

Community Arts Project Report

FLUX London Dance Festival

Hayley Wilton

Growing up in London, Ontario I gained an appreciation of the ability for a small city to incorporate arts education and experience, into the local community. I participated in various arts initiatives and start-ups while residing in London, however when the FLUX dance festival began, I was living in Toronto for my undergraduate degree. As I am hopeful that I will call London home again after this year, and eventually teach in the London school board, I have chosen a community arts project that is not only growing in recognition but inspires me to create more opportunities for the dance community in London, when I return.

Initial Research/Findings

Website

Project Description

FLUX is a dance festival in London Ontario that takes place every year on the first weekend of July for three days, where July 2017 will mark the fourth year of operation. This festival showcases both local and national dance companies who perform throughout the city. Many performances take place in non-traditional settings, and incorporate prominent landmarks of the city of London. Most performances take place outside in parks and on roadways. The festival begins with a community dance celebration and a flash mob that participants can learn ahead of time through the Internet or in person. Throughout the next two days, performances are set up around the city that also include workshops for community members, interactive demonstrations, and the opportunity to connect within the dance community.

Project Activities/Mandate

FLUX London Dance Festival presents local and national artists in an annual dance festival showcasing diverse perspectives within contemporary dance. FLUX endeavours to increase awareness and understanding of dance in London through performances, workshops, and community events while developing the infrastructure and leadership to sustain a vibrant local dance community.

Project Goals/Objectives

- Present works that speak to Londoners and develop local dance audiences
- Support and grow opportunities for established and emerging dance artists working in London
- Make contemporary dance accessible for people of all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds
- Be a part of the larger picture of dance presentation in Canada by developing opportunities for touring artists in South Western Ontario
- Create volunteer opportunities for Londoners to support and engage with the local dance community
- Develop partnerships with local businesses and community organizations to establish a firm foundation for dance in London

Personnel

Lacey Smith – Artistic Director

Lacey Smith is the founder and artistic director of Dasein Dance Theatre and School. She completed a BFA (Hons.) in Performance Dance at Ryerson University, where she found her passion for choreography. Soon after graduation, Lacey was selected by Dance Ontario for their Creative Partnership to create her first professional work, Unframed Portraits. In 2008, she created The Gaze for Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal's First National Choreographic Competition, which premiered at L'Agora de la Danse in Montreal. Lacey has had the pleasure of interpreting works by choreographers Robert Desrosiers, Denise Fujiwara, D.A. Hoskins, Andrea Nann and Gerry Trentham. Over the past five years, Lacey has been working with Fujiwara Dance Inventions on the creation of Eunoia and with Pounds Per Square Inch Performance as an associate artist. In London, Lacey has been producing full-evening dance productions since 2007 and is the co-founder and artistic director of FLUX London Dance Festival.

Ruth Douthwright – Associate Artistic Director

Ruth Douthwright is a dance artist, choreographer and teacher with more than 20 years experience on international stages as well as diverse community settings and schools. Ruth is an Axis Syllabus teacher and The Body Braid Movement Educator. Based in London, Ontario, Ruth teaches workshops both locally and internationally and dances with Dasein Dance Theatre.

Organizational Structure

Each year FLUX posts a call for submissions in early September with a deadline for applications in mid November. Performers that are interested in participating are asked to find the festival series that best match their performance needs, and from there, fill out an application form that describes their 'big idea'.

2016 Call for Submissions:

"FLUX London Dance Festival is looking for exciting, original choreography in all dance styles. We will be presenting fun and engaging dance works by dancers of all ages during our third annual festival from July 1st-3rd, 2016. While contemporary themes are preferred, we welcome diversity in applications."

To apply, FLUX requests the following:

1. Completed FLUX Application form
2. Applicant bio and performance history OR Company history and mandate (max. 1 page)
3. Detailed description of proposed dance work (max. 200 words)
4. DVD or web link of performance or rehearsal footage
5. \$20 application fee (email transfer, cheque, or money order)

*Artists are notified of the results of their submissions by mid-January.

