

DYDC
DUBLIN YOUTH DANCE COMPANY



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STRATEGY 2019 – 2021

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Dublin Youth Dance Company (DYDC) was initiated in 2000 through the collective ambition of the professional dance sector to create high-level opportunities for young people to train, perform and create contemporary dance.

FOREWORD

In the nineteen years since, the achievements of this pioneering organisation have been remarkable. DYDC has expanded from a representation of some 15 young dancers to incorporate two companies reaching 50 members between the ages of 12 and 25. In the early days of its journey DYDC established the Irish Youth Dance Festival, which now offers an annual platform to showcase and celebrate youth dance and creative exchange on our city's stages. The company has brokered valuable partnerships with affiliates and contemporaries at home and abroad, opening up pathways for international collaboration and shared learning. Recent years have also witnessed the emergence of a network of DYDC alumni whose own professional practice extends the reach and amplifies the impact of the organisation within and beyond Ireland.

These extraordinary accomplishments have only been possible through the belief and dedicated partnership-working of DYDC's funders, supporters and stakeholders. In particular I would like to acknowledge our principal funder, the Arts Council, whose guidance and leadership has been instrumental in shaping the plan for DYDC's development over the next three years. I would also like to sincerely thank our funder, dlr County Council and our supporters, Dance Ireland and Dance Theatre of Ireland's Centre for Dance, whose partnership has integral to our ongoing programming and development.

The publication of this new Strategy affords me the opportunity to acknowledge JJ Formento, whose initiative and visionary leadership laid the first foundations for

DYDC, supported by Loretta Yurick, Robert Conor and Dance Theatre of Ireland. I would also like to recognise the deep commitment of my fellow board members for their work in championing the vision of DYDC and advancing the youth dance movement in Ireland. Of course, at the helm of the company's work is Artistic Director, Mariam Ribon, whose artistic ambition and tireless drive for quality, creativity and change have been key to DYDC's success.

Through the development of this new Strategy the board and executive of DYDC have had the opportunity to review our current context, re-articulate our mission and values, and consider the areas of strategic priority in which we might focus our substantial energy between the years 2019 and 2021. Central to this work are the steps we must take to safeguard our sustainability. Over the next three years we intend to work hard to bolster our governance structures, nurture existing partnerships and identify opportunities for new linkages that will support our ambitions and help us realise our goals. These efforts will be paramount to securing our future and ensuring that the investment of our funders and donors has a long-term and meaningful impact.

In presenting this document it is important to recognise the significant contribution of our outstanding young members, whose candid voices and considered ideas have influenced the development of this Strategy and helped us consider how DYDC might grow and innovate into the future. As we embark on this new phase of strategic development, I look forward to being continually challenged by their imagination, emboldened by their tenacity and commitment to refining their craft, and inspired by the joy, confidence and creativity that they discover and re-discover through their participation in dance.

Robert Freese Chair

INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to introduce this new Strategy for DYDC, which sets out our shared vision and direction for the years 2019 – 2021.

Since its inception, DYDC has positioned itself at an important intersection with the professional dance community. We have forged strong relationships with world class artists and choreographers at home and overseas so that our young people can stretch the boundaries of their own experience and enjoy being challenged by fresh practice and perspectives. We have built a reputation for commitment, integrity and quality among our valuable network of partners in festivals, venues and dance companies in Ireland. This has allowed us to extend our reach to new audiences and participants, to share the extraordinary skill and creativity of our members and to show, first-hand, the transformative power of dance for young people.

For DYDC, our values are our guiding principles. We aspire to be artistically ambitious, striving for excellence in everything we do. We also value the developmental process and encourage exploration, seeking to imbue our members with the confidence to try and the resilience to try again. We believe in the strength of community, shared understanding and mutual respect which, in turn, creates the conditions in which to nurture individuality and self-expression fully and freely. That young people are at the heart of all our work, informing, guiding and co-creating, ensures our constancy and relevance.

For almost two decades now our company has been working determinedly to create exceptional experiences in dance for young people in Dublin. During this time we have witnessed a welcome shift in understanding of the need to support young people's holistic development, including through encouraging their active and engaged participation in society and, increasingly, in

creative and cultural life. Policy, backed by research, has recognised and articulated the multitude of potential benefits arising from children and young people's early and sustained engagement in the arts. Plans have been published to promote and resource the infrastructure and organisations that make those experiences available, accessible and inclusive.

Encouraged by the Arts Council, DYDC has developed this Strategy as a way to embed and advance those policies and plans within the sphere of youth dance in Ireland.

