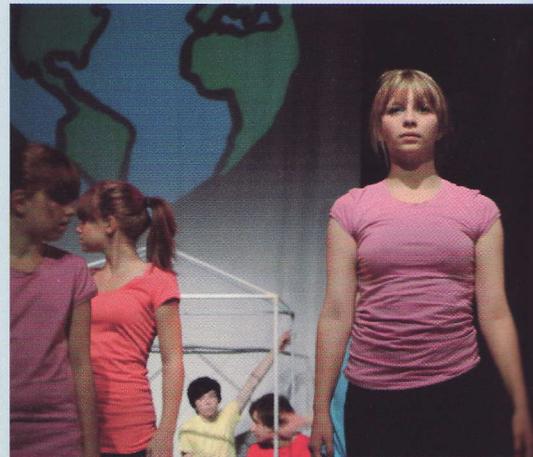
Kim May, TAN Dance

Following the success of last year’s *The Long, the Tall and the Short of It*, TAN Dance invited back experienced choreographer Cecilia Macfarlane to work with multigenerational participants from a variety of communities to create a piece of exhilarating dance work; *Home is Where the Heart is*. As one of the project partners, Swansea Metropolitan University was very pleased to be working with TAN Dance and South West Wales Reaching Wider Partnership again to facilitate this collaborative dance piece involving so many different community groups and ages.

Over the course of a week, the dancers were led through the creative process to explore the art of movement and discover new things about themselves along the way, culminating in two exciting performances.

Lucy Beddall, Community Engagement Coordinator at the Met said, ‘We were all very excited to be involved in this project again. I was one of the dancers last year and it is inspirational to work with such an established choreographer as Cecilia. Age and ability doesn’t matter - it’s such an achievement to perform with such a wide variety of people from different communities’.

All male dance group Meibion Dance Company also performed excerpts from their new show *Renegades*. Kim May, Development Officer for TAN Dance managed the project, “We really looked forward to working with participants of all ages again and I would also like to thank Reaching Wider, Barnardo’s and the Ariadne project for working in partnership with us”.



REVIEW: HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS, Townhill Theatre, Swansea Metropolitan University, Friday, July 29, 2011

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Graham Williams, Reviewer

TAN Dance is committed to bringing dance to the wider community, performing not only in formal venues and public spaces but also involving people who would otherwise fight shy of participating in the performing arts under their own steam: this latest project saw a variety of different agencies, organisations and institutions pulling together to create a satisfyingly involving and socially valuable evening of dance - the result of a week of dedication, energy and sheer hard work - which showcased the talents and creativity of people with a wide range of ages and abilities.

Billed as "an exciting community dance piece featuring the young and the not-so-young", this was an evening which not only entertained and thrilled the audience, but which also served to demonstrate something that I have long maintained: namely, that the performing arts can enhance the lives of those who participate and that they can create more confident and well-renowned people able to integrate and co-operate more effectively with individuals from a miscellany of religious, cultural and social backgrounds.

The focus of the evening revolved around a piece devised and directed by Cecilia Macfarlane, an internationally renowned performance artist and teacher whose experience includes the London School of Contemporary Dance and the Royal Academy of Dance - but before we were exposed to the imaginative centrepiece of the night, we were treated to a muscular and athletic contribution from all-male troupe Meibion - an offshoot of local dance company Dynion - under the direction/choreography of Douglas Comley, a familiar face to dance aficionados across the region and beyond.

Meibion's piece was fiercely contemporary and gruelling, performed as it was on a stiflingly hot and humid night in an enclosed space, and it is to the dancers' credit that they threw themselves around the space with such enthusiasm, strength and athleticism; the work, entitled *Renegades*, loosened up in the second segment with a comedic set in which the performers donned Brian May-style wigs and biker jackets and romped around like a heavy metal, headbanging and even at one stage playing air guitar.

After an interval we returned to witness the main event of the evening, entitled *Home is Where the Heart Is*: as the title suggests, this was an exploration of people's perceptions of what constitutes a home and the roots which shape us all.

The community aspect of the piece - which saw people from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds taking part in what proved to be an emotionally charged work - meant that a proportion of the choreography was handled by the dancers themselves, with Macfarlane on hand to keep an eye on the tiller.

Poetry and songs - together with a striking and emotive New Age-tinged story written and read by Jane James - fused with the dance segments to create a mesmerising piece of dance theatre that said much about the human spirit and the sense of place that runs through the veins of every human being, no matter where they might come from.

As I never tire of saying, the arts have an immeasurable value in shaping those who might otherwise have no means of self-expression or an outlet for their creativity, and projects such as this one are of paramount importance in healing the rift which so often exists between different communities.

Review by Graham Williams