The 2016 Submission Opportunities included:

Dance in the Park: Professional companies or independent artists performing original choreography for all ages (10-20 minutes on grass or pavement)

Dance at Home: Professional local artists performing original works in an intimate outdoor

setting (10-15 minutes on grass)

Community Dance Celebration: Local studios, groups, troupes, teams, crews, schools and companies showcasing short, innovative works (3-8 minutes on grass or pavement)

Participants/Clients

Participants are from London and beyond, with a focus on the collaboration of local community members. In a highly competitive city for dance studios, this celebration of dance allows studio members to come together and appreciate their mutual love of dance instead of fighting for enrollment.

Companies/Studios/Artists who performed last year:

- BoucharDanse
- Compania Carmen Romero
- Julia Aplin
- Cara Spooner
- Carley Stastny
- Dasein Dance Theatre
- If and When
- Dance Essence
- Dasein Dance School
- EnPointe Development Inc.
- North London Dance Centre
- Perspective Dance
- Sound in Motion
- Miko Sobreira
- Community Dance Celebration – Flash Mob

Interactive Workshops for Community Members included:

1. An all ages salsa workshop with Miko Sobreira: in Venezuelan style, participants were introduced to salsa in a fresh and fun environment where all ages and levels were welcome. This workshop was delivered to all interested, free of charge.
2. A flamenco workshop with Carmen Romero: Participants learned some of the expressive arm and hand movements to soulful sounds of a Flamenco guitar. Carmen Romero led exercises and explained the historical and cultural relevance of this passionate art form that is Flamenco. This workshop was for those 16 years of age and older, and cost \$20 before the day of, and \$25 at the door.
3. A flash mob: released on the Internet prior to the festival was an instructional video for participants to learn movements ahead of time to join the flash mob at the Community Dance Celebration performances.
4. Each year there is a 'Community Project' included where there is an opportunity for non-dancers to experience and play an active role in one of the dance pieces. No background in dance is necessary, where participants rehearse and perform the work within a span of three days. FLUX 2016's Community Project called for 10-15 volunteer performers, to perform a piece called **Chorus**, at London's Eldon House (One of the most historical and notorious buildings in London).

Chorus, was not a piece created for FLUX but a remount. *Chorus*, explores group dynamics, audience/performer relationships and ideas of individualism and togetherness through improvised scores and pedestrian movement. It has been developed and performed by trained dancers and untrained non-dancers including members of Workman Arts. *Chorus* aims to blend educational experiences with performance presentation by making room for a range of bodies and minds. *Chorus*, was created and choreographed by Cara Spooner, a Toronto-based choreographer working in dance, performance art and theatre. Her work has been presented at The National Arts Centre, Canadian Stage, Magnetic North, World Stage, Summerworks, The Theatre Centre, the Goethe Institut and Stromereien 11. She is the Education & Training Manager at Workman Arts and was born and raised in London, Ontario.

Funding Sources

The three-day festival is run completely by volunteers. Volunteering with FLUX is a great opportunity to experience dance in London's beautiful outdoor spaces while helping support local talent. The volunteers are of all ages, in which the hours can be put towards the Ontario Secondary School community service requirement.

Three volunteer positions are available:

Festival Promoter: In the weeks leading up to the festival, you will work with a partner to distribute festival marketing materials around London. You will introduce people to the FLUX Dance Festival, promote upcoming events, and ask them to share our flyers and posters.

Festival Greeter: As the face of the festival, your responsibilities will include welcoming audiences to the performances, handing out programs, festival guides, helping people locate and travel between performances, and most importantly, collecting donations. We expect you to bring a positive attitude and help with clean-up after the show.

Technical Assistant: You will assist the Sound Technician and Site Coordinator with set up, strike and supervision of any technical equipment. This position requires general technical knowledge and may include heavy lifting.

