



Evaluation Summary Report April 2022

Aims of Wildfire Rising Year 1 programme:

- Investing in & supporting dance artists from African, South Asian, East Asian & South East Asian diasporas to make way for the rising of their artistry, representation & development
- Increasing representation of artists from African, South Asian, East Asian & South East Asian diasporas in Movema and CD at all levels
- Learning about what the barriers are to African, South Asian, East Asian & South East Asian diaspora artists engaging with Movema & CD & using the learning to develop the diversity of our organisations
- Reducing inequalities in dance
- Learning about the needs of artists from African, South Asian, East Asian & South East Asian diasporas and using our voices to feed this understanding into wider strategic conversations with ACE and DCNW to ensure development of relevant support systems for artists
- Generating & developing trust & shifting perceptions of Movema & CD as places where people of diverse cultural & racial backgrounds are welcome, valued & feel 'at home'

Year 1 of the Wildfire Rising programme has begun to achieve the aims set out above this by meeting the needs of ethnically diverse artists, increasing employment and paid training opportunities and beginning to understand and tackle barriers that exist because of institutional racism.

Our organisation is built on collaboration and this project allows us to build on that strength, have wider reach and more impactful benefits working across regions, artforms & sectors.

Key Findings from Programme Evaluation:

The independent evaluation report from [Inc Arts](#) (leading national organisation who champion the creative, contractual and economic rights of the UK's African, Asian, Caribbean and ethnically diverse arts sector workforce) concluded that:

- *"The Wildfire Rising programme facilitated by Cheshire Dance and Movema provides an inclusive experience to dance professionals who want to develop their professional projects in the UK dance sector."*
- *"This programme is also a valuable experience for the sector to better understand how they can support the development of artists and professionals that are minoritised and marginalised in the UK society."*
- *"Compared to other programmes, the Wildfire Rising programme is very inclusive and raises the bar of what can be achieved."*
- *"This report recognises the high value of this programme for the sector and the North West Dance community. More resources could contribute to a positive step toward excellence in inclusive practices to nurture the global momentum on inclusion."*

The Wildfire Rising Programme Summary:

Programme requirements:	as part of this programme, participants were expected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to develop professional practice and artistic work • to apply for Arts Council England match funding • to contribute to sector knowledge of minoritised artists' needs in the sector.
Guided professional and artistic development	participants received <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the support of two programme facilitators • the support of a chosen mentor • the support of a chosen coach. • ten days of paid time (£250/day) for professional development.
Dance: practice and knowledge	participants were provided with dance specific learning activities around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dance teaching methods • world dance styles including Indian, African, Brazilian and Chinese dance styles • the impact of diverse dance styles on communities • delivering diverse dance styles to diverse groups (age, ability, background)
Employability and self-development	to support participants' journey to getting a job, returning to work, or taking the next step towards fulfilling their career goals, the programme also provided learning activities around <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time management • personal goal setting • finance including budgets and costing • bid writing • project management • organising and delivering dance classes • personal branding and professional marketing • self-guided professional development activities to support development as and when needed.
Networking	participants are part of the Movema and Cheshire dance communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they can work with partner organisations Milap, Irie Dance, Capoeira For All and Global Grooves • participants are also invited to stay connected with each other and with the facilitators. • They receive quarterly updates on opportunities, classes and other relevant information.
Public speaking	the Spread your Wings conversation contributed to participants' development of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their understanding and ability to talk about current issues that affect diverse communities • how dance can be used as a tool to develop tolerance and address racism and prejudice
Further support	after the programme end, the organisations continue supporting participants in their next steps and offer opportunities to stay connected, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • free use of a zoom account for the six months following the end of the programme

Summary collated by programme partner and evaluator Inc Arts (consultant Rachel Gnagniko)

The Programme in detail:

Professional Development

5 half day group sessions:

