

## Fleet Feet, shared beat DNA3D IN PERRY BARR

*'Dance can change your life in other ways...  
'I have never witnessed this before or understood it so well...  
'...this project allowed a positive relationship to develop between adults and  
young people, built on respect and trust which restored my faith in  
how dance can build social outcomes.'  
Aimee, contemporary dancer, dna3d*

### About DNA3D

dna3d : dance design digital are a collective of dance, design and digital media artists who challenge the conventions of traditional performance.

Led by Artistic Director, Dennie Wilson, dna3D offer an innovative, creative approach to dance presentations by bringing together dance and performance artists.

Dennie formed dna3d in 2009. The company comprises largely of graduates from the University of Wolverhampton . All company dancers live in Birmingham and have received their training from schools, colleges, and universities in Birmingham and the West Midlands.

[Extract from website: <http://www.dna3d.co.uk/> and the company's project blog: [web.me.com/dennie2/www.fleetfeetproject/Perry Barr Artists in Residence.html](http://web.me.com/dennie2/www.fleetfeetproject/Perry_Barr_Artists_in_Residence.html)]

### What happened?

Dna3D were based in St Mark's Church Centre on the Bandywood Estate in the Oscott ward of Perry Barr. They had two key tasks:

- **to lead dance sessions for young people (7 – 25 yrs)** who attend the youth groups in St Mark's Church Centre, Bandywood Estate, and Maryvale Centre, Old Oscott Hill.
- **to offer arts activities for members of the St Marks Day Centre for the Elderly (65-91 yrs)** and to create appropriate opportunities to create gather reminiscences from local residents to create performance material and an appropriate legacy document of the event

The activity culminated in the creation and performance of a new piece for St Mark's Centre's 40th anniversary event which was performed to the community in March 2011

### ***About Oscott Ward, Perry Barr constituency***

Perry Barr has a population of 103,458 and is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest situated constituency in Birmingham. It comprises four, largely residential wards: Handsworth Wood, Lozells and East Handsworth, Oscott and Perry Barr.

Both Maryvale Community Centre and St Mark's Community Centre are based in Oscott Ward. The participants were drawn from the surrounding area.

- According to the 2001 Population Census there were 24,073 people resident in Oscott.
- 21.7% of people were aged under 16, 55.6% were aged 16-59, while 22.6% were aged over 60.
- The minority ethnic population made up 9.4% of the ward's population, compared with 29.6% for Birmingham. These numbers exclude people with a White Irish background.
- 68.4% of the population aged 16 to 74 were working or seeking work, compared with 60.4% for Birmingham. White males are considerably more likely to be in employment than members of either the female and ethnic minority labour force.



[Socio-economic data from 2001 Census, and [www.birmingham.gov.uk/perrybarr](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/perrybarr)]

### ***GENERIC SOCIAL OUTCOMES: Health & Wellbeing***

#### **Outcome 1: Encouraging healthy lifestyles and contributing to mental and physical well-being**

***'One older man asked: "Are you teaching somewhere outside of this, because I would be interested to do some more dance lessons because it's great fun and I can tell you after this lesson that it keeps you fit"!!'***

Kasia's blog

No of sessions for member of St Mark's Day Centre for the Elderly	10
No of participants	30
No of repeat engagements	253
Average no of engagements per participant	8

Many of the day centre members had health and mobility difficulties and some were suffering from forms of dementia. The first workshop did not go well as the care workers appeared unprepared for the workshop:

*'Our lesson meant to start with everyone in the circle, but I have been told by one of the care workers ... that some of the seniors cannot even stand up, so they have to stay by their tables... We were stubborn and tried to talk to seniors directly and most of them were happy to move into the circle. And 90% of them managed to do so!!'* Kasia's blog, 11 February 2011

The second session was better, and set the tone for the rest of the residency:

*'I decided to plan something very simple...*

*But another great surprise: ... I risked and asked seniors to stand up and reach arms as high as possible. It was great to see how many of them actually can get up... I will never forget the effort from 'red jumper' man, how much he was trying to get up. It took him longer than everybody else, but he did!!'*

Kasia's blog, 1 March 2011

In order to stimulate reminiscence and to introduce the older people to different dance forms, the dancers interspersed the exercises with film clips and conversation.