All funding is provided by sponsors, in which FLUX relies on both local, provincial and federal support. The sponsors for the last two years include: Ontario Arts Council, London Canada, London Arts Council, Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage Program – Department of Canadian Heritage, Goodwill, M7T Printing Group, Shirt for Brains Custom Screen Printing, Little Red Roaster, The London Dance Shoppe, FreshCo, 3M, PA Shop, and Downtown Yoga Holistic Center.

Budget

Performers decide whether their workshops and performances will cost participants and viewers: if the performers decide to charge admission, that money goes directly to them. Most shows and workshops are free, or 'pay-what-you-can'. The festival is completely run by volunteers, and no individual associated with FLUX is given a salary or compensation for their time.

Applications to participate in the annual festival cost \$20; where this money is pooled with the sponsors' donations.

Observation

Attending the FLUX 2016 dance festival was a wonderful experience. It was a beautiful summer day, and the downtown core was surprisingly alive in comparison to a regular sleepy Sunday afternoon. I started at Eldon House, known notoriously by Londoner's as providing some of the densest sources of city history, but also for its reputation for being haunted. The ground that the volunteers (who were both friendly and informative when asked about the other pieces and their exact locations) were herding people to, was a spot on the grass that was already quite full when I sat down. There was no formal seating, but some smart audience members had brought lawn chairs or blankets for their family to sit on. As I waited for the performance to begin, I watched as one family had a picnic and enjoyed talking to the other people around them. There was quite an obvious number of people that were there to cheer on a friend or family member in the dance piece, as they were all very proud and eager to discuss this participant and their company with those willing to engage.

The pieces began at the exact times they were scheduled for, as there was no seats to fill or curtain to hold; and throughout the first five minutes there was still quite a bit of fussing in the crowd for the audience to take a seat, or find a spot that they would be able to see the best. I did find that this was quite distracting, however I am used to the theatre and the etiquette of professional shows. The atmosphere was very relaxed and allowed all ages to feel comfortable in making noise or moving to the music.

The dancing itself was of reasonably high caliber for a local dance studio, and in a setting where I have a hard time not critiquing, I found myself more at ease and less picky of technique. I believe this was one of the best things that the festival provided me with: it was an opportunity to see dance in a fun and light atmosphere, instead of a high stakes performance. I was able to tell that modifications had to be made choreographically in order to serve the space, and insist on the dancers' safety. Very little floor movement, turns or jumps were in the pieces – the styles of all the works I was able to see, tended to be supported heavily by pedestrian movement, eliminating intricate dance technique. The sound was very successful, even when taking into account all the challenges that they would be facing: backing on to a busy street, pedestrian conversation, surrounding businesses and etcetera. The speakers that were being used, were loud enough to drown out the excess noise, but left enough of the natural sounds to embrace the concept of being an outdoor festival.

My day at the festival was very exciting and inspiring, however I did find it a little confusing and a slight trek to get to the different locations that each dance was being held at. They were all within walking distance, however for young children or those who wished to observe for a brief time, could have been discouraged by the commute or lack of suspense and entertainment between acts.

For the most part, the audience was highly engaged and it was a wonderful sight seeing young children watching dancers with a sense of awe as they tried to manipulate their own bodies to copy them. Due to the relaxed nature of the performances, some people stayed for part of the performance, and some people stopped to watch as they walked by. It was amazing to see how intrigued the community could be by witnessing and engaging with dance.

Interview with Performer – Carley Stastny

How did you hear about FLUX dance festival?

I was born and raised in London, Ontario where I studied dance at North London Dance Studio. North London has participated in all FLUX festivals that have been held. After moving to Toronto to complete my BFA in Performance Dance from Ryerson University, I have been doing the occasional performance with The Dasein Dance Theatre that Lacey Smith owns and operates. Through both connections with Lacey and my former studio, I heard of and was encouraged to enter a piece of my own choreography into the festival.