This is an important moment for DYDC. We have an opportunity over the lifetime of this Strategy to affirm our role as a leader and pioneer in the progression and development of contemporary youth dance in Ireland. We will achieve this through our practice, but also by raising our profile, championing our work and that of our colleagues. We will open the door to dance for those beyond our existing community who may not otherwise have the choice or chance to participate. We will also continue to work in a focussed way with the members of our companies to equip them with the lived experience and technical ability they will need to grow as professionals and as people. We will serve as a co-connector and commit to being a strong partner for those organisations and companies whose values reflect our own. Together, our reach, impact and effectiveness can extend farther and deeper than if we act alone.

As Artistic Director, I am energised by the challenges, opportunities and possibilities that these responsibilities present. I look forward to collaborating closely with our funders, partners, board members and our wonderful young dancers to reach for and far beyond our collective goals, experiencing with each step of our shared journey the joy of living confidently and creatively through dance.

Mariam Ribón Artistic Director

CONTEXT

The years leading up to the development of this new Strategy for DYDC have signalled significant change and opportunity, not least for those cultural organisations in Ireland dedicated to creating high quality creative experiences with, by and for young people.

Substantive policy developments have emerged, including the all-of-government 'Creative Youth' Plan 2017, the National Policy Framework for young people, 'Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures' 2014-2020, and Ireland's first cultural framework policy, 'Culture 2025'. Across this policy there is a common recognition of the value of developing creativity in our society and economy, and the pivotal role of the arts in this regard. It affirms that participation in cultural and creative activity fosters individual, community and national wellbeing and supports young people to reach their full potential. The goals and objectives outlined in this Strategy have been informed and encouraged by this changed policy context.

In 2017 DYDC engaged in a Strategic Funding partnership with the Arts Council to support delivery of its policy priorities. This includes the stated objective in the Arts Council's Strategy, 'Making Great Art Work' 2016-2025, to 'Plan and provide for children and young people'. In creating this Strategy, DYDC has closely considered its partnership role and its fit with the Arts Council's objectives.

As of 2019, DYDC is operating in a country where almost a third of the population is under the age of 25 – the youngest population in Europe. At the same time, new ways of learning, working and communicating are quickly and fundamentally changing the environment for which we are readying and nurturing our next generation. This Strategy responds to and recognises the need to support young people to adapt and flourish within this changed landscape, by enabling them to think and act creatively.

SWOT ANALYSIS

To understand and articulate how it might achieve its mission optimally and effectively, DYDC has considered its organisational strengths, areas of strategic opportunity and scope for development within this context.

Strengths

- > Embodies the highest standards of practise and integrity of process
- > Provides excellent programme and performance opportunities
- > Holds national and international connections in dance
- > Benefits from valuable industry partnerships
- > Highly regarded by its loyal and committed members, Board and Executive
- > Viewed as a model of best practice
- > Well-managed on scarce resources by a dedicated and ambitious Artistic Director

Weaknesses

- > Limited personnel and financial resources
- > Heavy reliance on the Artistic Director and a small number of funders
- > Limited expertise and resources for fundraising
- > Limited public awareness and brand recognition

Opportunities

- > Potential to grow strategic partnership with the Arts Council
- > Positioned to take on a leadership and representative role for youth dance in Ireland
- > Scope to build creative partnerships within new community and education contexts
- > Potential to initiate new partnerships with local authorities in Dublin and other organisations
- > Strategic fit with Creative Ireland's 'Creative Youth' proposition
- > Capacity to extend organisational competencies and expertise through board renewal

Threats

- > Reduction in principal funding allocation, given the narrow funder pool
- > Overlong process or unexploited opportunity for board development and renewal
- > Failure to promote DYDC's relevance and value

The priorities set out in this document respond to the needs and opportunities we perceive in the context in which this Strategy will be delivered. There is a role for leadership in youth dance in Ireland that DYDC is poised to embrace. Through partnership, we will raise the profile of dance in the discourse of culture and creativity. We will nurture exceptional young dancers, but we will equally commit to cultivating all our members' confidence, creativity and wellbeing. We will attend to our future sustainability by aligning ourselves with the movement to champion and advocate for creativity in all young people's lives.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We have determined four areas of work that we will focus on over the course of the next three years. By concentrating on these areas, which we call our strategic priorities, we hope to realise our mission and vision.

Leadership	Advance youth dance through practice, community engagement and influence
Nurture	Create the opportunities and conditions for talented young people to develop as dancers and as people
Partnership	Forge the relationships that support our ambitions and progress youth dance in Ireland
Sustainability	Develop the capacity and resources to ensure our future as the leading youth dance company in Ireland



LEADERSHIP

Goal

Advance youth dance through practice, community engagement and influence

Objectives

- > To be a voice for youth dance in Ireland
- > To advocate for and enable opportunities for young people to dance
- > To deliver a programme of work including an annual youth dance festival and national events that fulfill our mission and influence the development of the youth dance sector
- > To be a model of best practice and serve as a support and connector for other youth dance companies

Outcomes

What will success look like?

