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Unless otherwise indicated, the evidence and data for this report is based on field and desk survey work done by We Made That and Dance Umbrella in 2017 and in 2018 as part of the London Dance Infrastructure Study.

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Acknowledgements

Greater London Authority

Jacqueline Rose Rachael Roe Fiona Ross

We Made That

Oliver Goodhall Melissa Meyer Penelope Seguin Lili Lainé Hara Anastasiou

Dance Umbrella

Anu Giri Georgia Heighway Emma Gladstone

Pan London Dance Partnership

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Executive summary

London is home to some of the most talented and creative dance professionals in the world. There are many benefits to having such a thriving dance scene on our doorstep. From Bhangra to breakdance, flamenco to tap, dance crosses cultures and brings people together. As an activity it promotes health and wellbeing. And commercially, it draws millions of tourists annually to our musicals and shows.

To reap these benefits we need to protect the venues which host our dance communities. They are an integral part of the social and cultural fabric of London.

This report is part of the Mayor's Cultural Infrastructure Plan and sets out the current state of play regarding dance infrastructure. It is based on findings from the first ever research study looking at dance performance and rehearsal spaces in London. Spaces that include everything from school halls and libraries to world class theatres and state-of-the-art studios. It reveals that, while our city's dance infrastructure is as diverse as the artists, choreographers and teachers that make up the dance profession, access to affordable studio space is by far the biggest challenge facing London's dance community today.

It's clear that there is an urgent need to invest in dance facilities. To make this happen, we need to work together with local authorities, developers, funders, dance professionals and organisations to make sure our dance spaces continue to support talent development, health and wellbeing and cultural exchange for generations to come.



Key recommendations

These recommendations are intended to support the protection and growth of dance infrastructure. They are for consideration by local authorities, developers, funders, dance professionals and cultural organisations:

- Use the Mayor's **Cultural Infrastructure Map** to understand local supply of facilities and identify where new facilities are needed¹.
- When developing that cultural, planning and regeneration policies consider including dance facilities, particularly in areas where there is currently little provision of dance infrastructure.
- 3 Create affordable dance facilities within existing premises. This can be achieved by auditing premises for underused capacity and the potential to improve fit-out.
- Ensure that new multi-use buildings for community use, leisure or culture include an appropriate fit out for dance activity.
- Develop bespoke professional dance facilities which meet the needs of the professional dance sector. This supports the talent pipeline and also provides wider community benefits.

¹ **Draft London Plan** Policy HC5: Boroughs are encouraged to develop an understanding of the existing cultural offer in their areas, evaluate what is unique or important to residents, workers and visitors and develop policies to protect those cultural assets. Boroughs should draw on the Mayor's forthcoming Cultural Infrastructure Plan to assess and develop their cultural offer.

What is dance infrastructure?

Dance infrastructure is defined as buildings with facilities for the rehearsal or performance of dance.

The research which supports this report took place in three stages:

- 1. initial baseline research in 2017 and re-mapping in late 2018
- 2. talking to stakeholders via workshops and questionnaires
- 3. case study profile visits

Findings are based upon input from over 180 respondents. These include touring companies, teachers, choreographers, dance organisations, and dancers. This has provided a range of contributions from stakeholders who engage with infrastructure in different ways.

MAPPING APPROACH

A set of criteria to identify which buildings would be mapped was applied. They had to be

- self-identified as providing facilities which are used for dance. This ensures that the buildings mapped were intended to provide for dance activities, even if alongside other activities. This means that the design and fit-out of the facility or that the space was marketed to the dance profession.
- publicly bookable. This ensures that the buildings mapped were available for public use by Londoners, including professionals.

Two categories were then applied, **one for rehearsal** and **one for performance.** Some buildings provide both.

Buildings were also defined as either **primary** – with facilities exclusively for dance, or **secondary** – with facilities used for other purposes too.