Did you have a piece in mind/remount before the application? Or was your piece created for the festival specifically?

The dance piece that I submitted was an original idea, however I had first thought of entering it into Ryerson's Choreographic Works Show that happens in March. I thought that due to entering this piece into both shows, there would ample time for rehearsal where it would not be left behind in order to pursue other works for school. In the end, after auditions for Choreographic Works, this submission did not make the cut. Because I was passionate about this choreography, I found time for additional rehearsals and together spent about 22 hours creating and rehearsing this piece. The piece was a duet, and explored the relationship between body and soul.

What was your experience with the application form?

The application process was very simple: you fill out a form, that included contact information, the working title of the piece, number of dancers, approximate length of the piece and where you might like to perform the piece in London. I also had to do a description of the piece I was creating, which was about half a page.

Was the staff available for any questions you had leading up to the performance?

I emailed Lacey a few times as we approached the performance date. I had questions about length restrictions, as I tend to let the piece dictate its time rather than cut it off in mid thought. Because of this, I was going over the time allotted (10-20 min). I incorporate a lot of improvisation into my work, and depending on the day or even moment that I rehearse, it could vary by ten minutes. I was also curious about music; how loud would the speakers go, and would there be a way to fade the music out based on when I finished the piece. Lacey was pretty quick to respond, and all communication was done over email. She was firm on the time restraints, and said that a volunteer would be able to fade out the music if requested; as for the volume of music, the speakers could become quite loud, similar to a small theatre space, however as it was near buildings and other operations it could not become a huge inconvenience/distraction.

Were there any limitations to the creative process? For example music/costumes/themes that were not allowed?

At Ryerson, we were encouraged to explore mature themes and modes of expression within our pieces, however as this is outside in a public forum for an audience of all ages, there were certain expectations that were not written but understood. Dance is becoming a useful tool to make political, social, and personal statements, however due to the nature of the festival this would not have been appropriate. I believe it was a silent understanding that our music, costume and themes would be kept 'G' rated.

Was there any alterations made to your original application idea to the final piece?

Yes there was some alterations made to my original idea I made on the application form. As these changes were made, I emailed Lacey notifying her, but I do not think that was necessary in hindsight. My original idea was for six dancers to perform in the piece, but due to the dancers I had available in Toronto, not many were willing to make the commute to London, or stay in London over Canada Day weekend. The other alterations I made to my original choreographic ideas, was based on the location we would be dancing and the limitations this provided. One of my specialties is floor work in a modern/contemporary dance style; however after realizing that we would be dancing on pavement, the idea of floor work especially involving skin to pavement contact was eliminated. This also limited the number of jumps I put into the choreography, to try to save the impact on our knees and back.

Was there an opportunity for a run in the space before the performance?

There was one scheduled rehearsal before the actual performance, but these were very informal as they were all public places where the space could not be rented. Being from London however, I was able to use visits home to gauge the space and try out some movements when there weren't too many people around.

What was your experience with dancing in an outdoor space?

I thought that it was a very important performance for both personal and professional growth. Being an artist, especially one starting out her career, I need to be comfortable in accepting the jobs that come my way. Although this job was not a paying job, it helped me form connections between other artists, and have my work seen. The fact that my piece was able to draw a crowd probably made up of community members that have never seen a dance performance was amazing. Dancing outside provides challenges, especially in an art form that strives to break the boundaries of limitations with our body, and verge on the line of dangerous – outside some of this becomes even more dangerous. Understanding our bodies, and knowing the movements that could pose threats to our safety in an outdoor setting is extremely important. Although I had to make alterations to my original piece to fit the venue, I do not think the integrity of the piece was challenged.

Would you consider participating in FLUX again?

I would definitely participate in FLUX again. The process was well managed, however did not include commutes every weekend, or time commitments other than what I decided was necessary for rehearsals, and then the actual performance weekend. To provide this type of low commitment opportunity for artists to share their work is especially important for artists that are trying to work multiple gigs and jobs. I really loved my experience with FLUX.