*'That was a marked thing this week, how much the seniors wanted to talk and share stories with us... Hilma has agreed to tell me the story of meeting her husband and how she came to the UK...*

*Mary her first Christmas without her husband...*

*Alice who is 97 and has been without her husband for over 30 years...*

*Leroy, and the other man who sat at the table but danced with Kasia for quite a while who said his wife had taught him to dance...'*

Dennie's blog, 16 December 2010

Dennie observed that even those initially reluctant to get up and dance participated: *'The table of ladies who want to stay at their table, but they do all join in and I have started referring to them as the Chorus and they seem to like this ... in today, but GOT UP and danced too !!!!!!!'*



*'... the care workers said how much we were getting out of the Senior Group ... you could really see that the workers were really enjoying seeing the vibe and the activity that was happening... everyone seemed to be smiling...'*

#### **Thumbnail sketches of individuals who benefitted:**

**Peter** in wheelchair had never done dance before but loved the sessions and joined in. He finally got out of his chair (taking 20 mins) to dance with another participant in the group and was thrilled to feel part of the group experience.

**Alan** started by sitting down and not being able to participate in the dance activities. By the end of the sessions he was dancing with other partners and enjoyed learning the movement vocabulary.

**Alice** (97 years) was a determined participant in the dance residency from her chair. She danced with her feet and played musical instruments and did all the ballet 'port de bras' and Spanish flamenco steps. Her war time story of bringing up 4 children single-handedly (as her arm was totally withered by shrapnel during WW2) was an inspiration to the final DNA dance.

### **Outcome 3: Helping children and young people to enjoy life and make a positive contribution**

*'Lots of benefits! For the girls who took part, fitness. The girls don't tend to join in much with the sports activities. One girl in particular, who doesn't usually engage with many activities, became really involved with the project, which surprised me.'*

Paul Chawner, leader of Maryvale Youth Group

*'The group have loads of energy and a really good rapport with each other. I think this is really nurtured by the youth leaders there, and everyone seemed to really like being where they were.'*

Dennie's blog, St Mark's youth group

*'This is the first time we have managed to get them to engage like this. Some of these children have very difficult lives and it has been fabulous to see them all engage with Dennie and each other'*

Vicar of St Marks.

No of sessions for youth club members	20
No of participants	40
No of engagements	242
Average no of repeat engagements per participant	6
No of school workshops & demonstrations	2
No of school pupils participating	150



Keith Airey, Community Development Officer at St Mark's, helped Birmingham City Council Community Arts Team to set up the residency and encouraged Paul Chawner, leader of the Maryvale Centre Youth Group, to participate. He had been looking for an activity that would engage the young people's attention and encourage them to try something new.

*'there aren't many opportunities locally for young people to learn dance... They had an excellent relationship with the dancers.'*



The dancers found it challenging to work with the young people, themselves unused to concentrated effort, in the noisy environment of the youth club:

*'the class was very difficult to run because we have some new people taking part in it. About 6 of them didn't even want to participate in the class so they were just sitting and making noise in the background. Another four joined the class but they didn't know any material.'* Kasia's blog, St Mark's Youth Group, 3 March 2011

*'A noise outside the window signalled that the first of our guests had arrived... all of them were kids aged between 4-14. I think about 11 of them but no parents in sight.'* Kashmir's blog. Strictly Dance Championship Show Day, 29 January 2011

Dennie found her attempts to adhere to child protection regulations and good practice, were often thwarted: *'Letters to advise parents of the performance [and] to ask for permission were sent out – but not clear if they were passed on to the parents. No signed forms returned.'*

The youth club leaders, some of whom took part in the workshops, helped the younger participants to focus:

*'Big Ryan and Callum ... seem to have a massive impact on the structure of the thursday sessions. When they are there, they give it their best and because the others see their efforts, they tend to follow. Plus they are always very helpful when getting the younger ones to be silent.'* Shanelle's blog. 7 March 2011

Despite the background chaos, the youth club members rose to the challenge. On 22 January, Shanelle wrote in her blog:

*'The members that came the week prior, were very excited to see Kasia and I again. I was very pleased to see that they had remembered the routine from the week before. It's almost like they went home, practised, and came back ready to show both Kasia and I how much they remembered.'*

The dancers continued to be impressed by the talent and energy:

*'Really wish that some of the parents did show up as it would have been really nice for them to see their kids take part in an activity which required them to learn and perform.'* Shanelle's blog. Strictly Dance Championship Show Day, 29 January 2011

*'The half-term project did show that having had a few weeks of regular sessions, bringing the two groups together for something more intensive, was a really good*

