



**LEEDS
ARTS RESEARCH
CENTRE**

MESH

BETH CASSANI

OUTPUT INFORMATION

Title:
Mesh

Output Type:
I – Performance

Venues:
Performed outdoors in Leeds and Wakefield city centres and The Hepworth Gallery and twenty performances, June - Aug 2018 in Newcastle and at The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art.

Year of first performance:
2017

Output allocation:
Dance practice research



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION STATEMENT

Mesh is a series of dance performance works derived through a methodology which facilitates the emergence of new embodied mentoring strategies. These offer an alternative to traditional approaches to artist-mentoring and dance dramaturgy. Mesh addresses the following research question: what sorts of artist-mentoring can emerge to support the choreographic performer when activated from the centre of collaborative creation?

Cassani adopted a practice-as-research methodology to explore strategies for embodied choreographic mentoring within this practice, incorporating dramaturgy and collaborative, improvisatory performance in order to challenge the traditional dynamic between artist mentor, mentee, and performance as one in which the artist-mentor is outside the performance. Each performance of Mesh took place within the setting of a city centre street, engaging pedestrian audiences by inviting passers-by to join in the making of a public ritual of togetherness. The resulting work unfolded over a two-year period (2017-19) during which Cassani was artist-mentor to choreographer Vanessa Grasse, as well as a performer within live iterations of Mesh. Cassani used an autoethnographic approach to reflect on embodied responses to process and product as the work was performed and re-performed. Cassani's dual roles enabled a unique research position that facilitated new insights from inside an emerging project, which were made manifest and shared through live performances.

Mesh received two Arts Council England grants, was commissioned by the Great Exhibition of the North, and produced by Yorkshire Dance and Dance City. Multiple performances have taken place at: the Hepworth Gallery, Wakefield with additional post-performance talks led by Cassani; in Leeds (Light Night, 2018, International European Theatre Network Meeting, 2019); Wakefield, 2017; Bournemouth, 2018; and Hull City of Culture. It has toured to South Korea and Valletta, Malta (Dance Studies Association International Conference, 2018). Twenty-one performances in Newcastle culminated in an hour-long performance at The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art.

PARTICIPATION DOCUMENTATION 2018

More than 3000 people joining in.

More than 55,500 live audiences at Hull Freedom Festival and Leeds Light Night





GG

"I didn't really know what I was getting into but I loved every moment. The group were so welcoming and supportive - I think you'd say permeable and collaborative"

Workshop participant



"I loved the whole experience. I was taken to a different place. So much happened to me that I cannot remember everything, but I am left with so many different feelings. I think it has something to do with the physicality, community, emotions, humanity, some parts of which I have not experienced for a long, long time, if ever. I am now left with more questions than answers. Where to go, what to do, how to do it. My path continues and met yours for a little while. It would be nice for them to join again. It feels good to be part of a wider family"

Workshop participant



" Mesh has really developed my confidence and self-esteem. Thank you!"

Workshop participant



Photo: Anete Sooda





“ It was a gentle, delightful piece of work that the audiences of Hull embraced and they accepted your dancers invitation into the space with them. I particularly liked the fact you incorporated four community dancers in the cast and they integrated beautifully and made up almost half the company performing during the weekend. It was a joyous celebration of community and very touching. I appreciated the fact that one of the community dancers is a retired policeman whose work took him city centres where he was constantly on the lookout for trouble – now he is embracing people in the street and is travelling with you out of his absolute pleasure of this new way of being with the public.”

Kate Wood. Executive and Artistic Director, Activate and Inside Out Dorset



Photo: Anete Sooda





Photo: Tom Arran



“ It was exhilarating I will be talking about it for weeks!”

Audience comment



“I loved the non-verbal communication and being invited to join in and support them”



“It is great to see people coming together. It is not something you see everyday”



PARTICIPATION DOCUMENTATION 2019

More than 3000 people joining in.

More than 25,000 live audiences at UK Dance Showcase, Dancing Town Barnsley, Gwacheon Festival South Korea







“It is something really special, it is deep. To see how people join in from the kinds, the teenagers who are always on their phones, to the older ones, to the homeless people”

Audience comment

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GG

“you were the star of the
festival, everyone loved you!”

Jongseok Kim, Gwacheon Festival Director

“

“amazing, such lovely moments”

“

“I love the way anyone can join. It is so colourful and brings life to the streets”

Audience comments

GG

“it is really emotional, I am from Romania and I have never been able to connect well with people here, now I am hugging people in the street...”

