

Dance activities 1998-2015

Compiled by Tom Bacciarelli, September 2015

Dance has established itself from being non-existent in the school prior to 1998 to being a significant feature of the wider life of the school. Supported by funding from Edinburgh Council with advice from Dance Base after approaches from Mr Bacciarelli, a dance week was organised in June 1998 offering sample sessions in street dance and creating a performance. This generated interest in dance activity and led to the formation of a dance group in August 1998 (numbering about 11) with regular weekly sessions straight after school every Tuesday lasting an hour. Interest grew gradually and, as the initial group progressed through the school, demand to participate grew from younger pupils and 2 groups were formed. Numbers increased as regular shows (usually 2 times a session but sometimes 3) provided opportunities to perform. This created a cycle of engagement that led to continued increase in uptake and to greater range in the types of dance offered. We were lucky to employ the services of a dance teacher with a strong educational background and to get Lottery Funding for 5 years. This enabled a range of projects to run as well as ensuring greater provision of classes on a weekly basis. The numbers of dancers, the range of dance styles on offer and opportunities for development in dance have increased as a result.

Now there are regular weekly sessions in a range of styles – growing from 1 class of 11 dancers in S1 in 1998 to 16 classes for all year groups in 2015 involving over 160 pupils, covering jazz/modern, contemporary, commercial, advanced alongside qualification in Higher dance (and previously tap, ballet and musical theatre). In addition classes are run for primary pupils from P1 to P7 on Saturday mornings. In previous years dance was offered as part of the PD programme in S5/6 (allowing mixed groups to form) though it is not offered as an enhanced activity at present.

The successful bid for Lottery Funding over 5 years (submitted and administered by Tom Bacciarelli) enabled a range of activities to take place:

- sample sessions in breakdancing with Random Aspects after school and also in the curriculum
- ballet sessions over 10 week periods
- street dance in the curriculum for a number of 6 week blocks
- additional weekly sessions established in ballet, tap, musical theatre, jazz, contemporary, street – leading to a wider uptake
- choreography for school's performances of We Will Rock You on the Fringe

Throughout this time there have been regular dance shows and opportunities to showcase work in every session (often more than once in the year, combining with other events such as charity shows or whole school events).

To develop enjoyment and knowledge of dance and performance skills there have been regular visits to a range of dance shows and musicals annually, building up an awareness of different dance styles and an engagement with the performing arts.

Each group has a number of Dance Captains who represent the group and who assist with the management of the group. These roles have developed a strong sense of responsibility and commitment as well as giving some leadership experience to pupils. Such an arrangement has developed a strong, positive ethos in the groups.

Alongside the weekly sessions there have been regular opportunities to work with other dance teachers and other dance agencies. Here are some of the activities, projects and workshops that have taken place (many with highly acclaimed dancers and world-renowned companies):

Associations with other companies:

- regular workshops with Scottish Ballet (and talks about aspects of performance – from costumes to health-related issues)
- regular workshops with Rambert Dance (at least one a year)
- several projects with Dancebase to get boys involved with dance (many involving Alan Irvine)
- workshops with Scottish Dance Theatre
- workshops with English National Ballet (including looking at costumes)

- workshops with Union Dance
- workshops with V-Tol Dance Company
- workshops provided by *Dance For All* students
- workshops with *Dance Ihayami* creating a performance piece using Indian Dance
- workshops with breakdancers (for example from *The Breakin' Convention*)
- workshops with *Bounce Dance Theatre* (street and contemporary)
- workshops with touring shows like *We Will Rock You*
- workshop with *Alonso Lines Ballet*

Projects with the Edinburgh International Festival:

- several workshops with Bal Moderne (a Flemish Dance Company)
- **Charles McNeil (world famous American choreographer and dance teacher) working in conjunction with Scottish Ballet, and Scottish Dance Theatre**
- a two day dance residency in September by the *Nrityagram Dance Ensemble* enabling large numbers of pupils to experience a specific form of Indian Dance
- work with *Pacific Northwest Ballet* involving S2 rugby players and S2 dancers
- workshops with Maori dancers (as part of the Festival)
- three workshops by the world-renowned *Deborah Colker Dance Company* from Brazil
- several workshops with David Millepied's *LA Dance Project*

