

Case study

Fundraising as an emerging artist



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Producer, co-choreographer, and dancer
New Movement Collective



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New Movement Collective (NMC) was formed in 2009 and currently consists of 11 members. Many of its members have worked together at some point for Rambert, although the dancers/choreographers come from diverse backgrounds and have worked with Gothenburg Ballet, Scottish Dance Theatre, English National Ballet, Mathew Bourne's New Adventures, Wayne McGregor/Random Dance and Manchester-based company Chameleon among others.

At the time, there were quite a few choreographers emerging from within the group, often dancing in each other's work, and they wanted to form a platform to showcase their choreography and continue the collaboration.

As NMC, they presented two separate evenings of choreography, curated by Clara Barbera in Spain, but found that the traditional platforms for dance, such as theatres were quite difficult or too expensive for them to access at the time.

During this period they started a partnership with AAIS (Architectural Association Interprofessional Studio), which is a post graduate course in performance and design with focus on collaboration, where they took turns to tutor a group of 5-6 students each year.

This partnership added a new dimension to the work and created performance opportunities in unusual settings – a derelict building in Covent Garden, Matadero Cultural Centre in Madrid, a post-industrial building-turned gallery space in Cologne, Zaha Hadid designed Roca Gallery in London.

Objectives

At first the objectives were simply to present the work on national and international stages but they soon embraced the deeper collaborative approach amongst the choreographers, as well as artists from other disciplines, and started to really enjoy creating work that is bigger than the sum of its parts, conceived together and often in response to a particular building or site.

Target Groups

By creating the cross connections between art forms NMC seek to introduce contemporary dance to audiences who do not usually associate their interest with this medium. With performances often taking place in unusual places and collaborators from fields such as architecture, design, film and music they hope that, with time, their audiences will become our biggest and most significant group of supporters.

Process

In 2012 they created their first independently produced full length work, commissioned by Will Alsop for Testbed 1, a 650 sq meters former-dairy space in Battersea. Casting Traces is based on Paul Auster's New York Trilogy and performed within a giant architect-designed paper labyrinth.

In order to produce Casting Traces, NMC submitted their first ACE Grants for the arts funding application. They focused on their relationship with the borough where they are based (Wandsworth), participated in the local festival a few months prior to the opening and applied for a grant to their cultural programme. As the work involved three Polish artists (the composer, violinist and producer/co-choreographer/dancer) they asked Polish Cultural Institute in London for support. NMC also received a considerable amount of in-kind support from the venue, Rambert and their members and collaborators. They spoke to individuals who had followed their work and development over the years and who expressed interest in supporting the company for match funding. There was obviously also income from tickets sales.

Outcomes

As their first independently produced full-length work at NMC, Casting Traces was a memorable success. NEST, which followed in 2013 was larger in scale and with the central Shaftesbury Avenue location (Stone Nest, former Welsh Chapel) it was immensely popular with the audiences. This year, taking Casting Traces on a tour of three very different venues presents a whole different fundraising and logistical challenge. NMC recognise that they are still learning as they go along.

Key points for effective practice

Try to get as much advice as you can; discuss the key points of the projects with all involved and ensure you are all agreed on these before submitting an application. Having a good concept, an interesting venue and a strong group of artists always provides the best starting point.

NMC face the difficulty that many institutions struggle at the moment to give assurances in good time for the company to build its plans around their support. The more financially independent NMC can be, the easier (and better) the production and creative process becomes.

NMC also face the challenge in trying to obtain significant sponsorship, which they have not yet been able to secure, even though they believe that the work has commercial appeal. They are still heavily reliant on in-kind contributions and, while their partners are very loyal and reliable, there is often a degree of uncertainty in such arrangements.

Conclusions and recommendations

Be ambitious and passionate about what you do. The confidence in your work and enthusiasm are infectious.

Despite concerns about funding, **stay true to your artistic vision and ambition.** One of the organisations key supporters, Richard Thomas, states that it is the new and adventurous choreography that motivates him to support NMC, rather than other more established institutions – which are more obliged to conform to certain expectations.

If you are without a venue, this can be seen as an asset – for many donors they are encouraged to know that their money is not being drained by the overheads of running a large building. This also opens up opportunities to perform in innovative and unusual spaces, which is again highly appealing for audiences and supporters.

Being a creator (i.e. choreographer, producer) and a fundraiser can have significant advantages, as most people who support organisations do so because, as much as wanting to enable the continuation of that work, they also want to be able to get closer to the creative process. Enabling them to be a part of conversations about your vision for the company will give them a deeper, more meaningful experience as a donor, and encourage them to invest in your future. Many donors don't just want to write cheque, they want to be able to give something of themselves, and these relationships – as well as in-kind support and advice – give them the opportunity to do that and to have a more genuine experience.

Additional information

NMC are currently touring this work, having re-designed the set and adapted the choreography to respond to 3 very different locations: 3 Olaf Street in London (July 22-24), Circus Street Market in London (August 28-30) and Winchester Guildhall (October 23-25).

<http://www.newmovement.org.uk>

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This case study was produced as part of CultureHive, a free knowledge hub where you can discover and share best practice in cultural marketing and fundraising. Visit culturehive.co.uk for more great resources.