*plan. They worked with focus and commitment for the whole two days, despite the fact that I am not sure that each of the participants has ever been asked to concentrate on One thing for such a long time.'* Dennie's blog, 27 February 2011

**The young people themselves were in no doubt about the value of their experience. When interviewed at the end of the project, they unanimously said that the best things about the project were making new friends and the perseverance and ability of the tutors.**

#### **Thumbnail sketches of individuals who benefitted:**

##### **Selina (25 years old)**

*Initially very negative about herself, she responded to the challenge of performance and came out of herself to learn a new dance routine (a first for her). She overcame her shyness and negative thoughts that she might not be able to dance. As a youth trainee worker she saw the benefits of dance, was proud of her achievement and overcame all of her own hurdles to perform whilst encouraging others.*

##### **Big Ryan (18 years old)**

*A trainee youth worker, Ryan was very focused and hard working and wanted to show others in the group how to learn dance and succeed in performance. When the group performed, it was clear that younger members looked to him for guidance. This was his first dance experience and he was so excited by this experience he is looking to see how he might learn dance and study it further at University.*

##### **Little Ryan (10 years old)**

*Had never done dance before and was inspired to focus his innate talent. With inspiration and tuition from Kashmir, he mastered a whole new set of dance steps which he made into a solo and performed on 12 March to great applause. His mum & dad were there to watch and were surprised by how good he was and were encouraged to take him on to further dance classes so that he can continue to develop his talent and skill.*



#### **GENERIC LEARNING OUTCOME: Skills**

**S3. Communication skills – writing, speaking, listening...**

**S4. Physical skills – running, dancing, manipulation, making...**

*'We ended up with a group of about 7 girls and 7-8 boys. The challenge which was introduced halfway through the session was a Dance Off pitching boys against girls.... the next 40 minutes flew by as they rehearsed the sequence, added their own entrances and exits, poses and formations...'*

Dennie's blog account of a session at St Mark's Youth Group, 15 Jan 2011

No of participants in St Marks Community performance	13
No who had previously had any dance classes	1

In 12 weeks, each group of young people learned a range of dance moves and worked with professional dancers to create two three-minute routines.

*'Learning the dance steps has made my football skills better'* Maryvale youth club member

*'My daughter is deaf and she has really come out of her shell through doing this. She's 2 years behind because of her deafness but she can do this!'*, Mum of two, St Mark's

The dancers encouraged participants to develop leadership as well as dance skills:

*'There were a couple of boys in the class who were already 'street dancers' and grasped the routine much easier than others. To develop their own skills and enable them to help others maybe we could make them leaders in the next session'* Amie's blog

The evidence of the dancer's blogs shows how they were constantly adjusting their own teaching approach to suit the participants' increasing skills, focus and creative drive:

*'One thing i think kasia and i need to think about is how ... to create a piece where everyone feels confident and comfortable ... Also the kind of structure we need to enable the choreographic process to run a bit better.'* Shanelle's blog, 22 January 2011

*'The last 'step' the children learned was very quick and quite difficult. I would say only a handful ... actually grasped this step and others seemed to get frustrated ... so I tried to keep breaking this particular section down for smaller groups when they were practicing.'* Amie's blog, 21 January 2011, Maryvale

*'Again lesson didn't go exactly according to the plan: seniors surprise us all the time!! Sometimes what seems to be easy for them, they find it hard and the other way round. But all the warm up went really well... I think I have to make it more complex next time to challenge them as they seemed to be now 'ready for more'.'* Kasia's blog, 19 January 2011



## **GENERIC LEARNING OUTCOME: Enjoyment, inspiration & creativity**

### **EIC 5. Exploration, experimentation and making**

*'It's heart -pounding amazing.'*  
Youth group member

Keith Airey noticed that the young people enjoyed the classes: *'They liked the opportunity to learn different styles so if they weren't so keen on one, they could focus on another'.*

*'The half term workshops were amazing! I went to both days. I was so tired afterwards. I was going to go into town but I couldn't move.'* 14 yr old girl, St Mark's Youth Group

*'It was very enjoyable and the teachers broke it down really well.'* Maryvale group member

*'[The high point was] seeing the genuine enthusiasm on the [older people's] faces. They're encouraged to exercise anyway, but this had physical and mental aspects. They began reminiscing, talking about their youth. They miss the dance tutors and want them to come back.'*