Projects with other groups:

- a project with Curve Foundation and Dancebase exploring a performed dance piece
- Over 70 dancers in S1- S3 taking part in *Get the Hex*, a film commissioned by the Royal Society in London and the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh, which used dance to explore space and the telescopes which observe the universe (the film was screened at the South Bank in London)
- Dancequest – an ambitious project supported by the Prince's Trust involving primary and secondary schools working with Scottish Ballet to create performance pieces with staged in the Festival Theatre
- Dancefest – a project involving Edinburgh secondary schools performing at the Festival Theatre

Other dance events/ activities

- Dancing at the National Museum twice – once to celebrate St Andrew's Day and once to celebrate the Museum prior to its closure for a major refurbishment
- Performing for the elderly residents of Strachan House
- **performing a medley from *Fame* at the Corn Exchange as part of Sky TV's Awards Ceremony**
- **performing in the trailer for Sky TV's *Just Dance* programme**

Such activities enhance the work that goes in the weekly sessions and have raised the quality of dance, developed creativity and receptiveness to new ideas and extended the repertoire of the many pupils who have been involved in the dance programme in the last 17 years. There is no reason why this successful programme cannot continue and develop in the future.

Compilation of Dance articles for Annual Reports, 2007 – 2015

Tom Bacciarelli, September 2015

Annual report: Dance 2006-2007

Dance activities have continued to prosper with over 120 pupils from all year groups participating in weekly after school sessions throughout the year. These dance sessions have enabled dancers to develop technique, fitness and creativity – skills which were evident in the range of routines performed in the *Spring Fling* dance show in March. This show also gave pupils from our cluster primaries a chance to share the stage with our own pupils, giving them a taste of some of the many styles of dance that are on offer at the school. In addition to attending these weekly sessions, pupils had the chance to participate in workshops with Ballet Rambert and a group of senior pupils worked on an extended eight week project with The Curve Foundation, one of Scotland's foremost contemporary dance companies, culminating in a public performance of work at Dancebase in March. Visits to shows like *Chicago* and to performances by companies as diverse as Ballet Rambert, The Curve Foundation and Y Dance gave pupils the chance to enjoy a wide range of different dance styles. The successful bid for a lottery-based grant from the Young People's Fund has provided some security for existing activities and has provided an opportunity to extend dance provision even further over the next four years. Already pupils have had the chance to take part in sessions of ballet for a ten week period and there are plans to offer sessions in street dance and break dance in the coming year. The high commitment and enthusiasm of the pupils is due in part to the efforts of Samantha Baigrie, our dance teacher, whose own creativity and dedication enhances the quality of our provision. Sam also takes an S5 dance group as part of the PD programme. The many pupils who have also committed to participating in the school's Fringe production of *We Will Rock You* this August have had the benefit of Sam's choreography and expertise. With so much publicity about the need for young people to participate in more physical activities, it is worth recording that dance at the school has involved significant numbers on a weekly basis (often even more when rehearsals for shows are underway) and that all participating pupils have developed their fitness, co-ordination, creativity and group skills. As long as pupils continue to give their commitment to after-school dance sessions, then dance provision will remain strong and should continue to develop – a healthy situation all round.

Dance Annual Report – 2007 - 2008

Dance activities continued to thrive in the school throughout the session with over 120 pupils from all year groups taking part in weekly dance sessions and with further groups participating regularly in tap, ballet and breakdancing lessons. All of these sessions took place after school but a large number of pupils in S1, S2 and S3 had the opportunity to experience breakdancing in their PE lessons and these proved very popular. The high standard of dance was demonstrated in a number of high profile performances – the Fringe performance of *We Will Rock You* in August, the Charity Show in December, the *Spring Fling* in April – all of which showcased a wide range of dance styles and involved a large number of pupils. In addition to these events in April nearly 70 dancers performed to an appreciative public audience in the National Museum – dancing in the main hall by the Millennium Clock – as part of the Celebration Party Weekend, part of the activities marking the closure of this section of the museum before its extensive renovation.

