

PRESS RELEASE – 30 September 2020
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DANCE UMBRELLA DIGITAL

- **CREATE. DEBATE. CELEBRATE. A VIRTUAL FESTIVAL FOR 2020**
- **EMMA GLADSTONE ANNOUNCES SHE WILL STEP DOWN AS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN THE NEW YEAR**

2020 marks the 42nd year of Dance Umbrella and **Emma Gladstone's** 7th and final year as Artistic Director and Chief Executive for the organisation before she will step down. On this year's digital-only programme Emma said '*Although the festival in its usual format has not been possible this year, we had to find a way to celebrate the work of contemporary choreographers. In Dance Umbrella Digital this November we are bringing together artists from across the globe for intimate conversations; taking a behind the scenes look at the choreographic process; debating the pressing topics of the day; running choreographic workshops for different ages and closing it all with an almighty digital disco.*'

Choreographer's Cut

Ever wondered how a performance evolves? Step inside the mind of a choreographer as leading artists give an in-depth commentary on a recent work. This is a unique opportunity to go behind the scenes with **Oona Doherty** (Northern Ireland): *Helium* from *Hard to be Soft* and **Eun-Me Ahn** (S. Korea): *Dancing Grandmothers*; as they discuss their creative process with Dance Umbrella's Artistic Director and Chief Executive **Emma Gladstone**.

Continental Breakfast

Join creatives from across the globe as they settle down to breakfast with a special guest of their choice. These intimate conversations bring together artists from different sides of the world to discuss culture in the current climate and share how recent events are shaping their creative processes. The programme features **Abby Zbikowski** (USA) in conversation with **Bebe Miller**, **Gregory Maqoma** (South Africa) in conversation with **Alfred Enoch**; **Akram Khan** (UK) in conversation with TBC; **Arundhathi Subramaniam** (India) in conversation with **Alarmél Valli** and **Lucy Guerin** (Australia) in conversation with **Amrita Hepi**.

Home Made

For people who enjoy dancing and creating their own moves around the kitchen, living room or bedroom, *Home Made* is Dance Umbrella's first ever digital dance residency available to a range of ages. Over five days, each Home Made group will work with a world-class choreographer to explore, play and create their own brand-new choreography.

The Home Made groups will include: Families (6yrs+) working with choreographer **Satchie Noro**; Adults (18yrs+) working with choreographer **Annie-B Parson**; Adults (60yrs+) working with choreographer **Kenrick Sandy**.

Participants will be able to join in from the comfort of their own homes via secure Zoom meetings (set up support available) and take the opportunity to be part of a final film showcasing the project that will be created throughout each residency. It's free to take part and no previous dance experience is necessary. See listings for how to apply.

Music to Get You By

We've asked everyone involved in *Dance Umbrella Digital* to share the tracks that have got them through 2020. We hope these selections spark creativity, lift spirits and prepare us for whatever comes next.

Studio Sessions

Studio Sessions returns for 2020 as twelve UK and Ireland based artists / companies share a live stream presentation of a work in progress. Connecting national and international industry professionals with creatives, these three informal presentations enable presenters, funders and supporters to see work well before it hits the stage. *Studios Sessions* are curated for Dublin Dance Festival by **Oona Doherty**; for Dance4 (curator to be confirmed); and for Dance Umbrella / ResCen Research Centre at Middlesex University by **Seeta Patel**. Participating artists to be announced.

SystemsLab Debate: *Shifting Ground – Reset / Reconnect / Reinvent*

Shifting Ground follows last year's insightful discussion *Tick Box/ Break Glass/ Look Pretty*, which explored the experiences and opportunities for women of colour in the arts. We revisit this subject to discover what has changed on a personal, local and global level for each of the original panellists. This discussion investigates how the events of 2020 have impacted on their lives as they explore shifts in perspectives, identities, values and priorities, reflecting on what their relationship to the arts looks like today. As we seek pathways that lead to solutions, we also share what challenges have been faced and the tools cultivated that enable us to be adaptable, resilient and learn to trust in ourselves.