Interview with Director – Lacey Smith

What made you think of creating FLUX Dance Festival?

In my fourth year of University at Ryerson, we had to complete a thesis project that revolved around the arts as a business proposal. I chose to do a rough version of FLUX, which looks a lot

different then, the actual thing now. But this was where the idea started, and where my realization that London's dance community needed a way to be brought together.

Did you start this festival by yourself, or was this a co-creation with Ruth?

I originally thought of this festival on my own, but could not have implemented it without Ruth's assistance. I designed the backbone, where Ruth was able to sort out the details and help me with the ins and outs of what it might take. I really couldn't have done it without her.

How did you and Ruth become partners in this endeavor?

Ruth and I have known each other for quite some time, and probably even before we officially met, as we were both raised in the London dance scene. The compatibility of both demeanor and artistic styles really flourished when she started dancing with my company, Dasein Dance Theatre. When I ran my ideas past Ruth, she was fully committed from the start, and thus our partnership grew.

How are the responsibilities delegated between you and Ruth?

I tend to write a lot of the proposals for sponsorships and grants, where Ruth is more the communication tool when it comes to face-to-face interactions with people. For screening and decisions based on the applications for the festival, we like to haul up together for a weekend after the deadline and decide together. Of course, we have some differences when it comes to applications but in the end we end up trying to make the show as diverse as possible.

How many years did this idea formulate before the first festival in 2015?

It took about eight years to officially get started; for the first year of the festival lots of people were on board with the general idea, but the concept of staging a performance that took place in many different locations and outside left a lot of people in doubt of the success. Many people were concerned about weather, seating, the laid back atmosphere, and how we could draw enough people to want to perform let alone enough people to come out and watch.

How did you get all the sponsors on board?

Gaining sponsors and grants were crucial in order for this festival to run. I was willing to spend some of my own money on the project, but was hoping that with sponsors and grants – and performers not being paid, money would not be an issue. That being said, the sponsors were quite eager to help. I approached many local businesses that I thought would be invested in having the dance community come together, or be able to gain advertisement opportunities at the festival. With the three grants we received, and generous donations by sponsors I did not have to supplement from my own funds. This festival doesn't require a big budget either, the space is public property for the most part, and contacting the city of London was enough for us to be able to use it. Volunteers run the festival, where the money goes into sound equipment, refreshments, and helping to subsidize travel for some of the participants.

Did you make any changes from the festival in 2014 and 2015 to the one in 2016? If so, why?

The third festival ran one day shorter than the first two festivals, and we tried to advertise a lot more this past year. However being still fresh into this, we tried not to switch things up drastically – as the first and second festivals went over better than we had hoped. We eliminated one of the days, partially because of the way the holiday fell with the weekend, but also because it seemed like we took on just a bit too much.

How do you advertise for the festival?

Most advertising is done through word of mouth, where the dancers usually bring their own audience members. One of our goals however is to engage the community with dance, and therefore we put up posters around the city, advertise on social media, and put out print advertisements in the news paper.

If you could expand your idea in any way what would you do?

It is my hope that at some point this festival could become a week long, and incorporate many artists from all over Canada. To get to this point, the word has to get out about little London and the festival – but it is my goal.

How many applications do you get each year?

We had approximately thirty applications in our first year, just over that in our second, and closer to fifty last year.

How do you choose which participants will be in the performances?

When we are looking through the applications we try to choose pieces that offer a diverse look into the dance community. We love seeing local talent come out, and we try to make sure that we include as many locals as possible. However, we do want the word to get out about the festival and bring artists from other cities so the show doesn't become a citywide studio recital.

What do you consider your biggest accomplishment throughout this process?