Other projects that developed dance skills included workshops for S5/6 pupils in contemporary dance led by The Curve Foundation (one of Scotland's top contemporary dance companies) and workshops for S1 pupils with Rambert Dance, Scottish Ballet and Scottish Dance Theatre. All of these workshops were followed by visits to performances by these companies. Other outings included *Cats*, *The Snowman* and *The Alvin Ailey Company*. Pupils in S4-6 participated in a workshop held by Dance For All whose students performed extracts from *Wicked* for them. Scottish Ballet visited the school on a number of occasions delivering a talk to senior PE classes about conditioning, discussing training and choreography with the S5/6 dance group and visiting S3 pupils in English to discuss aspects of performance.

The enthusiasm of the pupils has been encouraged by very effective teachers – in particular Bilal Oussalam (currently the Scottish Breakdancing champion) and especially Samm Baigrie who continues to develop the skills and interests of pupils. Indeed two of our senior pupils, Katrina Rankin and Hannah Atchison, will study dance next year – a testimony to Samm's ability to nurture and develop talent. We have continued to offer a variety of dance styles and a range of experiences to meet the interests of pupils and to develop their fitness, creativity and enjoyment of dance. With healthy numbers in all year groups there is every chance that dance will continue to flourish next session as well.

Shows 2008-09 – Annual Report

This year pupils have had a large number of opportunities to participate in some high quality performances at the school. The start of session saw another impressive Fringe production put on at the school. Building on last year's success, pupils performed *High School Musical* to large and appreciative audiences. This highly polished show, with a talented cast whose commitment was rewarded by five star performances, put many professional companies to shame with the quality of its production values. The cast and staff involved gave up a massive amount of time – including much of their summer holidays – to ensure that the show met the highest standards. All those involved (including Wiley the bear mascot who nearly stole the show with his cavorting in the finale) deserve to be proud of such an ambitious and successful production.

In December a large cast of singers, musicians and dancers performed in the *Charity Show* over two nights (raising a large sum for Cancer Research as a result). The range and variety of talented acts proved once again that the school has a massive amount of performing talent and that it is fortunate to have the opportunity to display it thanks to the tireless commitment of a small number of staff. This was shown once again in April's *Spring Fling Dance Show*. With over 170 dancers and a large number of singers and musicians, this was one of the biggest as well as one of the most impressive shows that we have put on. With well over 200 pupils performing, including some from our associated primaries, there were packed and appreciative audiences on both nights. Once again, the production values were extremely high and added to the quality of the experience. The many performance opportunities provided this session have enabled a very large proportion of pupils to experience the fulfilment of participating in such activities. The school is fortunate that such a strong performing tradition, catering for large numbers but at the same time developing some outstanding performers, has been established through the dedication of a small group of committed staff.

Dance 2008-09: Annual Report

Dance has continued to flourish this session, building on the success of recent years. Over 120 pupils have participated in dance sessions every week after school, with classes taken by dance teacher Samm Baigrie. As well as classes for each year group involving a range of dance styles, regular sessions in contemporary dance, tap, and musical theatre have extended the dance skills of the many pupils who take part in after school dance. Further sessions to extend dance technique have also proved popular with more committed dancers in S1-3. There have also been regular breakdancing sessions taken by Scottish breakdancing champion Bilal Ousselam and these have catered for a variety of groups – S4 boys from September to February and a mixed group of S1 and S2 dancers in May and June.