Shifting Ground is facilitated by **Dawn Estefan** (psychotherapist, writer, trainer & speaker) and features panellists: **Julia Cheng** (Dancer, choreographer & Creative Director House of Absolute); **Tracy Gentles** (Director, *Something To Aim For*) and **Nike Jonah** (Creative Producer) and is curated by **Anthea Lewis/ Blulilli Projects** presented by Dance Umbrella in partnership with SystemsLAB.

Articles

Across our festival week we will also be sharing long-form articles from writers on pressing topics surrounding the Dance sector and how the current climate is affecting our industry. Read articles from Tim Joss, Chief Executive & Founder of Aesop, the charity and social enterprise finding artistic solutions to society's problems and Italian artist Chiara Bersani on COVID-19 and disability. Further details to be announced.

Documentary Screening

Last year the opening show of the Dance Umbrella 2019 Festival - *Crowd* by Gisèle Vienne - was nominated for an Olivier Award. This year Dance Umbrella is thrilled to screen a documentary about the making of the piece *If It Were Love* (French: *Si C'était de L'amour*) directed by Patric Chiha. The film was streamed at 70th Berlin International Film Festival where it won the award for Best Documentary from the Teddy Award program for LGBTQ-themed films. Further details to be announced.

Friday Night Dance Party X *Let's Have a Kiki*

PUMP DA BEAT - The legendary Jay Jay Revlon returns to Dance Umbrella following 2019's *The Big Pink Vogue Ball* with a virtual version of his 'community-centred club night' (Huck Mag), *Let's Have a Kiki*. Party from the safety of your own home to Jay Jay's signature mix of House, Afro House, Classics and Ballroom beats alongside a curated bill of DJs and voguers.

Featuring faces from the ballroom community, join us to celebrate the closing of Dance Umbrella's first digital festival and *Let's Have a Kiki!*

Speaking of her departure, **Emma Gladstone** said:

'The time has come for me to hand over the DU baton to someone new. It has been an amazing seven years and I want to thank all the artists, audiences, venue partners, supporters, funders and staff team past and present for making it such an exhilarating ride. I am proud of what has been achieved artistically without question. But also geographically, as we are now touring more widely across London than ever before in DU's long history.'

Numerous things have combined leading up to my decision, both personal and professional, including my belief in the need to keep programming views rolling, the sense of being at the end of a particular era, the strength of the current team, and the fact that we are at the start of another reinvention of DU with our first digital festival this autumn.

From the New Year I will be focussing on specific areas of programming including talent development projects in the UK and Europe, whilst continuing as Chair at Siobhan Davies Studios, and in Trustee positions at Aesop and Dartington Hall Trust.'

Chair of Dance Umbrella's Board **Jake Ulrich** said

'Emma brought her formidable array of skills to DU in 2013 with the explicit goals of expanding the definition of contemporary dance and reaching out to new audiences. She has done a phenomenal job accomplishing both of these. She has the rare ability to identify and nurture new talent. As a result Emma has both transformed DU and become recognised as a global leader in the dance world. On behalf of the Trustees and staff I can say how much we have enjoyed working with her and we will miss her humour and insight. We wish her the very best going forward.'

Dance Umbrella Guest Programmer 2016-19 **Freddie Opoku-Addaie** said:

'Emma Gladstone's commitment to actioning and widening the 'movement' in dance for our global/local experiences is unparalleled. A key part of my success when I worked with Emma as the Guest Programmer 2016-19, is her innate care in being present whilst giving and holding open spaces for other innovative possibilities. I have seen the respect for her work championed by many peers across the globe, along with added warmth/smiles whenever her name is mentioned. With her incredible passion, knowledge and humane intelligence in our sector, the arts and beyond has more glimmers of hope in these unprecedented times for many to flourish In and 'Out of the System'.'

