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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

As an organisation we are continually seeking ways to improve how we operate and be supportive to those in the dance sector. It's not an easy role at times but it is rewarding.

Sometimes it's a phone call, a catch up over coffee or food, a formal meeting, a workshop presentation, advocating for dance through political channels, letters of support for funding applications, sponsoring an event, posting events, completing funding reports and applying for funds.

There's no golden apple that solves everything at once. Changes and shifts in paradigms take time, courage and innovation. This is why we have been piloting a range of new initiatives that add to our kete (basket) of knowledge and influence.

Initiatives we've piloted this year have included: New Zealand Dance Week (National), DANZ Talks at Kia Mau Festival (Wellington), NZ Dance Films from the Archives at Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision (Auckland/Wellington), piloting a new Māori ChoreoLab / Te Kanikani Whakamataau project (Auckland), Hot Off The Press (Auckland/Wellington), a partnership with TEMPO Dance Festival and additional articles in the DANZ Magazine.

I'm very interested in expanding our reach into regional areas and communities, outside of the main centres. Developing meaningful engagements with a wide cross section of the dance sector is important to help join us together, to be part of a larger and stronger dance network.

In early July I was on an assessment panel for the Caroline Plummer Fellowship at Otago University. The Fellowship established in 2003 is the only dedicated community dance fellowship in New Zealand. In fact it is the only Fellowship in the New Zealand University system with a specific dance focus. It's like a gold mine tucked away down south, radiating with Caroline's passion and vision for community dance in New Zealand. It was fantastic to meet her father and be part of this wonderful initiative.

Coming up for the remainder of this year are:

- **How To Hustle seminar at Tempo** (14 October, 3pm – 5pm at Q Theatre), a forum focused on sharing information; and
- **National Dance Hui** (21/22 November at TAPAC), our major event to finish the year. The aim of the event is to provide a platform for contemporary dance to share ideas and expertise. (Read more about this on page 24).

It is our aim to create unique platforms and spaces to help grow and feed dance in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Bear with things as the earth bears with us; by yielding, by accepting, by nourishing¹

¹The I Ching or Book Of Changes (Chapter 2, Pg 7)

DANZ Māori Choreolab

Te Kanikani Whakamataau

The aim of the Māori Choreolab/Te Kanikani Whakamataau is to expand the choreographic expression of Māori in Tamaki Maukarau (Auckland), reflecting the artistic vision of Māori in the 21st century.

The recipient of the first DANZ Māori Choreolab was freelancer and Atamira Dance Company member Bianca Hyslop. Bianca was paired with experienced Māori choreographer, Merenia Gray; a graduate from the New Zealand School of Dance who has enjoyed a successful career as a dancer, teacher and choreographer both nationally and internationally, with a specialisation in Māori contemporary dance.

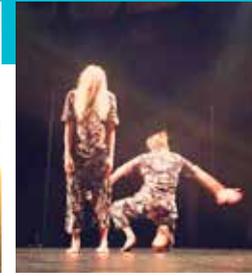
Merenia mentored and worked with Bianca over six weeks to devise and rehearse a work at Te Pou in Auckland, which culminated in public showings at Te Pou and the Mangere Arts Centre during Matariki (June/July).

The following is a personal account from Bianca about her six-week journey towards the creation of *Beauty of Small*.



ALL PERFORMANCE IMAGES OF BEAUTY OF SMALL,
TE POU THEATRE / PHOTO: JACK GRAY

FANLALAI'AN, GUAHAN / PHOTO: DAKOT-TA ALCANTARA-CAMACHO



“Matariki is a time to reconnect with the natural world around us; to give thanks to the land, sea and sky. We come together to acknowledge the past, share stories and to turn to the future in celebration of new beginnings.

This year the rising of Matariki brought *Te Kanikani Whakamatau: The Māori Choreolab*, a new initiative created by DANZ to give time to reflect on the rich whakapapa of Māori contemporary dance in Aotearoa and whakamana the new dance of today.

This was captured in the project Whakataukī.

Kua mārō te haere o te kaupapa. Ko tā tātou i nāianeī he ū tonu, he ū tonu kātahi ka whakahōhonu, ka whakawhānuī.

The progress of the project has firmed. What we are to do now is consolidate, deepen and broaden its scope.

I was the proud recipient of this choreographic laboratory and from this created my short work in progress *Beauty of Small*.

The space in between; the wana, the harmony

The cliff line

The elevated point

The zoom

The unfocused

The beauty of all

The beauty of small

Over the Matariki period I meet with my mentor, Merenia Gray. We would have coffee and scribble down ever shifting ideas. I loved that the emphasis was on exploration and experimentation, opening my creative brain to endless opportunities.

I had eight short but rich days with my chosen dancers Maria Munkowits and Matiu Hamuera. I shared with them an improvisational task I developed from the time I spent at the Venice Biennale with choreographer Salva Sanchis in 2015. This task became the base on which the movement for the work was developed. The task required the dancers to ‘tune’ in with each other and the space around them. This resulted in two harmonious dancers who mirrored each other physically and spiritually.

I also worked in close collaboration with Dākot-ta Alcantara-camacho, my music composer. Dākot-ta

(Chamoru, Filipino) is currently living in his home town in Guahan (Guam). We set up regular Skype dates in which we would exchange korero around the essence of *Beauty of Small*. After our first conversation, Dākot-ta sent me a panoramic photo of Fanlalai'an, a cliff line that overlooks the south east part of the island. He shared with me how for him this place was the manifestation of my kupu; the seemingly endless beauty we had spoken of.

For me this exchange was the first in many of the small but beautiful offerings I had hoped for. My kupu became his call to the land in which he created a body of sound for the dancers to be inspired by. We then gifted our dance to the community; two small offerings at Mangere Arts Centre and Te Pou Theatre in New Lynn. The dance might have “just been a development but it now exists. It has been shared and felt and my hope is that it will continue to resonant in small but beautiful ways in our actions, thoughts and memories”.

Reflecting on her experience as a mentor for this project, Merenia said:

“I got a huge amount of pleasure sharing my knowledge with Bianca. We really established a bond of trust which I hope to see grow in the years to come. Bianca’s proposal was very clear and her initial ideas stemmed from wanting to create a duet from a poem she had written. The project is a fantastic initiative for DANZ and I highly recommend this becomes an annual event – that can be tapped into the Matariki celebrations that happen around New Zealand.”

As a platform for choreographic exploration the project was a success. It provided Bianca with the freedom to explore ideas without any financial burden and she was able to work with dancers who were very receptive to her process. Although the public showings were a secondary outcome to what occurred in the rehearsal room, it is heartening to see that the work-in-progress will most likely be revisited, expanded and presented in a professional performance setting in 2017.

DANZ looks forward to further developing this project. ■

The DANZ Māori Choreolab project was supported by Auckland City Council, Atamira Dance Company, Mangere Arts Centre and Te Pou Theatre