

Wales Wide Training Programme: *Are you OK?*

I remember vividly asking an artist “*What do you need?*” when I was leading the PHF funded ArtWorks initiative. His reply was a wake-up call. “*That is the first time anyone has asked me that since I became freelance.*” In the research I have carried out on the impact of WWTP on freelancers, another question cited by an interviewee resonated. At the beginning of the pandemic she was asked “*Are you OK?*” These questions seem to me to sit behind the ethos and culture of the WWTP and inform its unique and impressive outcomes.

My work has always been informed and driven by a desire to ensure that artists needs are met and in 2017 my Churchill Fellowship took me to the US and Australia to look at how freelance artists were supported. At that time, I hadn’t realised that there was a unique model close to hand in Wales and when I first encountered the Wales Wide Training Programme in 2019 I was impressed by the focus of the programme on the needs of the artists and practitioners, the breadth, the accessibility and most importantly the care with which it was developed and implemented. The programme became a lifeline during the pandemic and expanded exponentially to meet the needs of freelance artists and practitioners who were most definitely not “*Ok.*”

Through my research, I can state that it doesn’t simply offers dance artists and practitioners across Wales access to training. It provides opportunities for networking, peer to peer learning, dialogue and conversation and key to its success is that it is organic, developing as needs develop, and never stagnating. Importantly, it give agency, ensuring it is co-created and informed by the needs of the artists and practitioners themselves. Artists and practitioners feel heard, validated and affirmed. The programme is accessible and affordable and offers a safe space for artists and practitioners to both learn and share their own knowledge and skills.

It is a genuine learning community and one that provides essential support to a workforce which is isolated and financially precarious. The dance ecology in Wales is interlinked and interdependent and WWTP both recognises and encourages this by supporting the infrastructure which comprises individual freelancers, community dance providers and other organisations working in dance provision across Wales.

For more information on the programme please contact tracey@rubicondance.co.uk



Dr Susanne Burns
susanneburns57@gmail.com