

TRINITY LABAN CONSERVATOIRE OF MUSIC & DANCE

Addressing the Dynamic: The needs of artists and arts managers in participatory arts projects

Lead Partner:

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (Learning and Participation teams – Music and Dance)

Trinity Laban is the only Conservatoire of Music and Dance in the UK and earlier in 2013 was hailed as a best practice Higher Education Institute by the Office of Fair Access due to its diverse participatory outreach programme. Trinity Laban has an innovative Learning and Participation team that devise and deliver a range of music and dance participatory projects. It also hosts two Centers of Advanced Training - Junior Trinity (music) and CAT (dance).

In 2011-12, a total of 16,298 people sang, danced, played, created or performed in live music and dance activities as part of Trinity Laban's Learning & Participation programmes. Of these, over 7,500 were children or young people and 380 were adults aged 60+, exploring the benefits to health and wellbeing of music and dance for those in the third age. Over 100 teachers, community workers and arts professionals received training or Continuing Professional Development.

Lead Project Manager:

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Proposal

In April 2013, ArtWorks London provided a small grant to Trinity Laban's Learning and Participation teams to coordinate and deliver a symposium in partnership with the Older People's Arts Network. The symposium explored ways of supporting and nurturing artists to develop creative practice in participatory settings with older people.

Building on the successful facilitation of this symposium and following on from the ArtWorks London case study report on best practice taking place within organisations delivering training and CPD for artists working in participatory settings, our dance and music Learning and Participation teams will be coordinating another enquiry-based research project. This project will focus specifically on the role and skills of arts project managers, aiming to tease out answers around what management skills are needed to facilitate positive relationships with freelance participatory artists, ensuring high quality participatory arts delivery.

Research question:

What skills do managers need and what do artists want from managers to ensure the facilitation of high quality participatory arts projects?

Subsidiary questions:

- What training and CPD should project managers undertake to ensure they are supporting artists effectively?
- What areas of knowledge do project managers need in terms of participatory practice and/or pedagogy to ensure high quality delivery of participatory arts projects?
- How do project managers establish and maintain effective relationships with participatory artists?
- What constitutes effective line management for participatory artists working on arts projects?

Model and Methodology

We will use the funding available to bring together 15 mid-career project managers to discuss the research question outlined above. These managers will be recruited according to the following criteria:

- They regularly recruit and manage freelance participatory artists to deliver education/learning/participatory projects.
- **Ideally** not responsible for strategic organisational decisions or line-managing staff although this is not an **essential** criteria as we understand that organisations are structured in many different ways.
- They must represent a range of cross-art forms, sectors and participatory settings. (Dance, music, visual arts, cinema, theatre, design, literature and media)

Trinity Laban understands that smaller organisations may find it challenging to release a project manager to participate in this project due to limited time and resources. Two hardship funds to support smaller organisation's participation will therefore be made available.

The project will also bring together ten cross-arts freelance participatory artists who are working in a range of contexts and settings at different stages of their career, to separately discuss the same research question. These artists must have experience of being commissioned/recruited by a manager to deliver participatory work. The artists will be offered a payment of £75 for committing their time (1/2 day) to this research based project.

An experienced external facilitator will be paid to lead the discussions and will have responsibility for collating and reviewing the learning into a comprehensive report that will be disseminated to the wider sector.

This project will allow partners from across London to discuss a key research question, aiming to share learning and best practice. The project will develop a better understanding of how arts managers can better support the CPD needs of their freelance workforce and contribute to strengthening the infrastructure for artists working in participatory settings.

Rationale

This is an innovative proposal that builds on and enriches previous research carried out by ArtWorks. The focus on arts managers and their CPD needs in facilitating effective relationships with freelance participatory artists is an area which has yet to be explored but is a crucial factor in ensuring the quality of participatory arts projects. Too often projects break down or are less successful because the expectations of managers and artists have not been adequately managed.

Formal research and informal discussion by Trinity Laban with freelancers suggests participatory artists can feel professionally isolated¹ and have difficulty recognising their CPD needs². Often they can feel disconnected from the organisation they are working for and the strategic aims of the projects that they are delivering. It can be difficult for them to understand the wider context of the commission as projects are frequently set up and developed by organisations before the appointment of the artists who deliver them. Sometimes, artists may not be offered (and cannot ask for) sufficient support from the organisations that employ them due to the nature of the recruitment process and their relationship with the management team.

Anecdotal evidence collected through consultation with various project managers has highlighted that they can feel uncertain about how best to build proactive relationships with their freelance participatory artists. Many project managers have developed their skills 'on the job' and the need for skills in effective line management of freelance participatory artists is often overlooked. The facilitation of a strong relationship

¹ This was also recognised as a challenge at the ArtWorks London HE Seminar held on 18 March 2013 at The Barbican.

² In a local CPD survey carried out by Trinity Laban Learning and Participation team, 25% of the participatory artists asked claimed they were unsure what their development needs were: Annie Sheen, CPD Review, Trinity Laban on behalf of Lewisham Music Hub, January 2013, p.24

with participatory artists in often tight timescales can be a significant challenge for project managers who may find it difficult to critique and offer feedback to participatory artists in a supportive way. Therefore, project managers can find it challenging to control the quality and success of participatory projects, particularly when problems arise.

*'I have been working with freelance artists in a range of music and dance projects for 5 years. Without any kind of formal line management review process for freelance practitioners within our institution, I have found it challenging to offer the appropriate constructive feedback, support and advice which are required to ensure the continued quality of our programmes. I would welcome the opportunity to work with practitioners to discover what support they feel necessary and to work with other project managers to establish the best approaches to supporting them.'*³

If organisations can have better understanding of the skills arts managers need to fully support their freelance artists, the sector will be able to improve the support offered to freelance artists and enable stronger collaboration and partnership.

We consider that the learning carried out in this project will have impact on the quality of the projects delivered by the partners involved, but will also raise awareness of the professional development needs of all arts managers coordinating participatory arts projects nationally.

Outcomes:

- Better understanding of what is most effective when facilitating professional relationships between project managers and participatory artists.
- Increased professionalisation and confidence of arts managers involved, particularly in supporting artists delivering participatory work.
- Raised awareness of the impact that effective relationships and line-management can have on the quality of project delivery.
- Development and sharing of effective CPD models of good practice for how managers can best support the needs of freelance artists.
- A series of recommendations for the sector, detailing the support and skills needed for effective arts management.
- More shared learning of best practice across art forms.
- An improvement in the way that freelance artists delivering participatory arts projects are managed and supported by project managers.
- Recommendations and shared learning on how project managers can shape project infrastructure, offering new ways of working with participatory artists.

Time-Scale

June-September 2013	Recruitment of participants and facilitator
Monday 23 September, 10.00am - 5.00pm King Charles Court, The Old Royal Naval College Room 2.42, G.48 & 328	Full day with 15 project managers and facilitator
Friday 27 September 2013 9.30am - 1.30pm Laban Building Glass Meeting Room & Conference Rooms 1 & 2	Half day with 10 artists and facilitator
October 2013	Collation of initial learning into summary document by facilitator

³ Helen Hendry, Projects Manager at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, May 2013

Wednesday 6 November 2013, 10.00am - 5.00pm Laban Building Glass Meeting Room & Conference Rooms 1 & 2	Second full day with project managers and facilitator to discuss initial findings and develop recommendations
End November 2013	Final report published and disseminated