**For further information about Dance Umbrella Digital 2020 contact
Maisie@thecornershoppr.com or kateh@thecornershoppr.com**

Ends/

Dance Umbrella Digital Listings Information:

Choreographer's Cut

Dates: 24 - 25 November 2020

Tuesday 24 November - Oona Doherty

Wednesday 25 November - Eun-Me Ahn

Time: 1pm

Where: www.danceumbrella.co.uk

Admission: Free

Continental Breakfast

Dates:

Monday 23 November 2020 – Abby Zbikowski in Conversation with Bebe Miller

Tuesday 24 November 2020 – Gregory Maqoma in Conversation with Alfred Enoch

Wednesday 25 November 2020 - Akram Khan in Conversation with TBC

Thurs 26 November 2020 - Arundhathi Subramaniam in Conversation with Alarmél Valli

Friday 27 November 2020 - Lucy Guerin in Conversation with Amrita Hepi

Where: www.danceumbrella.co.uk

Time: 9am

Admission: Free

Documentary Screening

If It Were Love directed by Patric Chiha

Date: Tuesday 24 November 2020

Time: 8pm

Further details to be announced

Home Made

Date: 26 October – 13 November 2020

Where: Zoom, application required

Times: Families Mon 26 Oct - Fri 30 Oct 10-11am daily / Adults (18yrs+) Mon 2 - Fri 6 Nov 7 - 8pm daily / Adults (60yrs+) Mon 9 - Fri 13 Nov 12 - 1pm daily

Admission: Free

Duration: 1 hour sessions x 5 days per group

Age guidance: Families (6yrs+), Adults (18yrs+) and Adults (60yrs+)

Access Info: Please see contact below for access requirements

Applications: Participants are required to apply to take part and commit to attending all five days of their group's week. There will be a maximum of 16 spaces per group.

To apply, please download a relevant application form [here](#) and return via email to Bethan Peters, bethan@danceumbrella.co.uk

Application deadlines:

Family group: Wednesday 14th October 2020

Adult group: Wednesday 21st October 2020

Adult (60+) group: Wednesday 28th October 2020

For more information about *Home Made* or to discuss any access requirements in relation to taking part please contact Bethan Peters via email above or on 07498 232 515

Playlists - Music to Get You By

Date: 23 - 27 November 2020

Time: 10am daily

Where: www.danceumbrella.co.uk

Studio Sessions

Date: Friday 13 November - Curated for Dublin Dance Festival by Oona Doherty

Friday 20 November - Curated for Dance4 by TBC

Friday 27 November - Curated for Dance Umbrella by Seeta Patel

Where: Zoom, For Industry Professionals

Time: 2pm - 5pm

Admission: Free, email to attend robert@danceumbrella.co.uk

SystemsLab Debate: Shifting Ground – Reset / Reconnect / Reinvigorate

Date: Wednesday 25 November 2020

Time: 4pm – 5.30pm

Where: www.danceumbrella.co.uk

Admission: Free

Friday Night Dance Party X Let's Have a Kiki

Hosted by Jay Jay Revlon

Date: Friday 27 November

Time: 9pm – 11pm

Where: www.danceumbrella.co.uk

Admission: Free

Notes to editors:

Artist Biographies

Eun-Me Ahn

A leading artist from the Korean performing arts scene, Eun-Me Ahn founded her company in 1988 in Seoul before moving to New York in 1991. In 2001 she moved back to Korea and continued her choreographic and performance practice by revisiting classic works from her country including *Symphoca Princess Bari*, investigating social issues - often working with non-professionals in the *Dancing...* trilogy and more recently the relationships between South and North Korea in *North Korea Dance*. Also designing her costumes and set, Eun-Me Ahn has developed a unique and colourful signature visual which she has taken to prestigious stages around the world. Eun-Me Ahn is an associated artist at Théâtre de la Ville in Paris.