SCOPE OF THE MAPPING

8

The scope of the mapping approach means that buildings which have facilities that might be used for dance, but don't fit these criteria, are not included. Acknowledged gaps in the mapping include:

- Facilities that are in any way reserved for private use.
 For example, institutional spaces for use by their own dancers only.
- Buildings which can be used for dance activities but which aren't publicly advertised or self-identified as such. For example, some community halls, church spaces, school halls.
- Some secondary buildings. Because secondary buildings are multi-use, they are not always available for dance bookings. If these weren't available for booking at the time of mapping, they wouldn't have been included.

The scale of London's cultural infrastructure means that it is ever changing. The mapping which underpins this report provides the best snapshot of information that we have gathered to date. It will continue to evolve, adding new facilities as information is provided. Community centres are mapped as a separate category on the Mayor's **Cultural Infrastructure Map**.

The data which underpins this research can be found in the Mayor's **Cultural Infrastructure Map** or on the **London DataStore**.

Why is dance infrastructure important?

MAINTAINING LONDON'S REPUTATION AS A WORLD CLASS CITY FOR CULTURE

London has a worldwide reputation for dance. Our dance facilities offer creative opportunities and a place to showcase dance performance across the city. 4 out of 5 visitors to London say that culture is their main reason for coming to London². Tourists flock to our West End musical successes, from The Lion King to Billy Elliot. Their continued popularity is as much about dance as it is about music and theatre. The city also has an amazing legacy from the Big Dance festival which ran for a decade. London hosts important international festivals such as Dance Umbrella, which showcases international dance, and Breakin' Convention, which showcases the best of hip-hop dance theatre. It is home to outstanding dance performance venues too, like Sadler's Wells, The Place, the Royal Opera House and the London Coliseum where English National Ballet presents its largest scale performances. All bring world class dance to local and visiting audiences. London's future talents get training from some of the best dance organisations in the world. These include Trinity Laban, The Place, Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance and the Royal Ballet School.

PROVIDING HEALTH AND WELLBEING BENEFITS

Dance can keep people of all ages mentally and physically fit, from 5 to 85. The UK's Health Secretary has championed the mental and physical health benefits of dance activities. Studies show that for adults, dance can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and chronic heart disease. It can improve cognitive and physical development. It can boost social skills, reduce

symptoms of depression and increase cardiovascular fitness. Dance can also prevent or reduce obesity and increase self-esteem. Trials of GP's prescribing dance to patients to reduce reliance on painkillers and anti-depressants in Croydon reported a 20% reduction in hospital outpatient referrals (in the twelve months to July 2018), and a 4% drop in emergency hospital admissions from the medical centre in Thornton Heath, which pioneered the scheme³.

Many dance organisations run programmes which support Londoners' health needs. For example, Trinity Laban runs 'Dancing Ahead' which is a weekly dance programme for young people aged 10-16 years at risk of low self-esteem or poor mental health. English National Ballet offer a 'Dance for Parkinson's' programme. Rambert runs Mercury Movers classes which are designed for people aged 60 and over to improve their balance and flexibility through contemporary dance exercises and improvisation.

A GLOBAL EXPERIENCE IN ONE CITY

London's diversity and wealth of cultural influences are reflected in the many dance styles people perform and take part in each day here. This experience can help people connect with their heritage and support them to understanding other cultures. There's everything from salsa to Irish, and ballet to contemporary. For example, Flamenco at Escuela de Baile in Camden, interdisciplinary dance practice at Siobhan Davies Dance, Contemporary African Dance with Movement Angol at Islington Arts Factory, Kathak and Bollywood dance with Apsara Arts in Croydon, and of course Carnival, Europe's biggest annual dance and music event.

CONTRIBUTING TO PLACEMAKING

Dance facilities can help to strengthen an area's local identity and make a place more vibrant. One example is Trinity Laban in Deptford. Designed by Herzog & de Meuron, it won the Stirling Prize for Architecture in 2003. It is the world's largest purpose built contemporary dance centre with 12 studios and a studio theatre. The building has contributed to a hub of creativity and community involvement in this area.