Audience comment



<https://meshjournal.wixsite.com/mesh>



LINKS TO MESH VIDEO DOCUMENTATION

<https://vimeo.com/293112870>

<https://vimeo.com/284996458>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_ps9jBgelE

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=233659357127606>

<https://vimeo.com/243021264>

<https://vimeo.com/313764593> (workshops)

<https://www.facebook.com/saralribeiro/posts/10155869133527636>

LINKS TO PUBLICITY

<https://vimeo.com/310548596> promo video

<https://getnorth2018.com/previous-events/mesh-2/> Mesh at the Great Exhibition of the North, Newcastle

<https://yorkshiredance.com/whats-on/event/vanessa-grasses-mesh-5/>

<https://www.freedomfestival.co.uk/our-work/commissions/freedom-festival-20181/> Mesh in Hull

https://issuu.com/yorkshiredanceonline/docs/yorkshire_dance_annual_review_2018-19_rgb_version?e=39522009/75908134

<https://meshjournal.wixsite.com/mesh/workshops>

<https://surfthewaveuk.org.uk/vanessa-grasse> Mesh at Surf the Wave

<https://valletta2018.org/events/mesh-ensemble-sharings/> Mesh in Valetta, Malta

<https://yorkshiredance.com/news/mesh-goes-to-south-korea/> Mesh in South Korea

<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/meshchoreography/> Instagram

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=233659357127606>

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10154859012121482&set=pb.696416481.-2207520000.&type=3>

A Conference Paper about Mesh; *What can participatory dance do and who cares anyway?* (Beth Cassani) was presented at the 14th International NOFOD Conference, Helsinki, Finland, 13th of June 2019

http://www.nofod.org/wp-content/uploads/NOFOD_Programme_12_6.pdf

IMPACT INFORMATION AS REPORTED TO ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

My involvement with this research project was throughout 2016-20 as the key artist mentor and a creative collaborator to the choreographer. In addition, I have performed in the work in 2018/19 in Leeds, Wakefield, Newcastle (and ongoing). The project started in 2016 with one unfunded week of residency at Yorkshire Dance as a free workshop with 10 professional dancers – I was present as mentor/dramaturg.

Since then we have received 4 lots of ACE funding

ACE funding 2017: R&D in Leeds and Wakefield (with residencies at Yorkshire Dance, Leeds Beckett and Hepworth Wakefield) and performances/sharings in Leeds and Wakefield.

A public Tim Ingold talk event at YD.

3 sharings

approx 30130 live audiences

approx 250 audience/participants physically joining in (counting both performances and rehearsals)

over 600,000 online audience (partners, mailing list, social media etc)

16 workshop participants

9 joined rehearsals and performances (3 in Wakefield and 6 in Leeds)/community cast

2 apprentices

ACE funding 2018: Development & Production & initial performances/test tour with residency at Yorkshire.

- 3 Performances at Hull Freedom Festival and 2 at Light Night Leeds.

- 1 week intensive workshop in Malta with final public sharing with participants + presenting at Contra Dance symposium

5 performances

approx 55500 live audiences engaging

including appx 3500 audience/participants physically joining in

over 700,000 online audience (partners, mailing list, social media etc)

5 workshop participants joined the professional rehearsals and performances/community cast

In 2018 we also received The Great Exhibition of The North commission in Newcastle (the largest and most prestigious event in the UK that year). We used it to develop the work and tests formats; test how to work with local participants and how to work in different sites.

21 performances

Approx 32,000 live audiences engaged (that's what YD said in the report but I counted more).

approx 7000 audience/participants physically joining in

22 workshop participants

4 of them joined the rehearsals & performances/community cast

+ 2 apprentices

extra activities in 2018: collaborative research with ICI (Improvisation Conjointe Interaction) interdisciplinary research group of neuroscientist, philosophers and dancers. in France (20 participant

IMPACT INFORMATION AS REPORTED TO ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

ACE funding 2019: Touring in UK and South Korea

- Leeds IETM pre-meeting event
- The UK Dance Showcase, Bournemouth. Pavillion Dance South West
- Dancing Town, Barnsley

- Ulsan Promenade Festival, South Korea
- Gwacheon Festival, South Korea

- one off workshops in Cardiff with Groundwork Pro participants and Ballet Cymru company dancers.
- one off workshops in Leicester, People Dancing Summer School

10 performances

31 workshop participants

25000 live audience

including appx 2000 audience/participants physically joining in

1,150,000 audience online/broadcast

1 community cast

extra activities in 2019: Collaborative workshop/research with Genetic Choir voice improvisation ensemble in Amsterdam (22 participants)

ACE funding 2020: further UK tour with London emphasis/Sadlers Wells + legacy activities (creative book and ways it can continue in different ways and inform my future work).

You can also see the list of all our performance dates [here](#) which also shows all the logos = everyone who supported the work each year.

Total figures/outputs 2017-2019 (we don't have 2020 figures and these are obviously severely impacted by the Covid crisis)

- 39 performances in 8 cities in 2 countries (in Leeds, Wakefield, Hull, Barnsley, Bournemouth, Newcastle, Gwacheon, Ulsan)

- appx 142,630 live audiences

- appx 12,750 audience participating physically joining in

- appx 2,450,000 online audience

Keywords:

Performance

Dance dramaturgy

Collaboration

Links:

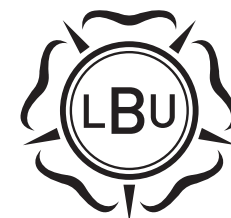
<https://meshjournal.wixsite.com/mesh>

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