I think one of my big accomplishments by setting this festival up is that I have created opportunities for beginning and established artists in London. So many talented dancers are produced in London, but it is a shame that they must go to a bigger city like Toronto if they want to pursue a professional career. By building up the dance community in London, and starting my own dance company, I hope that London can begin to build facilities to keep local artists working in the city instead of just being a training ground.

Analysis

Website

The FLUX Dance Festival website was extremely easy to navigate, and contained clear information for applicants, participants, and audience members. I was able to find out information about the festivals mandate/goals, which enabled me to feel more connected and thus more invested in the success of the festival. Many websites that I have browsed, specifically for community arts projects, do not advertise the specific goals of the project – and now looking back, it would have been something that I could have easily overlooked when thinking about the

information that this type of a website should provide. FLUX's goals/mandates are fine-tuned, and address the current issues that London has when integrating dance into the community. I appreciate that these goals have been written in an honest way that does not purposefully leave broad statements in order for each participant to find their own meaning.

Having a website dedicated to the FLUX Dance Festival entirely, also added to the frustration free information search. For many of the festivals that London presents, all the information is located on the City of London's website. This information is usually limited to the date, time and location of the event. Although our annual summer festivals do get a lot of attraction even with this limited information online, they have become such a tradition that this is all the information that is needed to attract visitors. Since FLUX is a relatively new idea, and has not had the opportunity to become a long-standing tradition, having a website that clearly describes what participants will be able to experience becomes all the more crucial. FLUX also appears in the domain name of their website, and thus makes the search extremely easy when you enter a Google search.

I appreciated that the website included some screenshots of social media platforms, such as Facebook and twitter posts that commented on the participation or engagement with previous festivals. I thought that this was a very effective way to show positive reviews, without staging positive feedback. By using these responses it also engages the community that lies outside the realm of dance, which is one of the festivals goals. I believe that including some testimonials, especially from dancers who were a part of the festival, on the website, would encourage more applications. On the website it states that the dominant dance form is contemporary based, yet seeing the list of participants from the past few years, it is much more diverse in content. This statement could deter some artists from applying, but if there were statements from past artists such as the ballroom or salsa dancer from last year, more diverse styles of dancers may be more encouraged to apply.

As was noted in both the website and through interviews, volunteers and sponsors are integral to making this festival possible. On the website, these sponsors logos appear in a number of places, however no explanation as to what these companies are or where they are located is provided. From the information I gained from speaking with Lacey, all of the sponsors were local as another emphasis on community partnerships. However, as someone who has grown up in London, I was unable to recognize some of the businesses that were sponsors; because of this, I think it would be beneficial for the sponsors, who help out so much with making this festival a success, to have a link provided on the FLUX website to each sponsors' own website and/or a brief description of their business or initiatives within London.

Another suggestion that could help build the reputation of FLUX, would be to add a picture and/or video gallery of previous festivals to the website. With dance it becomes hard to just rely on verbal descriptions of the pieces presented, and in this case an entire festival. I believe it would positively promote and encourage more participation, if there were videos and pictures that showcased both the dancers and the audience engagement in the past.

Other than these few minor adjustments and recommendations, I would feel confident in using the FLUX Dance Festival website as an exemplar to anyone interested in building their own website to showcase a community arts initiative. My own website would incorporate the same framework that is used for FLUX: the navigation bar allows information to be neatly sorted into topics and headings, thorough information is supplied about the project, its goals, applications and the people who make this festival a success.

Atmosphere

The atmosphere of this festival was what got me excited to be not only a part of the London dance scene, but to be a dancer with the ability to impact people in a way that is exclusive to the arts. In a discipline that is usually plagued with competition and a fake sense of loyalty and community, it showed that it was possible to bring dancers together to celebrate what makes them similar instead of comparing the differences.

By integrating dance into local heritage, historical places, and the urban landscape it was interesting to see how conversations in the audience compared the infrastructure to the dance pieces, even if they were not intended to be related. It was very special to see how bringing the community together to experience dance in a setting that held meaning to most of the audience members, prompted conversations between strangers about the stories of buildings and in a greater sense the community.