- Project Development 1 (13th Jul Aug 21)
- Funding (20th Jul 21 – with Desiree Cherrington, ACE Relationship Manager for Dance. Also attended by WFR applicants and Movema freelance/associate artists)
- Project Development 2 (10th Aug 21)
- Connecting with Communities (14th Sep 21)
- Choreography (6th Oct 21 – with Alesandra Seutin of Ecole de Sables)

Masterclasses

4 half day group sessions:

- Alessandra Seutin – 6th Oct 21 - African Dance, partner Ecoles Des Sables (25 participants)
- Sheetal Maru - 21st Oct21 – Indian Dance – co-organised with NPO partner – MILAP (14 participants)
- Shiyin Huang – 9th Nov 21- Chinese Dance– organised by Xiaouwei Lu (WFR artist) and Pei Tong (Movema director/South East Asian artist) (14 participants)
- Adriano Alveres – 27th March 2022 – Afro-Brazilian dance partnered with Global Grooves and hosted at The Vale (20 participants)

Masterclasses were open to all Wildfire Rising Artists and the wider dance community in the North West and beyond. Being delivered by highly accomplished and experienced artists, they were suitable for all but provided challenge and clear development opportunities for experienced dance artists from the North West. 100% of the masterclass guest artists are from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Reflection

5 full days:

Paid reflection time was built into the programme in order to listen and learn from the artists about their journey and how best to improve processes and design.

This included:

- Midway Evaluation session
- 1:1 sessions
- Group reflection session
- Inc Arts Facilitated conversation (including preparation with lead organisations and resulting in evaluation report)

Spread your Wings Hybrid Conversation

Two dance specialists from the global majority, facilitated the conversation: Ithalia Forel (Co-founder and Director, Movema) and Akosua Boakye BEM (Dance Practitioner, Lion King Children's Casting Director, Co-founder Thea Barnes Legacy Fund.)

Guest speakers also included Amanda Parker, Founder and Chief Executive of Inc Arts and Paul Smith, Programme director of Dance Consortium North West.

Information discussed focused on informing the sector of future support, training and opportunities, necessary to support global majority dance artists' career potential.

Participants were able to discuss and explore with the panel and the public challenges they encountered as part of their professional journey. They discussed:

- creating career opportunities in the UK for artists with a Chinese dance background;
- taking into account artists stage of development, artistry and needs;
- lack of support and training for diverse dance arts in low income areas;
- training and development routes to develop for artists working in culturally diverse dance styles.

13 creatives took part with a total audience of 88 in person and online.

The Wildfire Rising Associate Artists:

The programme recruited three North West based dance artists, who each took part in paid, bespoke professional development and reflection and received a £1.5k commission with support to develop their dance work. The artists come from different backgrounds, cultures, educational settings, and they have different kinds of family responsibilities. Their career path to dance was not straightforward, and they all had to overcome unique challenges. Along the way, they developed specific skills, knowledge and abilities that form strong narratives of their resilience.

Wildfire Rising Artist Case Studies:

Sabrina Steele

"I have developed more self-belief in myself. I have become more recognized as an artist through this programme."

Sabrina is a female from the African Diaspora. A freelance dance artist based in Liverpool she aims to deepen and develop her work in the community by using world dance styles and commercial street dance.

She has been teaching and dancing for over 30 years with and for the Liverpool community, but maintaining a financially viable career has been a challenge. Sabrina had never applied to ACE for funding and had no knowledge of the possibilities of the funded dance sector. In the past 2 years she has been focusing on developing and deepening understanding of world dance styles and how it is a tool for engaging with young dancers and communities.

During the programme Sabrina worked with Hakeem Onibudo (Impact Dance) as a mentor and Ella Mesma as a coach. She maintains her relationship with Hakeem and there are plans for the two to work together in the future, including through Sabrina's ACE Project Grant project.

Sabrina submitted her first ACE Project Grant in March 2022. Sabrina's application is to create and deliver a high quality, fun fusion street dance and world dance workshop series for children aged 6-12 and 12-17 in the Toxteth area of Liverpool. As well as providing exercise and cultural activity, the project will help to generate cultural understanding and acceptance and promote diversity. She will also be continuing her choreographic development with mentor Hakeem Onibudo.