Dance premises are designed and used differently to many other cultural facilities. They are often made up of both individual studios and other amenities which can host a mix of rehearsal, performance, commercial activities and public classes and courses. These are typically booked on an hourly or daily basis. This means that a range of users visit a dance facility on any given day – from daytime professional rehearsal to public evening classes creating activity at all times of the day. With the right design dance activity can easily be integrated into multiuse or community buildings.

PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Dance professionals often have multifaceted careers, which may include performing, choreographing, producing, community outreach, teaching dance and fitness, project management and arts administration. Dance organisations provide direct employment for a range of these roles. The sector also offers a range of associated jobs such as marketing and press roles, physiotherapy, general management, facilities management, accounting and IT.

Research with 160 dance organisations shows that together they employ over 3,200 people. They also provide a minimum of 400 extra associated freelance and seasonal jobs.

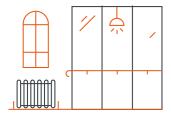
The sector is sustained by a wide base of small-scale employers and a small base of large-scale employers. Around 50 per cent of respondents employ fewer than 9 people. Whereas only 7 per cent of respondents reported directly employing over 50 people and so contribute considerably to the employment total. Both types of employers need to be supported in order to retain and sustain a range of employment opportunities.

Key findings

There are 335 buildings used for dance rehearsal and performance in London.

TYPE OF BUILDINGS

Only 78 of these buildings are used primarily for dance. For the remaining 257 buildings, dance is a secondary use where dance activity takes place alongside other activities. These may be cultural, creative, commercial or educational settings in everything from school halls to arts centres, like the Bernie Grant Arts Centre in Tottenham and artsdepot in Barnet. The live dataset can be found in the **Cultural Infrastructure Map**.



335

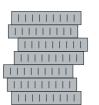
buildings used for dance rehearsal, production and performance mapped across London. Seventy nine of these are used primarily for dance



50%+

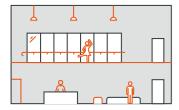
of mapped buildings used for dance are concentrated in central London





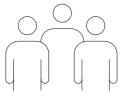
33%

of users pay between £25-£50 an hour, but only 5% consider this rate affordable



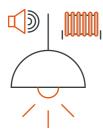
77%

of London's dance facilities are located in buildings which have other functions



3,200+

jobs are provided by surveyed dance organisations and practitioners



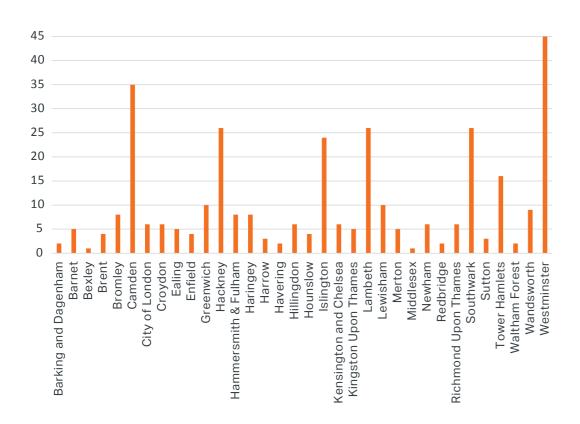
19%

of dance facilities are not of a specification considered to be suitable for professional dance activities



WHERE ARE DANCE BUILDINGS?

There are buildings being used for dance in every borough. However, most are in inner London. In general, outer London boroughs have far fewer facilities. There is also more provision in east London boroughs than west.