In addition to these regular sessions, there have been opportunities to work with other professional groups. A number of S1 and S2 pupils worked with *Dance Ihayami*, a company specialising in Indian dance, and they produced an impressive piece which was performed on St Andrew's Day during a day of celebration in the Museum of Scotland to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the museum's opening. They were accompanied by the tap group, the contemporary dance group and Highland dancer Marliese Perks to provide a varied, colourful and creative programme celebrating Scotland's cultural diversity. Opportunities to work in different dance styles and with different professional companies were provided throughout the year with the Flemish company *Bal Moderne* (associated with the Edinburgh Festival), *Rambert Dance* and *Breakin' Convention* all delivering workshops to groups of enthusiastic participants. The interest in different types of dance was also developed through regular visits to performances throughout the session, with large numbers of pupils attending shows as varied as *Flashdance*, *Mary Poppins*, *Rambert Dance*, *Joseph*, *Cabaret*, *Chicago*, *West Side Story*, *The Pied Piper* (in which second year pupil Susie Faull performed) and *The Breakin' Convention*.

All after school dance groups, as well as the PD group, had a chance to show their skills in December's *Charity Show* as well as in April's *Spring Fling Dance Show*. The quality and variety of dance performances in these shows demonstrated the diversity of talent that exists in the school and the range of dance provision. A number of dance acts also performed locally in June for senior citizens at Strachan House.

Dance continues to provide fitness, creativity and enjoyment for large numbers of pupils – and its popularity is shown by the weekly commitment made by these pupils to after-school activity. The quality of dance skills has risen in recent years, along with participating numbers – thanks to the tireless efforts of

staff involved, particularly Samm Baigrie. There is scope for developing dance involvement even further but even if current levels are maintained, dance can be seen as a significant success story in the school.

Dance 2009-10

The Dance Programme goes from strength to strength with over 150 pupils participating in a vast range of classes every week throughout the session.

Visits to performances have included:

Scottish Ballet (Edinburgh Festival programme - August)

Beauty and the Beast (September)

Scottish Ballet – *Rubies* (September)

Bounce Dance Company - *Insane in the Brain* (October)

Mark Morris Dance Company (November)

We Will Rock You (November)

Peter Pan (December)

The Sound of Music (February)

Northern Ballet - *Wuthering Heights* (March)

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang (April)

Scottish Ballet – *Romeo and Juliet* (May)

Random Dance Company – *Entity* (May)

These visits have involved large numbers of pupils (some from cluster primaries). We have encouraged pupils to experience a wide range of shows to develop their appreciation and enjoyment of dance in particular and performance in general.

Dance workshops have included:

- Charles McNeil (the world famous American choreographer and dance teacher) working in conjunction with Scottish Ballet, and Scottish Dance Theatre as part of an Edinburgh Festival project – over 45 pupils involved (August)
- Bounce Dance Theatre working with over 20 pupils in September exploring how contemporary and street dance can be used to express feelings and to create narrative
- We Will Rock You – two workshops with cast members involving over 50 pupils exploring aspects of musical theatre and learning choreography from the show
- Scottish Ballet: a visit by an education officer to deliver a talk to S1-S3 dancers about performance aspects of ‘Rubies’ and ballet in general.
- Dance has featured prominently in all school performances over the session. However, dancers have also performed in other notable events:
 - Over 60 pupils performed a medley from *Fame* at the Corn Exchange as part of SKY TV’s Awards Ceremony
 - A group of 15 pupils performed in the trailer for Sky TV’s *Just Dance* programme.
 - Over 70 dancers in S1- S3 took part in *Get the Hex*, a film commissioned by the Royal Society in London and the Royal Observatory, which used dance to explore space and the telescopes which observe the universe. Using silver umbrellas to create shapes and to develop dance routines, the dancers developed some creative and ingenious sequences in the film which is to be shown at the South Bank over the summer. The film will be placed on the website of the Royal Observatory and the Royal Society and used on GLOW to showcase the links between sciences and the arts. A screening in school is planned later in the year.

The enthusiasm and commitment of large numbers of pupils is due mainly to Samm Baigrie, who takes most of the weekly sessions and who has developed high quality dance programmes throughout the school. We also note the huge contribution from Mr Bacciarelli, who liaises closely with Samm to co-ordinate the programme.