Oona Doherty

Oona Doherty is an Irish dance artist based in Belfast. Doherty's distinctive choreography has earned multiple awards. *Hope Hunt and the Ascension into Lazarus* (2015) was awarded a Tiger Dublin Fringe Festival Best Performer Award in 2016, and subsequently a Total Theatre Award as well as The Place Dance Prize at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2017. Doherty was voted one of the top 10 Irish Artists in 2017 by the Irish Times. Her first group piece *Hard to be Soft – A Belfast Prayer* (2017), was then voted the UK dance show of 2019 by the Guardian. In 2019 she created *Lady Magma: The Birth of a Cult*, a group work. Further collaborations include Jamie XX *I dont know* (2019), The Rubber Bandits (2017-2019), (La) Horde, Ballet National de Marseille (FR) (2021) and Artnight London (2021) In 2022 she will premiere her ambitious new work. <https://www.oonadohertyweb.com/>

Alfred Enoch

Alfred Enoch began acting as a child. His first role in film was 'Dean Thomas' in the Harry Potter series. More recently he has starred in Brazilian feature *Medida Provisoria*, and *Tigers*. Enoch's work in Television includes ABC's *How To Get Away With Murder*, which starred Viola Davis. He has also appeared in *Sherlock and Troy: Fall of a City*. Last year he starred in the second season of *Trust Me* on the BBC, and will next be seen in upcoming Apple TV series *Foundation*. Alfred also has an impressive body of theatre work including Kwame Kwei-Armah's *Tree* (Young Vic and MIF); *Red* alongside Alfred Molina (Wyndhams Theatre); *King Lear* as Edgar (Manchester Royal Exchange); *Coriolanus* (Donmar Warehouse); *Timon Of Athens* and *Antigone* (National Theatre); and *The Ballad Of Salomon Pavey* (Shakespeare's Globe). Before the lockdown he was in rehearsals to play Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare's Globe).

Lucy Guerin

In 2002 Lucy Guerin established Lucy Guerin Inc in Melbourne to support the development, creation and touring of new works with a focus on challenging and extending the concepts and practice of

contemporary dance. Recent works include *The Dark Chorus* (2016), *Split and Attractor* (2017) and *Make Your Own World* (2019). Guerin has toured her work extensively in Europe, Asia and North America as well as to most of Australia's major festivals and venues. She has been commissioned by Chunky Move, Dance Works Rotterdam (Netherlands), Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project (USA), Lyon Opera Ballet (France), Skånes Dansteater (Sweden) and Rambert (UK) among many others. Her awards include the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award, a New York Dance and Performance Award (a 'Bessie'), several Green Room Awards, three Helpmann Awards and three Australian Dance Awards. In 2016, Lucy received the Australia Council Award for Dance.

Amrita Hepi

Amrita Hepi (b.1989, Townsville of Bundjulong/Ngapuhi territories) is an artist working with dance and choreography through video, the social function of performance spaces, installation and objects. Utilising hybridity and the extension of choreographic or performative practices, Hepi creates work that considers the body's relationship to personal histories and the archive. In 2020 she is a Gertrude Contemporary artist in residence and is currently working with Kaldor projects/Serpentine UK as a participating DOit artist. Amrita trained at NAISDA and Alvin Ailey NYC.

Akram Khan

Akram Khan is one of the most celebrated and respected dance artists of today. In just over 19 years he has created a body of work that has contributed significantly to the arts in the UK and abroad. His reputation has been built on the success of imaginative, highly accessible and relevant productions such as *XENOS*, *Until the Lions*, *Kaash*, *iTMOi (in the mind of igor)*, *DESH*, *Vertical Road*, *Gnosis* and *zero degrees*. A highlight of his career was the creation of a section of the London 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony that was received with unanimous acclaim. Awards include the Laurence Olivier Award, the Bessie Award, the prestigious ISPA (International Society for the Performing Arts) Distinguished Artist Award, the Fred and Adele Astaire Award, the Herald Archangel Award at the Edinburgh International Festival, the South Bank Sky Arts Award and eight Critics' Circle National Dance Awards. Khan was awarded an MBE for services to dance in 2005.

