

# DANCE KEEPS GROWING

## WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE?

In the past two months there have been dance events which show that the NZ public's desire to dance grows and grows. What opportunities does this create for the whole sector?

*CubaDupa*, the new festival on the block, had its début in Wellington in March 2015 evolving out of the *Cuba Street Carnival*. Produced by the Creative Capital Arts Trust and supported by Wellington City Council and many community partnerships and grants, it was a free community festival celebrating Cuba Street, food, music, dance, arts, craft and theatre where the audience was "invited to help create the show, to dress up to dance and be part of the action". It was great for the dance community because of the considerable and successful inclusion of diverse dance events and styles within the whole event. Tarrant Dance Studio celebrated 45 years and Footnote New Zealand Dance 30 years on Cuba Street. A night screen outside the building projected Tarrant productions and Footnote tours "a real legacy experience... I cried as some of those images came onto the screen," says Deirdre Tarrant. The highly visible Swan Lane Dance Zone aimed to recreate the old idea of a dance hall in the Swan Lane car park, encouraging people to join in, not just watch. People leapt into the flash mob events: "Poi E" lead by Paora Taurima in partnership with City Gallery and "Staying Alive" led by Chris Jannides. They also tried swing, clogging, ballroom, samba, action song, hip hop, samba and more. "The Swan Lane Dance Zone was the absolute heart of the 2015 *CubaDupa* festival," said Emma Giesen, General Manager.



TARRANT DANCE STUDIO, CUBADUPA

*CubaDupa* achieved the successful mixing of dance enthusiasts with other enthusiasts and a very broad public of all ages and backgrounds. "In a nutshell we had around 800 participating artists, 100,000 audience members, 200 performances", says Emma.

From 29 April through to 3 May we had several *International Dance Day (IDD)* events, again run by community trusts and volunteer organisations. *IDD* celebrations in Wellington were held at Te Papa on 3 May and attracted record numbers. People were calling in as part of their visit within Te Papa, including the new WW1 exhibition, but there were clearly hundreds who had come

with the intention to dance and try out many styles. As with *CubaDupa*, they were not shy, they were ready and “up for it”. Dunedin also reported a growth in numbers at *IDD* celebrations held at the Toitū Otago Settlers Museum on 3 May. Forty people turned up for the launch of the “Aging Gracefully” dance programme alone, and the day included hip hop, contemporary, ballet, social dance and dances from different cultures.

How could this creation of atmosphere, of wanting to dance not watch, generosity, joy and a sense of theatre relate to performance and find audiences and sustainability for that? Clearly there are huge numbers of people loving dance, people who want to be active participants not passive receivers. Where is the “disconnect” and how can it be bridged? Perhaps we need more festivals like these that mix things up – dance with food with music. Or offer the opportunity to have a go as well as be performed to or entertained. Perhaps that is a way to develop visibility, loyalty, capture people’s hearts and imaginations? Do we need to dance with them to bring them to dance? Do we need to leverage off opportunities such as these festivals to create a platform where the public can get to know us as companies and as dancers, teachers and choreographers.

The joy and enthusiasm on people's faces and their engagement as seen in the galleries on the *CubaDupa* and *IDD* Facebook galleries clearly shows the power of these events. The challenge is to make the most of the opportunities created by these events to grow dance in Aotearoa. ■

This growth and interest in dance is supported by recently released NZ Recreation Association research in physical activity. The Sport and Active Recreation Survey in the Lives of New Zealand Adults 2013/14 shows that 74% or 2.5 million people take part in recreation or sport in any given week. However two thirds (65.6%) of survey respondents said they were interested in trying a new activity or sport or doing more of an existing one.

FULL SWING DANCE STUDIO,  
SWAN LANE DANCE ZONE  
PHOTO: KEANE CHAN, CAPTURING HEARTBEATS



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CUBAN FUSION, IDD WELLINGTON  
PHOTO: JOSE G. CANO PHOTOGRAPHY



FILIFEST, IDD WELLINGTON  
PHOTO: JOSE G. CANO PHOTOGRAPHY