- > We will have raised the profile of youth dance in Ireland and have ensured that youth dance is represented in any forum concerning the arts and young people
- > We will have contributed to the increase of the provision of youth dance opportunities nationally
- > We will have delivered a programme of work that is regarded as the exemplar of good practice, has engaged at a local, national and international level and which has progressed youth dance in Ireland
- > We will be recognised for our role in supporting the development of other youth dance companies and for creating an empowering nexus

NURTURE

Goal

Create the opportunities and conditions for talented young people to develop as dancers and as people

Objectives

- > To provide an ongoing programme for young people to develop their talent and ability in dance to a very high level
- > To challenge young dancers to aim for a professional standard of work and give them the opportunity to work with established professional choreographers
- > To introduce dance as an expression of creativity to children and young people who may not otherwise experience it

Outcomes

What will success look like?

- > We will have given a generation of young dancers the skills, technical ability and confidence to perform at a high level, with some equipped to consider dance as a career
- > We will have created exceptional experiences for young people in dance
- > We will have created and delivered projects in community and schools settings that have engaged children and young people who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to dance

PARTNERSHIP

Goal

Forge the relationships that support our ambitions and progress youth dance in Ireland

Objectives

- > To work with institutions, agencies and those in the dance sector to create clear, well-resourced development pathways to enable young dancers to progress from participation to professional training and a career in dance
- > To identify and build long-term relationships with key partners who support and amplify the work of DYDC
- > To sustain and deepen the relationship we have with our core funders including the Arts Council and local authorities

Outcomes

What will success look like?

- > We will have established relationships with the relevant dance education and professional development bodies and have a cohort of dancers who have transitioned with ease from practitioner to professional
- > We will have amplified the DYDC brand and expanded the reach and impact of our programme through working closely with a number of like-minded partner organisations in Dublin, around Ireland and internationally
- > We will have secured Strategic Funding from the Arts Council and be in receipt of regular funding from local authorities at a higher level

SUSTAINABILITY

Goal

Develop the capacity and resources to ensure our future as the leading youth dance company in Ireland

Objectives

- > To institute the founding ethos of DYDC
- > To renew and strengthen our board ensuring that we have the appropriate competencies and experience to deliver on our ambition and adhere to best practice in corporate governance
- > To review and strengthen the DYDC brand to better reflect its leading position in youth dance in Ireland
- > To enhance our communications on- and off-line
- > To expand and diversify income streams
- > To build the organisation's capacity through creating a full-time executive and attending to professional development

Outcomes

What will success look like?

- > The founding ethos of DYDC will be sustained and alive in the company through the animation of our values and attention to the compass of our vision, mission and purpose
- > Our board will be actively contributing to our success through its expertise, experience, connections and committed, supportive engagement with the company
- > DYDC will be recognised as the leading youth dance company in Ireland with a distinctive, contemporary identity and suite of visual communication material that advances the reputation of youth dance in Ireland
- > We will have raised the awareness of DYDC and be engaging a broad public, particularly young people, in and beyond the dance community
- > We will have doubled our revenue through securing funding from statutory and non- statutory sources
- > We will have a full-time Artistic Director, part-time administrator and part-time dance Engagement Officer who are supported by exemplary HR practices and professional development training



APPENDIX: CONSULTATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The genesis of this Strategy stems from an extensive period of consultation and development, undertaken to create a shared vision and set a direction for DYDC that would affirm and strengthen its strategic position in the context of dance and arts provision for young people.

During a robust consultation process, 12 interviews were conducted with board members, funders, key external stakeholders and with DYDC's Artistic Director. Two focus groups were held with DYDC members. The Strategy was also informed by desk research, looking at comparable companies at home and abroad as well as at the strategic development of youth arts organisations in Ireland and internationally.

The consultation aimed to gather information and insights to guide the direction and focus of DYDC. It sought to

explore people's experience of and attitudes towards DYDC, to assess what's working well and what may need to be strengthened in the future. It also aimed to identify potential opportunities and challenges over the coming years and, ultimately, to consider DYDC's strategic priorities and future emphasis.

The input and ideas of all interviewees and the participation of the young dancers of DYDC have been invaluable in shaping this roadmap, which will chart the future direction of the company over the next three years.

This Strategy will be supported by an annual Implementation Plan to set out key actions pertaining to the objectives in this document, for the years 2019-2021.