Gregory Vuyani Maqoma

Gregory Vuyani Maqoma (b. Soweto, South Africa) started his formal dance training in 1990 at Moving Into Dance where in 2002 he became the Associate Artistic Director. Maqoma has established himself as an internationally renowned dancer, choreographer, teacher and director. He founded Vuyani Dance Theatre (VDT) in 1999. Maqoma is respected for his collaborations with numerous artists. Recent collaborations include William Kentridge's opera *The Head And The Load*, Tate Modern and touring to Germany, Austria, Holland and New York (2018); *Tree* with Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah, MIF and the Young Vic (2019). A multi-award winning artist, Maqoma's recent accolades include a Bessie for his work *Exit/Exist* (2014) and being honoured as a Chevalier de l' Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Arts & Literature) by the French Government in 2017. His current works *Via Kanana* and *Cion: Requiem of Ravel's Bolero* (DU 2019) have been halted from touring due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bebe

Miller

Bebe Miller first performed her work at NYC's Dance Theater Workshop in 1978. Her choreography has been commissioned by Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Oregon Ballet Theater, Boston Ballet, Philadanco, the UK's Phoenix Dance Company and a host of colleges and universities. Since its forming in 1985 Bebe Miller Company has performed nationally and in Great Britain, Europe, South America, Australia, Africa and the Caribbean. Over the last decade the Company has produced a variety of digital archive projects referencing the company's creative practice. Her latest ebook, *How Dancing Is Built: The Making of In A Rhythm*, is available online.

Satchie Noro

Choreographer, dancer, circus artist. French-born Satchie took her first steps in the dojo of her Japanese father, Masamichi Noro. She studied classical dance with Wilfride Piollet and aerial circus techniques with Michel Nowak. In 2002, she founded her own company Furinkai. She has collaborated with Adrien M & Claire B, Carlotta Sagna, James Thierré and Michel Schweizer. She currently co-directs the Circus School Les Noctambules in Nanterre. She is Associate Artist to the Nantes National Choreographic Centre directed by Ambra Senatore. She regularly teaches workshops to non-professional dancers, of all ages and capabilities.

Annie-B Parson

Annie-B Parson is a postmodern choreographer; she co-founded Big Dance Theater in 1991. She has also made dances and stagings for theater, opera, ballet, rock bands and symphony orchestras. She has made dance for David Byrne, David Bowie, St. Vincent, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Wendy Whelan, Laurie Anderson, Nico Muhly, Jonathan Demme, Salt n Pepa, Esperanza Spalding, Anne Carson, Jonsi, and the Martha Graham Dance Co. Her most recent work with David Byrne, [American Utopia](#), just opened as a film by Spike Lee.

Seeta Patel

Born in London, Seeta has worked with numerous Bharatanatyam and contemporary dance professionals and toured with companies including DV8 Physical Theatre, Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company, Gandini Juggling, David Hughes Dance Company and Mavin Khoo Dance. She has produced and presented solo and ensemble works at the Southbank Centre Purcell Room, Royal Opera House: ROH2 and Sadler's Wells. Her collaboration with Australian choreographer Lina Limosani, *Not Today's Yesterday* - a one-woman show taking a dramatic look at the whitewashing of history - premiered at the Adelaide Fringe Festival (2018) winning Best Dance and the Peace Foundation Award before touring the UK, India, Italy and Australia (2018/19/20). Film and TV credits include producing multi award-winning short dance film, *The Art of Defining Me* (2013) and being a judge and mentor on the *BBC Young Dancer* competition. Seeta created a Bharatanatyam version of *The Rite of Spring* (UK tour 2019) which will be expanded in 2022/23 at Sadler's Wells. www.seetapatel.co.uk

Jay Jay Revlon

From curating events, DJing, Ballroom (voguing) and mentoring; Jay Jay is listed as Time Out's 'One to Watch'. A committed community activist who is dedicated to creating safe spaces and conversations for QPOC and LGBTQ+; Jay Jay runs his own club night 'Let's Have a Kiki #theparty' and is a volunteer peer to peer mentor at Stonewall Housing. As Father of the 'UK House of Revlon' and founder of the 'Kiki House of Tea', Jay Jay is a leading authority of Ballroom in the UK. From leading workshops at Tate Britain and Southbank Centre, to bringing his inclusive flair to Brighton Pride, he is a frequent collaborator with LGBTQ+ artists such as Honey Dijon and Years & Years. DJing credits include Rinse FM, Fabric, The Royal Academy, National Portrait Gallery, Bussey Building and for brands such as Levi's, G-Star, JW Anderson's LFW Afterparty.