Dance 2010 - 11

Dance continued to be one of the largest regular after-school activities throughout the session. With a large uptake for weekly sessions in all year groups, an additional dance teacher was required in S1 and S2 to cope with numbers. Classes in Tap, Contemporary Dance and Musical Theatre were also provided alongside sessions for year groups and there were also two Advanced Groups for pupils who wish to develop their dance skills further. Additionally sessions in Hip-Hop and Breakdance, lasting between 4 to 8 weeks, were also provided at several points in the year (with workshop sessions also given to PE classes).

One off workshops with *Alonzo King Lines Ballet* and *the Breakin' Convention* also took place. Many of the sixty dancers celebrated the completion *Get the Hex*, a film exploring astronomy through dance, braved the snowy conditions in December with a screening in school as well as a chance to experience the Royal Observatory's Starlab.

Throughout the year large numbers of pupils attended many dance shows and musicals, experiencing all kinds of dance - from ballet to breakdancing – and developing their appreciation of the performing arts.

In April *The Spring Fling* dance show allowed all 14 dance groups as well as 3 groups from the cluster primaries to showcase their talents. This vibrant and exhilarating display of talent over 3 evenings, involving more than 250 dancers as well as a large number of singers and instrumentalists, was appreciated by packed audiences on all nights. Proof of how much talent exists in the school in the performing arts.

Next session we plan to maintain a similar level of provision as well as offering a qualification in Higher Dance for older pupils. After school dance provision continues to be an inclusive activity as well as one that nurtures and develops talent. Thanks to Bilal Oussilam (Breakdance), Christina Gusthart (Hip-Hop), Peter Twynham (Tap, S1 and Contemporary 1) for their help throughout the session. A particular thanks to Samm Baigrie who continues to encourage and enthuse pupils about dance – making it one of the largest extra-curricular activities in the school.

Dance: Session 2011-12

Dance activities continued to thrive throughout the session with 18 separate dance groups running on a weekly basis, involving nearly 200 pupils. This number does not include the 3 cluster primary groups (covering all age groups) that meet every Saturday throughout the year. The type of dance offered this session included hip-hop, tap, cheerleading, musical theatre, jazz, and contemporary dance whilst Higher Dance was also offered as an after-school class. The enthusiasm and commitment of pupils was encouraged by attendance at shows as various as The Shen Wei Dance Company in the International Festival, 'Legally Blonde', The Breakin' Convention, Matthew Bourne's 'Nutcracker', Danza Contemporanea de Cuba (with the latter two acclaimed companies delivering workshops at the school). In addition, a two day dance residency in September by the Nrityagram Dance Ensemble (who appeared in the International Festival) gave large numbers of pupils an insight into the disciplines of Indian Dance.

Pupils had a chance to showcase their talents in March when over 250 dancers (and over 50 other performers) took part in the Spring Fling Dance Show. Performing over 3 nights to full houses, the dancers showed the range of their talents in an entertaining, energetic and high quality show.

Throughout the year a committed group of dance helpers assisted with Saturday dance classes for the cluster primaries and hard-working dance captains for each dance group ensued that activities ran smoothly through their leadership and commitment.

Plans are already in place to enhance dance experiences further. In addition to developing the weekly dance sessions further there are a number of activities planned including one which involves the school in a prestigious UK wide pilot project (involving the Festival Theatre and The Prince's Foundation) which will include working with Scottish Ballet and performing at the Festival Theatre.

The range of dance offered– and the sheer numbers taking part – testifies to the commitment of the teachers and organisers who provide so many opportunities for our pupils, encouraging them to develop their skills and interests in dance. Thanks to Heather Brown, Lisa Aytoun and Peter Twyman for their commitment and encouragement throughout the year and, in particular, special thanks to Samm Baigrie who has done so much to enable many pupils to develop their enjoyment of dance and to ensure that it continues to make a vibrant contribution to the life of the school.

Dance 2012-13 (Annual Report)

Dance has continued to flourish this session with continued popularity in uptake for weekly classes in a variety of styles, including jazz, contemporary and hip hop. The high participation rate of nearly 200 pupils has been maintained throughout the year, with the commitment and enthusiasm of participants being encouraged by the dance teachers (Peter Twyman, Lisa Aytoun and in particular Samm Baigrie). The quality of dance has continued to improve with sessions for more advanced dancers being offered. The energy and creativity of pupils was celebrated recently in June when the Summer Dance Show took place. This involved well over 250 dancers, including the primary groups that run on Saturday mornings, and a range of musical acts. Performing to full houses over three nights, the talented cast showed the impressive quality and range of dance education in the school.

