

# Autonomy, collaboration, creativity and dignity: evaluating Scottish Ballet's three-year dementia-friendly dance programme

**Dr Bethany Whiteside, [B.Whiteside@rcs.ac.uk](mailto:B.Whiteside@rcs.ac.uk)  
Directorate of Research and Knowledge Exchange  
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland**



# Introducing Time To Dance (TTD) (2017-2020)



Overall **aim** is to positively impact on the quality of life of dancers involved.

- **Dancer-centered** and inspired by the repertoire; Takes place with **live music**.
- Incorporated a **social time** before and after class; **Intergenerational** format.

Photo credit: Christina Riley

# Evaluation Design

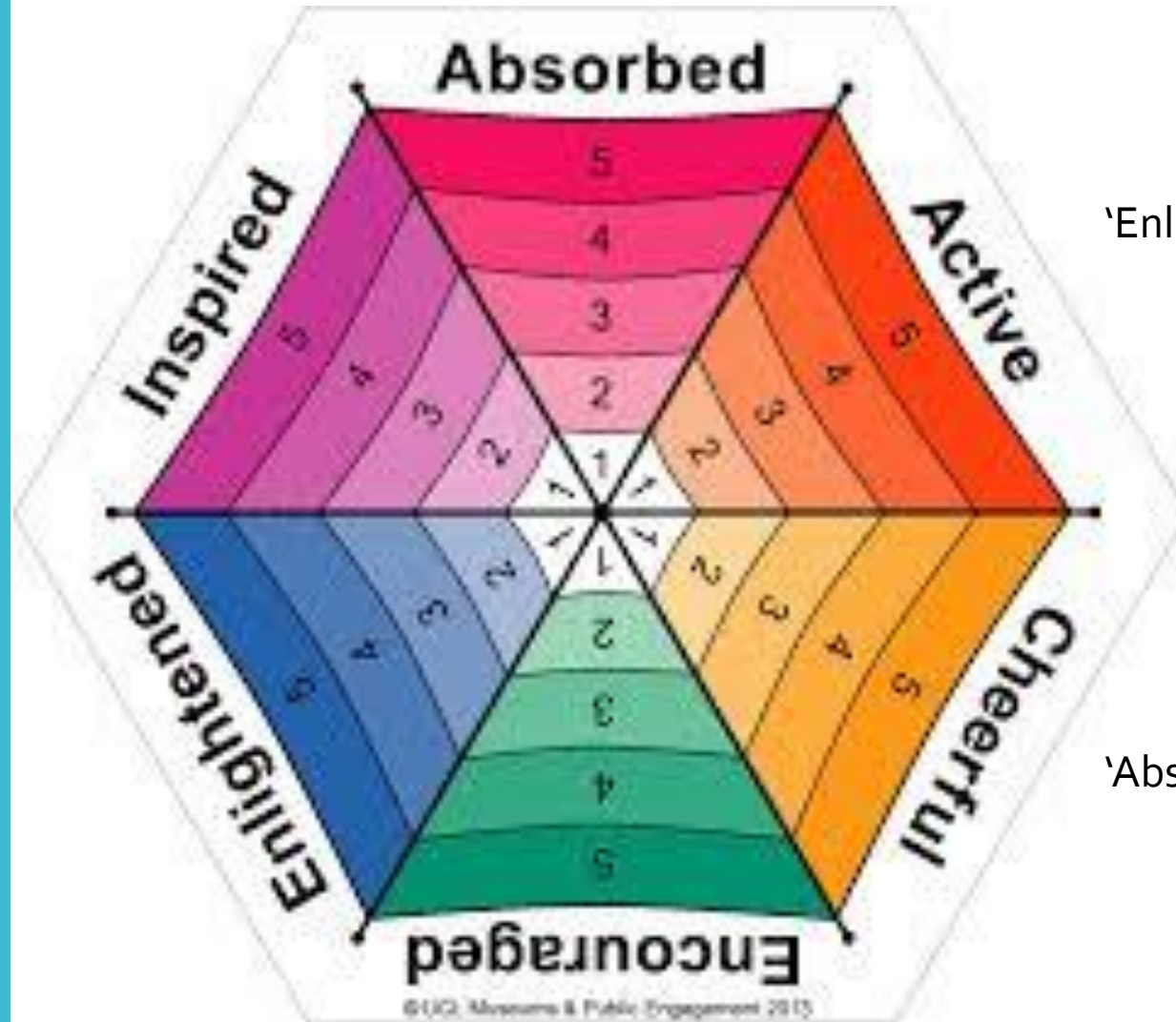
- **Aim:**  
Explore the narrative, framework, and efficacy of the Time To Dance programme and model of practice developed by the Company.  
Understand the social and emotional experiences of all groups of participants.
- **Methods:**  
The UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit (the Generic Wellbeing Questionnaire (GWQ) Short 6-item and Positive Wellbeing Umbrella Older Adult (MWM-OA)) was administered every eight weeks during the first 12 months of data collection working with the dancers with dementia. 13 dancers participated in the former measure, and 9 dancers participated in the latter measure.
- Semi-structured and ethnographic interviews with all groups of participants (n=29) (10 interviews with dancers), together with participant observation, took place at eight-week intervals. Practitioners (n=6) were also interviewed at regular intervals. The final six months of data collection drew on ethnographic means only.
- Importance of 'in the moment.'
- **Limitations**
  - Model developed over the 18 months
  - Mixed attendance, people joining at different points
  - Lack of a baseline, small sample involved
  - Descriptive statistics
  - 'Snapshots' of points in time
  - No diagnostic criteria