Kenrick 'H2O' Sandy

Kenrick 'H2O' Sandy MBE is co-founder and co-Artistic Director of Boy Blue. As choreographer Kenrick's credits include; film *R.E.B.E.L* (2018), dance theatre shows *REDD* (2019), Olivier nominated *Blak Whyte Gray* (2017), *The Five & the Prophecy of Prana* (2013), *A Night With Boy Blue* (2018, 2016, 2015, 2013) and Olivier Award winning *Pied Piper: A Hip-Hop Dance Revolution* (2007). Kenrick was awarded an MBE for services to dance and the community in Her Majesty the Queen's New Years honours list in 2017, a Companionship from LIPA, and an Honorary Fellowship (HonFGS) from Guildhall School of Music & Drama in 2018.

Arundhathi Subramaniam

Described as 'one of the finest poets writing in India today', Arundhathi Subramaniam is an award-winning Indian poet, prose writer on Indian spirituality, critic, curator and poetry editor. Widely translated and anthologised, her book, *When God is a Traveller* (2014) was the Season Choice of the Poetry Book Society, shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize. Her new book of poems, *Love Without a Story*, is forthcoming from Bloodaxe Books, UK, this November. Her other work includes the acclaimed mystic poetry anthology, *Eating God*, and the bestselling biography, *Sadhguru: More Than a Life and The Book of Buddha*. She is the recipient of various awards, including the inaugural Khushwant Singh Prize, the Raza Award for Poetry, the Zee Women's Award for Literature, the Il Ceppo Prize in Italy, the Mystic Kalinga award, among others. Her collaborations with dancer Alarmel Valli include an acclaimed production on dance and love poetry, *Only Until the Light Fades*.

Alarmel Valli

Noted for her "ability to turn a traditional grammar into a subtle, deeply internalized, personal dance poetry", Alarmel Valli's work has won acclaim in India and at international venues like the Bolshoi Theatre, Theatre De La Ville, Edinburgh Festival, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Avignon Festival, New York International Festival of Arts and the Salzburg Festival. Among several awards received are the Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan from the Indian President and the Chevalier of Arts and Letters from the French Government. Documentaries on her include Arun Khopkar's 'Pravahi' for the National Archives, a film by BBC for the Omnibus series and 'Lasya Kavya' by Sankalp Meshram.

Abby Zbikowski

Abby Zbikowski created her company Abby Z and the New Utility in 2012. She is a 2020 United States Artists Fellow and received the 2017 Juried Bessie Award for her “unique and utterly authentic movement vocabulary in complex and demanding structures to create works of great energy, intensity, surprise, and danger.” In 2018 Dance Umbrella UK awarded her a “Choreographer of the Future” commission. She is an inaugural Caroline Hearst Choreographer-In-Residence at the Lewis Center of the Arts at Princeton University (2017-19), current artist in residence at New York Live Arts (2018-20), and has been in residence at Bates Dance Festival, American Dance Festival, and the STREB Lab for Action Mechanics. She is an Assistant Professor of Dance at the University of Illinois and on faculty at American Dance Festival. She has taught at the Academy of Culture in Riga, Latvia; at Festival Un Pas Vers L’Avant in Abidjan, Ivory Coast; and studied at Germaine Acogny’s L’École de Sables in Senegal. Her company has been presented nationally, performing at noteworthy venues such as Jacob’s Pillow in Becket, MA, and the Fuse Box Festival in Austin, TX, among others.

