



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Thursday 18 February 2021**

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# **DANCE UMBRELLA ANNOUNCES NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE FREDDIE OPOKU-ADDAIE**



Photo Miguel Altunaga Jr

- **OPOKU-ADDAIE, WHO HAS BEEN A GUEST PROGRAMMER AT THE FESTIVAL FROM 2016-19, TAKES OVER FROM EMMA GLADSTONE IN MARCH**

Dance Umbrella today announces the appointment of new Artistic Director and Chief Executive, Freddie Opoku-Addaie. Only the fourth person to hold this position in 43 years, Freddie heralds a new era in the festival's artistic leadership.

Opoku-Addaie is a critically acclaimed choreographer, dancer/performer, curator and teacher and is also the recipient of several choreographic awards and commissions. East London-born, Freddie's Ghanaian heritage informs his art practice through which he references disparate movement styles, folkloric themes and structured choreography to

make witty, conversational and affecting work.

Freddie was Guest Programmer for Dance Umbrella during a three-year initiative from 2016-2019. His *Out Of The System* programme presented exhilarating work by dance practitioners from the UK and abroad.

**Freddie Opoku-Addaie** said of his appointment: *'I am thrilled to be working with the fantastic Dance Umbrella team again as the next Artistic Director and Chief Executive, following on from the visionary Emma Gladstone. I'm seeing and listening to a generation of artists, creatives and communities who are fueling a shared movement beyond the established mainstream platforms. This is an opportunity for a generation to tangibly expand the global festival stage for contemporary dance and performance. The artist and audience experience has shifted beyond 3Ts (Tick Box/Tokenism/Tolerated) of diversity. In challenging times it's more essential than ever that we collaborate to deliver some exciting moves.'*

**Chair of Dance Umbrella Board, Jake Ulrich** said: *'We couldn't be happier or more excited about Freddie leading the festival into the future. Our long-standing relationship with him, coupled with his vision and expertise made him a stand-out candidate in a very strong field. This is a game-changing appointment for us. I cannot wait to see how his plans and ideas develop.'*

Freddie Opoku-Addaie is founder, director and curator of 'SystemsLAB' (2016), a platform that offers slack-time for multi-faceted, mid career artists, invaluable in raising important questions about contemporary dance and the framework and voices within the industry. SystemsLAB artist gatherings make connections with festivals, venues, organisations and creatives responding directly to their 21st century, diverse, artistic needs. After a hugely successful tour of a double bill in 2017, four more works were presented at Dance Umbrella 2019 and subsequently toured the UK March 2020 under the title *SystemsLAB: Mixed Bill*.

As well as performing with Internationally renowned artists and companies, Freddie has choreographed and performed in a catalogue of high profile productions including his breakthrough work *Silence Speaks Volumes*, and *Fidelity Project* (conceived/co-created/performed with Frauke Requardt) both of which reached the Bloomberg Place Prize finals in 2006 and 2010-2011 respectively. His compelling duet with Jorge Crejis *Bf* was selected by Aerowaves/Dance Across Europe Aerowaves Twenty, and other commissions include *Mis-thread* presented at Dance Umbrella 2010, *Remaining Energy* commissioned by the Barbican - thrillingly performed in response to and with Argentinian artist Leandro Erlich's installation *Dalston House*, and the witty solo work *Show Of Hands* commissioned by Dance Umbrella in 2013. Freddie's work has been presented internationally including Romania, Spain, Italy, Canada, Brazil, South Korea and India.

Freddie is also a highly respected teacher, leading and facilitating across national and international arts practices. He is a Part-Time Lecturer in Performing Arts at the University of East London, a Visiting Fellow Artist at Queen Mary University, London and has previously been guest composition lecturer at London Contemporary Dance School and a Studio Wayne McGregor Dance Artist.

Freddie regularly features on national and international select panels including the Edinburgh British Council Showcase. He has also been invited to international festivals

including Dance Gathering in Nigeria, Aerowaves - Dance across Europe and Dance Massive Platform in Melbourne, Australia.

Freddie is a former recipient of the prestigious Robin Howard Commission, One Dance UK (Dance of the African Diaspora), Trailblazer Fellow/Champion and co-curator of their annual showcase events (2016), and was an Associate Artist of the Royal Opera House - ROH2 (2009-12).

Freddie starts his new role part time in March and full time from May. Look out for future announcements about Dance Umbrella's plans.

**-ENDS**

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About Dance Umbrella**

Dance Umbrella is London's international dance festival, celebrating 21st century choreography across the capital and beyond. It's mission is to entice audiences, nurture artists, innovate practice, and stimulate interest in the power of the body in motion. Since 1978, the annual festival has brought outstanding contemporary dance to London, presenting more than 785 artists from 40 countries to over one million people. Dance Umbrella has commissioned over 85 new works and presented at 136 different venues ranging from Smithfield Market to the British Library; from canal long boats to Alexandra Palace Ice Rink; from inner city car park rooftops to outer London parks. Alongside the festival, Dance Umbrella creates year-round creative learning initiatives for all ages, develops new choreographic talent, hosts thought-provoking debates and discussions, and offers skill sharing opportunities for creative industry professionals.

[danceumbrella.co.uk](http://danceumbrella.co.uk)