In addition to weekly classes, pupils participated in a number of workshops that provided a range of dance experiences. In August over 80 pupils took part in three workshops by the world-renowned Deborah Colker Dance Company from Brazil as part of an Edinburgh Festival project and large groups of pupils took part in workshops with Rambert Dance and with Scottish Dance Theatre. These were followed up by visits to see the companies perform. Other theatre visits included *Cats*, Matthew Bourne's *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Snowman*.

Nearly 50 pupils in S1 and S2 took part in the national Dance Quest project that enabled pupils to enjoy sessions of salsa, street dance and percussion as well seeing performances by Batsheva Dance and Scottish Ballet (*Sleeping Beauty*). The project culminated with pupils working with Scottish Ballet in creating pieces which were performed to a large audience in the Festival Theatre on a snowy January night – along with other acts by senior dancers from the school and guest performers from Scottish Ballet. This highly successful project will now be rolled out to other schools in the city. Dance groups also performed in DanceFest, a celebration of creativity as part of the build up to the Commonwealth Games. These many opportunities to see and be involved in performances have given pupils rich experiences of dance.

With further projects already being planned for next session, dance continues to thrive in the school. None of these activities would be possible without the hard work of dance teachers, in particular Samm Baigrie, and of Mr Bacciarelli. The continued success of dance in the school is down to their own energy and commitment.

Dance Annual Report 2013-14

Dance activities continued to flourish throughout the year with extra-curricular weekly sessions running for all year groups in a wide range of dance styles – 17 separate groups within the school as well as 4 primary groups. Pupil assistants, working with younger groups, have continued to develop skills in leadership and responsibility. Higher Dance, run after school, continues to have impressive results. At the start of session several groups took part in workshops with the LA Dance Project who were performing in the Edinburgh Festival. In January the Advanced Group was invited to dance at the Festival Theatre as a guest act in the *Dance Quest* project (run by the Children's Trust and the Festival Theatre), giving an eye-catching and highly praised performance to a large and enthusiastic audience. Throughout the year pupils had the opportunity to see dance performances (Scottish Ballet's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hansel and Gretel*; Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*; *West Side Story*, *The Lion King*). The quality and range of dance in the school, as well as the commitment and engagement of participants, was evident in the recent highly successful *Summer Dance Show* which ran over 3 nights and included over 250 performers.

The vibrant contribution that dance plays in the life of the school is down to the commitment of the teachers as well as the engagement of the pupils. Thanks to Peter Twyman, Lisa Aytoun, Hazel Douglas and Emma Smith for their work and enthusiasm and to Mr Bacciarelli for organising much of the dance programme. In particular, thanks to Samm Baigrie whose commitment to developing dance in the school remains undiminished.

Dance 2014-15

Dance activities continued to thrive throughout the session with weekly classes offered to all abilities and years. There are 15 separate classes run after school, covering Contemporary to Commercial styles and everything in between. The high quality of dance was reflected academically in excellent Higher results and through performances in the Summer Dance Show. This involved 4 primary groups as well as all the current dance groups and testified to the energy and talent of our pupils. In addition to experiencing a variety of performances through trips to Scottish Ballet's *Nutcracker*, *Wicked* and Rambert Dance, groups took part in workshops run by Rambert Dance as well as performing in Dancequest at the Festival Theatre and in the Cluster Dance Show in March. Dance remains one of the largest extra-curricular activities in the school and thanks goes to dance teachers Emma Smith and Peter Twynam and especially to Samm Baigrie, who has continued to develop dance in the school and in the wider community, and to Mr Bacciarelli, who has organised and co-ordinated the programme. The continued success of dance is down to their commitment and enthusiasm - as well as that of the many pupils who experience and benefit from the dance activities.