Due to all of the venues being located outside, on pavement or grass, some styles of dance had to be edited or eliminated for safety and space requirements. I believe that it would be nice to include an option for some of the pieces to perform inside or even on a working stage flooring outside. I did enjoy being outside, and it definitely created a relaxed atmosphere that stimulated pure enjoyment of the spectacle, but having the option for people to see more refined dances that include some of the movements that make dance so unique and engaging would also be interesting. On this note, I also found that the locations were too far from one another, and discouraged some audience members from seeing more than one dance piece. In the future, once FLUX gains more reputation and can provide space for more artists, it would be nice to see a way of connecting pieces along the path to each big name location.

Being a regular at the theatre, I was at first put off by the relaxed nature of the audience. The audience talked with one another, answered phone calls, left mid way through, or stopped just a second to take everything in before carrying on. However, it did not take me long until I began to appreciate this, as I realized that these people may never have watched a dance piece before, and now they were. When I tuned in, I began to realize that regularly the voices that I would hear would be talking about what they were seeing in the piece: not only was the audience watching dance, but they were talking about it. It was a thrill to realize that this many people, even if only for a second, had been engaged with dance.

Interviews

The interviews with Carley and Lacey were extremely beneficial in allowing me to see the full scope of the festivals inner workings and participant reviews. Talking with Carley, I was able to see what made the festival a success through the eyes of a performer, where Lacey shared key information on how to implement an arts initiative within London.

From the point of view of a performer, Carley seemed genuinely pleased with the process from application through performance. I found it very interesting that she expressed the awareness of an 'unwritten' rule that limited the creative process to a rated 'G' performance. Of course, this makes complete sense when providing a festival for all ages to attend, however the arts have always been a form of communication that allow difficult topics to be addressed in a communal and less threatening environment. Although it is important to hold a festival like FLUX, so that numerous people are willing to attend, I think it is important that if it is our goal to create opportunities for local artists to exhibit their work, no limitations should be placed on their creative process. In a similar way, I do believe that having all of the performances outside created limitations for the dancers, and thus how the audience connected with dance. As Carley

stated, dancing in the outdoor space was a valuable learning experience, but it also limited the variety and dance skills that were shown. I think that it would be interesting to include indoor venues in the future as well as having outdoor performances. By including indoor performances, there would be an opportunity for both an older/more mature audience and the ability to connect with more technically difficult pieces for those who wish to participate in a more authentic dance performance/theatre experience.

If indoor spaces were included, this could also offer a more in depth look into the connection between dance and the city's historical landmarks and buildings. The spaces could still include abnormal performance areas, but have them on a level floor instead of grass or pavement. Within a five-minute walk from some of the most popular locations of last year's festival, are some of the oldest theatres in London that could be included for a more traditional dance experience.

Sitting down and talking with Lacey was very beneficial and helped me to realize that dancers have the ability to engage and connect the community. I appreciated that Lacey was honest with her answers, and exuded resilience. Lacey had been formulating and trying to implement FLUX for eight years before the first festival, and from there she continues to fine tune the experience and take suggestions in order to achieve her goals. It is important that we understand that we are life-long learners, where we should always be searching for feedback and reevaluating goals. Carol Dweck, the creator of the phenomenon, 'Growth Mindset', develops this life-long learning approach into the ideology, that to fulfill our potential in any area of our lives, we must obtain a growth mindset. To create a community arts project with the hope of making positive changes to London's art scene, it is important that I develop a growth mindset: people that are deemed to have a growth mindset, "aren't afraid of making mistakes, are known to go for it, where, people with fixed mindsets on the other hand are afraid of making mistakes, afraid of moving out of their comfort zones." (Morrison, 2016). It is the people with a growth mindset that take risks in order to create change.

