



## BDE 2010: The Curatorial Approach

by David Massingham, Artistic Director

British Dance Edition 2010 is a curated programme of performances, events, presentations and debates, brought together to showcase the British dance scene in a snapshot of an ever-expanding industry. It is a truly exciting time to be part of dance in this country and we should celebrate our achievements.

At the heart of BDE 2010 is a selection of performances that, for me, encapsulate the artistic drive of our British dance scene, bringing talent from three different countries. As ever, there is a range of work on offer and I would like to share with you the rationale behind the choices made.

The central guiding principle for BDE selection remains in place: performance work must be available to tour so that presenters can be assured they are able to book what they see – and work must of course be available to be presented at the given time within the allocated budget. But beyond that, we wanted this BDE to foster and facilitate new relationships with artists.

Over 200 artists expressed an interest in being part of BDE 2010, with 255 works – and we have also explored further to find more, in order to shape a dynamic programme that embraces established artists and companies as well as new talents. There have been many changes and shifts in the run-up to BDE. My team and I are now committed to the selected line-up of work for this BDE, which strives to celebrate work of quality, staged in the spaces most suited to it.

We have enjoyed a period of growth in the dance industry which, if anything, is accelerating. This is not just about artists making work and venues showing it; there are many companies, projects and organisations that perform a myriad of functions whose aims are not necessarily artistic excellence alone – even though artistry is a vital element of their work.

With such a mature dance industry, there comes a danger that we become complacent in the assumption that quality is assured simply by virtue of the funding resource available and the valuable support this affords to artists, through different organisations and networks, and through the magnificent dance houses and theatres in which we present. At this BDE, we will be debating the work on show in **The Morning After Sessions**, which I hope will stimulate a more rigorous dialogue between artists and presenters.

BDE 2010 attempts to highlight a range of work that may be new to many promoters, both UK and international. Although there are familiar names, many of these artists have either never performed at BDE, or have rarely featured.

It has been said that British dance has, in the past, been characterised as being about steps, not concepts. So, in this BDE, there has been a desire to programme work that is underpinned by a conceptual idea or a line of investigation that makes the dance more tangible to the viewer. Alongside this, we recognise that the British dance industry boasts some of the best dancers in the world – and we wanted them to be here, dancing their hearts out!

This BDE acknowledges the long period that sometimes intervenes between a presenter seeing an artist's work for the first time and then choosing to work with them. For that reason, I have instigated many opportunities for delegates to become involved with the artists themselves. As part of this, BDE 2010 is expanding the strand of **Works In Progress**, to provide greater opportunity to see work in its initial phases and become part of the process in bringing it to the stage – and, for the first time ever, British Dance Edition will be also funding new choreographic research projects.

**The BDE Research Project** allows this British Dance Edition to take an active, directorial role in the development of the dance sector, creating choreographic research and sharing the findings throughout the coming year. This may also lead to the first-ever work to be initiated and evolved by one BDE and shown at the

next (London 2012). As such, the BDE Research Project helps steer British Dance Edition away from being a supermarket of shows and positions the event as a developmental model.

Britain is home to companies of all scales who work across a diversity of styles and forms, and we have fostered many ways to show work. There has been a definite growth in the number of dance performances that, rather than being produced for traditional spaces, are being developed with unusual places and spaces in mind. Interrogating the importance of site in dance – asking, where should dance be performed or indeed where can it be performed? – BDE 2010 takes a tour of **Location Based Dance** in rehearsal spaces, an industrial warehouse, and even the impressive Birmingham City Council Chamber; as well as exploring installation-based work.

With the event itself now so well established, I also wanted to re-shape the journey for the delegate; to make it possible to find patterns in the flow from one artistic experience to another. Here, I define an artistic experience as being as much to do with the work seen in performance as the context in which it is presented or the debate that surrounds it. With this in mind, I have tried to find ways for delegates to get to know the artists more easily, so, there are fewer artists presented in this edition, thereby freeing up space for more productive dialogue between artists and promoters.

For many years I have been involved with the development of the role of producer. The Jerwood Foundation funded two major projects with DanceXchange (The Jerwood Changing Stages Choreolab 1 and 2) that have not only been effective in stimulating the production of a greater range of dance for the middle scale, but have also taken me on a journey of experience in the role of producer. This has led me to include several producer-led full evening shows for the first time at BDE. These evenings all feature work by different artists and, with one exception, are defined by themes. They're also for all scales and targeted at different audiences. This way of presenting dance proves that our industry is on the move. In addition to this, we have programmed several other individual shows that have been produced in association with the major dance houses, as well as a string of performances with producers working alongside artists.

National Dance Network, along with other organisations, has been debating the development of **Work for Children and Families**. By including a defined children's work strand, this BDE asks the question: what is quality work for children and families? The debate has also questioned whether enough international delegates are interested in this growing part of our sector. This strand of work has been programmed across BDE, to open up the experience to as many delegates as possible.

In developing BDE 2010 I have acknowledged the need for a coherent digital offering. The **BDE website** is an interactive service designed to improve communication and connection with delegates, and to allow access to our event from across the globe, for those who can't attend in person. We have a truly global dance industry and networks that go with it – our website will enhance this and provide BDE with an ongoing legacy to be handed to the London Consortium in the intervening years.

I want this BDE to give us insight into the expanding British dance industry, the artistic work that is its character and personality, and those who define it by shaping it and making it happen. I have worked with my colleagues, Paul Burns and Hannah Sharpe, to find new work and to offer a fresh perspective – and I hope that for many delegates, there will be much to discover here.

David Massingham  
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