# Ethics

- **Framework of Autonomy, Collaboration, Creativity and Dignity**
- **Evaluation can be intrusive, if not invasive, and involved dancers deemed to be vulnerable through experiencing cognitive and/or sensory challenges.**
- **Communication from Scottish Ballet to myself and to joining dancers**
- **Time and space provided – creating time; modifying of spaces**
- **Informed consent – communicating the evaluation; design of forms; use of proxy consent**
- **Rationale of using the UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit; experience of using the questionnaire and umbrella**
- **Importance of dancing together**
- **Use and presentation of data – the ‘voices’ of the dancers**
- **Frequency of researcher presence**



# UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit – Older Adult (MWM-OA)



'Enlightened' → 'Informed'

'Absorbed' → 'Interested.'

# Generic Wellbeing Questionnaire (GWQ) Short 6-item

## Generic Wellbeing Questionnaire Short 6-item version

Please circle a number for each statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

### 1) I felt happy

None of the time 1	Not very often 2	Some of the time 3	Very often 4	All of the time 5
-----------------------	---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------	----------------------

### 2) I felt engaged

None of the time 1	Not very often 2	Some of the time 3	Very often 4	All of the time 5
-----------------------	---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------	----------------------

### 3) I felt comfortable

None of the time 1	Not very often 2	Some of the time 3	Very often 4	All of the time 5
-----------------------	---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------	----------------------

### 4) I felt safe and secure

None of the time 1	Not very often 2	Some of the time 3	Very often 4	All of the time 5
-----------------------	---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------	----------------------

### 5) I enjoyed the company of other people

None of the time 1	Not very often 2	Some of the time 3	Very often 4	All of the time 5
-----------------------	---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------	----------------------

### 6) I talked to other people

None of the time 1	Not very often 2	Some of the time 3	Very often 4	All of the time 5
-----------------------	---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------	----------------------

*I just love this class! I love it! I could sit down to anyone that I hadn't met before and talk to them and they would talk to me. That's what life is all about. I know if I was to turn ill, I would be looked after.*

Evie, Dancer

## Contribution to the field through...

- Focus on a long-term programme (involving 18-months of data collection) – themes of Trust, Transitions, Balance.
- Focus on personal experience rather than therapeutic and holistic benefits.
- Involvement of dancers experiencing varying stages and types of dementia.
- Focus on an external venue, rather than a care home or hospital.
- Inclusion of the 'voices' of the dance practitioners and dancers.
- Drawing on mixed methods including the use of measures designed specifically for working with people with dementia.
- An explicit focus on the model of practice developed by Scottish Ballet.

Thank you!



Photo credit: Andy Ross



## References

Coaten, R., Helley, T. and Spitzer, N. (2013). Dancemind's 'Moving Memories' Evaluation and analysis; a UK based dance and health project for people living with dementia and their care-staff. *UNESCO Observatory Multi-Disciplinary Journal in the Arts*, 3 (3).

Guzmán-García, A., Hughes, J.C., James, A. and Rochester, L. (2013). Dancing as a psychosocial intervention in care homes: a systematic review of the literature. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 28 (9): 914-24

Hamill, M., Smith, L. and Rohricht, F. (2011). 'Dancing down memory lane': Circle dancing as a Psychotherapeutic intervention in dementia—a pilot study. *Dementia*, 0 (0): 1-16.

Hokkanen, L., Rantala, L., Remes, A.M., Härkönen, B., Viramo, P., Winblad, I. (2003). Dance/movement therapeutic methods in management of dementia. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 51 (4): 576-7.

Thomson, L. and Chatterjee, H. (2014). Assessing well-being outcomes for arts and heritage activities: development of a Museum Well-being Measures toolkit. *Journal of Applied Arts Health*, 5 (1): 29-50.

Vella-Burrows, T. and Wilson, L. (2016). *Remember to Dance: evaluating the impact of dance activities for people in different stages of dementia*. Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health: Canterbury Christ Church University.