SystemsLab

Facilitator: [Dawn Estefan](#) (psychotherapist, writer, trainer & speaker)

Curator: Anthea Lewis

Anthea is a movement artist, facilitator and producer who combines these facets to produce and create work under the Blulilli Projects. This includes UnTamed a female choreographic platform, Bit Pop a digital interactive dance film with architect Jerome Beresford and the installation performance of Stay With Me For Ever as part of SHE festival by Sweet’Art and an interactive film version with filmmaker Drew Cox. Last year she was invited by Dance Umbrella Festival’s guest programmer Freddie Opoku-Addaie to curate a discussion panel and returned this year with the follow up digital discussion Shifting Ground in partnership with SystemsLAB. As a freelance producer and project manager Anthea has worked with Sara Dos Santos, Yukiko Masui, Mina Aidoo, Acrojou, the Brick Box, the Albany, Stratford Circus, Like Minds, SystemsLAB, Adidas and ASOS. Anthea was also the assistant movement director on the Young Vic production of Jesus Hopped the A Train directed by Kate Hewitt and is a Guest Dance Lecturer at Central School for Speech and Drama on the Collaborative, Devised Theatre BA course.

Panelists:

Julia Cheng

Julia Cheng is a creative director, choreographer, dance artist spanning 15 years in the professional creative arts industry, with works presented nationally and internationally. She was appointed as Resident Choreographer 2020 for Royal Academy of Dance, she was a judge and mentor for BBC Young Dancer and mentor for the biggest UK Hip Hop Festival, Breakin’ Convention and recipient of runner-up prize for Hip Hop Dance Futures Award 2019. Julia has worked with Chinese Arts Now for the past 5 years which is an organisation championing British East-Asian artists. She is currently a Supported Artist with Bedford Creative Arts and University of Bedfordshire. Cheng has also co-directed several operas, one of which was awarded the George Butterworth Prize 2020, curated cross-art form exhibitions, theatre shows, dance films and youth productions. As the artistic director of House of Absolute Julia has created works for ICA, V&A, Sadler’s Wells, Southbank and more. Working with a team of multi-disciplinary artists to combine live music, technological innovation, visual arts, spoken-word and multi-media performances.

Tracy Gentles

Tracy Gentles is the Creative Director / CEO of Something To Aim For, a new charity that works to ensure inclusion is core to the creative and cultural industries. Their current work includes: flagship arts, health and wellbeing programme The Sick of the Fringe and Us In The Making, a new digital platform for experimentation, co-creation and sustaining communities online. Set up in 2020 through the support of Wellcome, STAF is an infrastructure organisation there to enable and support others. Tracy previously worked as a practicing artist, initially based in Manchester where she is from. During this time she was also engaged as a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Salford (2004-2008) before later relocating to London to work with Clod Ensemble (2008-14) as Producer. In 2015 Tracy set up artist development organisation In Company Collective, which informs the work she is doing today.

Nike Jonah

Nike has various roles in the cultural sector. She is currently a Visiting Research Fellow at Central School of Speech and Drama, and the lead for Popchange, a Pop Culture and Social Change initiative at Counterpoints Arts. In 2018, she launched Pan African Creative Exchange (PACE) a platform for artists based in Africa. Between 2008 and 2012, Nike led the Decibel programme, an Arts Council England initiative for African, Asian and Caribbean artists in England. Nike is a Trustee of the following; The European Cultural Foundation, The Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, The Royal Africa Society and The Bush Theatre.

About Dance Umbrella

Dance Umbrella is London's international Dance festival. We shine a light on new choreography every October, sharing memorable shows from around the world with audiences across the capital. We are committed to taking dance out and bringing audiences in by touring in inner and outer London, broadening definitions of contemporary dance, and developing partnerships with non-dance venues and organisations such as The Big Draw, National Theatre, Battersea Power Station and local councils. Founded in 1978, Dance Umbrella has reached audiences of well over a million people. Pioneering commissions by world class choreographers have been presented at sites ranging from the Royal Albert Hall and inner-city rooftops, to Tate Modern and outer London parks. Emma Gladstone was appointed Artistic Director & Chief Executive in 2013, and in addition to the festival, Dance Umbrella now runs digital projects, creative learning schemes and professional development programmes throughout the year.