

Audiences for Contemporary Dance

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A research snapshot report providing a brief profile of audiences for contemporary dance. It draws on Audiences London and Dance Touring Partnership's analysis of audience data in 2006 and 2007. The key summarised findings conclude that audiences for dance are not as frequent attenders of the artform as we'd like to think, and that the audience profile for dance is similar to audiences for a given venue as a whole.

The Audience Agency is a not-for-profit organisation created out of the merger between All About Audiences and Audiences London Plus in 2012.





Audiences for Contemporary Dance

The following is a short profile of audiences for contemporary dance, drawing on Audiences London (AL)'s and Dance Touring Partnership (DTP)'s analysis of audience data in 2006 and 2007.

Key findings are:

- Audiences for dance are not as frequent attenders to dance as we'd like to think.
- Audiences for dance, in the main, do not exclusively attend dance or identify themselves as 'dance attenders'.
- The profile of audiences for dance is similar to the profile of audiences for a given venue as a whole.

Facts and figures

For the full Dance Touring Partnership report, follow the link in Resources, below. For more detailed information about London arts audiences, contact Audiences London www.audienceslondon.org.

The following indicates how the behaviour of London audiences and regional audiences is similar, and illustrates the key findings (given above):

- What proportion of dance attenders across a range of regional venues are first time bookers?
 - 20 – 75% (DTP analysis)
- What proportion of dance attenders in London have attended once between 2003-2005?
 - 68% (AL analysis)
- What proportion of the audience for contemporary dance have bought tickets for more than one dance event in the last 12 months?
 - 5 – 37% (DTP analysis)
- What proportion of audiences for contemporary dance have been at a venue more than once and only bought for dance?
 - 2-5% (DTP analysis)
- What proportion of dance attenders between 2003-5 in London have only attended one venue for dance?
 - 85% (AL analysis)
- In towns/cities with more than one venue, what proportion of the audience sees dance in at least two venues?
 - 1.1% (DTP analysis)
- What proportion of cultural attenders in London (bookers recorded in the Snapshot London project) only attend dance?
 - 36% compared to over 60% for plays/drama (AL analysis)

The way ahead

- Dance audiences are not specialists, so make sure that you're selling the benefits of your work in a way that will appeal more generally.

- Increased openness and understanding between venues and companies about audience characteristics at the venue enables both to maximise the potential to attract and retain audiences.
- Ensure your copy will appeal to the venues' regulars, not dance regulars.
- Understanding the motivations and profile of a venue's audience for other art forms, and communicating information about dance in a similar way is one way to achieve this.
- Consider selling the work in non-dance specific contexts, ie. is it theatrical – what story does it tell, or would the music be of particular interest?

Audiences London projects

Audiences London has undertaken a number of projects focusing on audiences for contemporary dance:

- A full analysis of dance bookers for venues across London (2006) looked at audience demographics, behaviour, and crossover between art forms in the context of Snapshot London benchmarks.
- Primary audience research associated with the Dance Escalator project – Hofesh Shechter's 'In Your Rooms' performances at The Place, Southbank Centre and Sadler's Wells (2008) focused on understanding how audience members influence each other to attend dance.
- An audience development support programme for dance companies based in London enabling them to understand audiences and develop more effective relationships with venues they tour to (2009/10).

Resources

- Regional Audiences for Dance:
 - www.dancetouringpartnership.co.uk/about.html (2007)
 - 'Snapshot of dance audiences in the East Midlands' undertaken with Derby Dance www.deda.uk.com/audience-development/
- **Snapshot London**, a data sharing initiative including the audience data from over 35 organisations in London – visit www.audienceslondon.org/snapshot for more information
- For more information on using audience data or finding the relevant local audience development agency visit www.audiencesuk.org/

Audiences London's Services

If you are interested in understanding the audiences for your work in the context of London or regional benchmarks, please get in touch with Audiences London. We can help you profile your audiences and use the understanding about who they are to enable your company to develop more rewarding relationships with your venues. We take a practical approach to help you develop effective strategies for your marketing and understanding your audiences for the benefit of company and venue alike.

Contact Rachel Escott, Head of Audience Development Services, for more information
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