Keith Airey, St Mark's Community Development Officer

*'The kids really seemed to enjoy it. Kasia and I were really pleased to see that they were all attentive and willing to do the tasks which we set for them. Overall it was a very refreshing and proud moment ... as we've see them grow so much within a short space of time'* Shanelle's blog, St Mark's Youth Group

*'Now the challenge will be: how to plan the lesson not to make 'sitting people' feel bad about themselves. But one lady made very good comment – "even if she cannot do things, she still enjoys watching her friends dancing".'* Kasia's blog, St Marks Seniors

## **GENERIC LEARNING OUTCOME: Knowledge & understanding**

### **K&U 2.d. Learning facts or information about myself, my family, my community, the wider world**

*'We should also build in ... a demonstration each week, and gradually telling the group more and more about the individual dancers... so each week's session is not just about them dancing, but us sharing other things to do with dance'*

Dennie's blog, 15 Jan 2011

**Interviewer: 'What kind of dance shows have you seen?'**

**Youth club members: 'We watch Strictly, Dancing on Ice, music channels and Youtube.' 'I watched Disney on Ice last year.' 'And I saw Blood Brothers in town.'**

Between them, the five dancers specialised in a range of styles including contemporary, show dance, ballet, ballroom, hip-hop and street dance. They performed demonstrations for all of the participants to show them a variety of dance forms.

*'Kashmir gave a demonstration of what they could be doing in the next week, I then showed them what fouettes were and managed to do more than I expected!'* Jo's blog, Maryvale, 15 January 2011

Everyone learned new things about themselves and each other. Paul Chawner, leader of the Maryvale group said: *'At the public show parents were overwhelmed. People also enjoyed seeing the DVD of what the older people had done – very touching.'*

*'I have learnt through this project how important the relationship with community can be. The sessions were not successful by how well we planned the lesson but how*



*we responded to the participants and observed how they were and how they took to the activity'* Kasia, final evaluation meeting, 16 March 2011

*'I was really impressed and proud of Kasia and how she has managed to lead and teach a group which she has never taught before.'* Shanelle's blog, 7 March 2011

### **GENERIC LEARNING OUTCOME: Activity, behaviour, progression**

#### **ABP 4. A change in the way that people manage their lives including work, study, family and community contexts**

***'One young man is now considering a dance course at College.  
Arts careers aren't really considered by young people around here.'***

Keith Airey

***'It has also been great to see how the [youth club] company is growing in confidence as each dancer develops new skills and new friendships with other company members. I think because each of them has different strengths and ... the combination of dancers is a really positive one, where they each support each other. There was been a brilliant vibe around the company over the two days.'***

Dennie's blog, Half Term workshops, 27 February 2011

Paul Chawner was impressed by the effect the residency had in the youth group. The project has *'attracted new members and some lapsed members have re-joined as a result... We used to have a street dance tutor that we're thinking of bringing back as a result of the project.'*

*'If opportunities are offered we'd love to take them, but often the approach isn't made in the most useful way ... information doesn't get through so they don't know what's on offer.'*


***'The group of elders (many of whom suffer from Alzheimers) showed that the positive engagement in the dance activity was a trigger for them ... so that they actually remembered it was 'Wednesday' and it was 'dancing today!'***

Dennie's blog

*'At the beginning I didn't think I was a teacher or could teach. After the first session when we had to forget our lesson plan and improvise our way through, I realised that I could go on with this and learnt that I can be a good teacher. '*

Shanelle, final evaluation meeting, 16 March 2011

## RESIDENCY FACTS & FIGURES

Artist in Residence	dna3d	
Art form	Dance and digital media	
Constituency	Oscott ward, Perry Barr	
Length of residency	3 months	
Based in	St Mark's Community Centre	
Residency cost		
No of participants	93	
No of engagements	525 (an average of 6 repeat engagements per participant)	
No of sessions	30	
No of performances	3	
No of audience members	225	
Community partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• St Marks' Community Centre Youth Group</li><li>• Maryvale Centre Youth Group</li><li>• St Mark's Day Centre for the Elderly</li><li>• Kingsrise School and Sundridge School</li></ul>	

### BIRMINGHAM ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE: project specific outcomes

- to locate artists within community venues to create and develop their own work
- to develop participatory arts work with local residents in the host venue and another local partner in the Constituency
- To work with local partners to sustain and develop local infrastructure and to create new opportunities for participation through initiating new artistic activities, experiences and performance opportunities
- To raise public awareness of Birmingham City Council's cultural offer both in the city centre and the constituencies