"My biggest achievement was to express my views and experiences on an artist's panel speaking to representatives of the dance sector." Sabrina reflecting on the programme and her involvement in the Spread your Wings conversation.

Xiaowei Lu

"I have gained so much from the programme – the experience, information, support, mentoring, coaching and contacts [were] really supportive. [I had] freedom to do what is important to me."

A female artist from the East Asian diaspora with a Chinese dance background who has studied both classical and ethnic forms. Xiaowei graduated in 2021 with a Masters in Creative Dance Education, from Salford University in which she focused on Chinese dance education in the UK at University level.

Xiaowei set up Arts of China dance company in 2011, which aims to teach Chinese dance classes, produce Chinese dance events and performances. The company is based in Manchester, Xiaowei is a director working with a pool of international freelancers who lead in different forms of dance – musical theatre, and ballet. She is scheduled to start PhD Intercultural Dance at Salford University in May 2022.

During Wildfire Rising Xiaowei reflected that she particularly benefited from coaching, mentoring and developing sector connections.

"The mentoring developed my connections in the sector and made me realise and provide direction for a clear pathway for my research questions." Xiaowei is continuing to work with her mentor Christopher Bannerman post mentoring agreement.

Xiaowei aims to submit her ACE Project Grant application in April 2022. She is applying for a short Research and Development project exploring the connection between Chinese and contemporary dance styles and ultimately intends to use this research and discoveries as a springboard to address the wider topic of collaboration between Chinese and Western cultures. Through Wildfire Rising she has made connections with the Lowry CAT scheme and also met with Eckhard Thiemann – Programming Associate in Dance at The Lowry. They have offered her studio space in exchange for the CAT workshops.

Addae G

Addae is from the African Diaspora and is deeply rooted in the Caribbean community in Liverpool. His work crosses dance, theatre and written and spoken word. Through Wildfire Rising he articulated a project exploring dances and rituals from the Caribbean community and the connections to other migrant communities.

Addae reflected that he benefited most from the programme when there was more freedom in how to connect with collaborators and use the mentoring/coaching budget. He highlighted the importance of 'meeting the artists where they're at' and supporting them there.

Through signposting from the programme, Addae attended one of the ACE Diversity Development advice sessions and has since been contacted to say they felt his project was well suited to a Project Grant and will offer support in developing his application/idea. We continue to support Addae and he is making lots of new connections with collaborators.

Recommendations for Future Development:

Inc Arts Consultant Rachel Gnagniko conducted an evaluation of the programme on behalf of Movema. This evaluation provided the following recommendations:

- Offering more opportunities to exchange knowledge and skills and to collaborate in showcasing skills, creative practice, and creative inspiration inside and outside the programme.
- Understanding who the individuals are and how their intersections meet
- Valuing collaborative projects between participants
- Creating more projects and networking opportunities where participants can showcase their work and make professional connections
- Discussing socio-economic background, learning and communication styles and preferences with participants from the start
- Allowing more flexibility in participants' use of their budget so it reflects their particular needs
- Giving more opportunity for planning activity at the beginning of the programme
- Letting go of the assumption that all participants will need a coach/mentor to achieve their particular development goals.
- Taking more time to acknowledge diversity of need by creating a more structured initial needs-assessment phase and being flexible enough to respond to the particular needs of each individual

The recommendations above came from Inc Art's evaluation of the programme and facilitated conversations with the three Wildfire Rising Artists. We have ensured these recommendations are responded to within the development and design of Wildfire Rising Year 2. They have been taken alongside additional feedback from the artists which highlighted the importance of:

- Being paid for their development time so that they can invest in their own development
- Flexibility in how they use development and financial support to ensure it truly supports their artistic practice and development
- Bespoke, regular support for realising projects and closing skills gaps
- Making connections with other artists, organisations and mentors within the dance sector
- Caring for artists holistically, acknowledging their circumstances, barriers they face and racial and other trauma they may have experienced