I thought it was very important that Lacey and I, talked about how Ruth was incorporated into the project at a later date, as a way to fill the gaps that Lacey did not feel comfortable to fill herself. I believe this is a very important lesson for myself moving forward, as I am extremely hard on myself and feel accomplished by nothing less than perfect. Not only is it important to release some of this control, and feel comfortable relying on other people, it is important to realize that working in a team can provide more opportunities, a range of ideas, and various routes for success. Collaboration is at the heart of community building, and helps provide discussion and feedback to build ideas and knowledge. This idea is outlined in Lev Vygotsky's, Social Learning Theory, and is currently being applied to the classroom, but is also helpful when collaborating in a group setting or building a team to help a project come to life: it's essence is that we are able to create based on our ability to communicate, share and collaborate with others (Neff, n.d.). We also see this ideology in the organization of businesses management, and hear continuously that to be considered hireable in today's market, we must be a team player: "To become a successful leader you need to understand how and why teams work well and what make teams falter. To break into management and become a successful leader, you first have to become a successful team player" ("The Real Benefits", 2014).

Similarly, the FLUX team that consisted of numerous community partnerships is what made this festival possible. After speaking with Lacey, it became apparent that many people in the community are more than willing to help arts initiatives succeed. FLUX was completely funded by local sponsors, with additional help of project related grants from municipal,

provincial and federal arts council branches. Before this conversation, I was certain that individual resources would be needed to fund a festival of this magnitude; but by reaching out to community members, negotiating the potential success for all involved, finding volunteers willing to help or by providing incentives such as community service hours, and finding dancers willing to create and perform for free, the community can be brought together to witness a celebration of dance without investing loads of the visionaries own money. I would love to see this festival grow to the point that the dancers earn some money for their contribution, as I believe it is important for us to acknowledge that supporting local talent does not necessary end with providing a space to perform.

Project Impact

FLUX was able to foster creative outlets for an entire community to participate in. I have always been impressed with London's ability to promote the importance of the arts, where a smaller city houses two arts focused elementary schools (one Choir School, and one Performing Arts School), an arts centered high school, and a highly competitive market for independent arts studios and programs. However, London trains students in the arts to a level that competes with larger cities throughout North America, yet does not have regular opportunities for professional artists. Currently we train our students to become artists, and send them to larger cities to perform. I believe that this current reality needs to change, and festivals like FLUX may be the initial motivation needed to create larger and more permanent opportunities.

Not only did FLUX allow community members to come together to support the initiative and engage with dance, but it also permitted students from various dance schools in the area, to come as one to celebrate a similar passion, instead of competing against one another under a studio name. I believe this is one of the most important aspects of this festival, because the dance community will not change without all of the people that support it, coming together.

I wholeheartedly agree with the goals of the FLUX Dance Festival, where I can visualize a London where established and emerging dance artists are given opportunities to have successful careers while residing in London, and by extension we are able to support and engage the community with accessible dance opportunities. By researching FLUX, I have been given a realistic account of what it takes to implement a community arts project in London, with an inside look into feasibility and crucial management roles. Throughout this opportunity I have become more optimistic about the achievability of such project, and am excited about my future impact on London's dance community.

References

- Morrison, D. (2016, April 15). What Does a Growth Mindset Have to Do with Learning? Retrieved January 10, 2017, from <https://onlinelearninginsights.wordpress.com/2016/04/14/what-does-a-growth-mindset-have-to-do-with-learning/>
- Neff, L. (n.d.). Lev Vygotsky and Social Learning Theories. Retrieved January 11, 2017, from <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/lsn/educator/edtech/learningtheorieswebsite/vygotsky.htm>
- Smith, L. (2013). FLUX London Dance Festival. Retrieved January 9, 2017, from <http://fluxdance.ca/>
- The Real Benefits of Being a Team Player. (2014, February 18). Retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://careerrocketeer.com/2013/06/the-real-benefits-of-being-a-team-player.html>