Overall, the provision in single boroughs ranges from 1 to 50 buildings with facilities for dance:

central London (168 buildings)

east London (77 buildings)

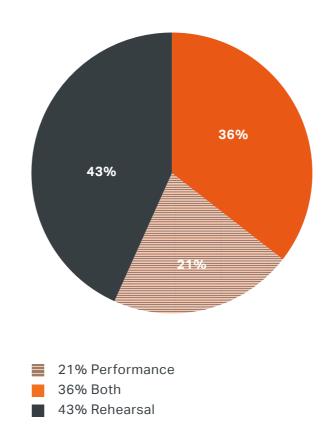
south London (36 buildings)

west London (37 buildings)

north London (17 buildings)

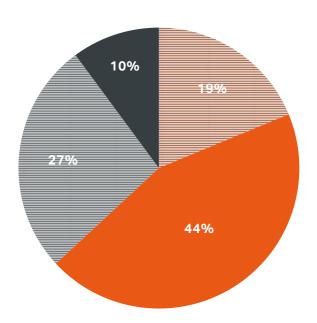
THE RATIO OF PERFORMANCE TO REHEARSAL FACILITIES

Most venues are used primarily for rehearsal space, followed by those which are used for both performance and rehearsal.



QUALITY OF FACILITIES

Overall, the level of specification of London's dance facilities is good. This means that facilities are fitted out to essential standards and include a sprung or semi-sprung wood floor, high ceiling height and regulated heating. Only about 27 per cent of facilities are fitted out to higher standards suitable for professionals by including features such as storage, lockers and showers.



- 10% Unknown specification
- 19% Basic specification. (Spaces with no essential features for professional dance use.)
- 27% High specification. (Spaces with additional features for professional dance use. These are defined as mirrors, ballet barres, piano, showers, locker space and wi-fi.)
- 44% Essential specification. (Spaces with essential features for professional dance use. These are defined as: a sprung or semi-sprung wood floor; high ceiling height and regulated heating.)

STABILITY OF PROVISION

When comparing openings and closures in a twelve month period from 2017-2018 the data shows a net reduction in sites from 340 to 335 sites. This includes 13 newly opened sites providing at least 38 rehearsal studios and 17 site closures which provided at least 29 rehearsal studios.

Whilst the number of sites has reduced, new larger sites with the ability to provide more studios means that on aggregate provision remains largely unchanged. The opening of Mountview College of Performing Arts in Peckham provides 22 studios.

This review suggests that performance facilities for dance are relatively stable, but that small scale independent rehearsal facilities are more vulnerable to closure. 12 sites used for dance rehearsal closed in this period. While the remaining five that closed hosted both performance and rehearsal space.

The loss of small independent studios has occurred in several ways, but primary reasons relate either to the redevelopment of industrial spaces or the conversion of premises into another use.



AFFORDABILITY OF SPACE

A third of dance facility users pay an hourly rate of between £25-£50 to hire the space. Yet, only five per cent of users consider this rate to be affordable. The core of this challenge has to do with affordability of appropriate dance studio spaces across the board. Young people, small companies and early stage artists are impacted in particular.

Living and travel costs compound these pressures for the dance sector in London. Access to affordable studio facilities for rehearsal and creative development is the most commonly cited problem. This means that found free space, or repurposed space is attractive. For example, the Royal Festival Hall cloakroom space is used by many artists for rehearsals and training.

This requirement should be understood in the context of the challenges that those who provide and run dance facilities face. The main threats to premises' operation are financial in nature. Respondents identified escalating rental costs, business rates and an overall lack of suitable funding as core concerns affecting the viability of spaces. Linked to this, providers report the impact of reduced funding on their ability to provide affordable dedicated facilities to artists. It was noted that offsetting income generation against operating costs is a tough balancing act. There is little doubt that with the right conditions dance organisations can operate self sustaining business models. However, local authorities, funders and developers are also identified as having a role to play in enabling the correct conditions for this.

AN ECOSYSTEM OF SUBSIDISED SUPPORT

Across the dance sector, facilities offer a way to support dance artists and associated organisations. Studio facilities are often provided as part of in-kind or subsidised support. This can also be in exchange for events programming like performances and classes. There is also some cross-subsidy between commercial hire and artistic hire so that artists and organisations can be offered lower rates.

These arrangements have been made formal in some places. For example, Studio Wayne McGregor's FreeSpace programme which offers a set amount of free access to studios. Wac Arts in Belsize Park has commercial hires which allow further financing of the organisation's programming, and mean that 'no young person is turned away'.

Providers report a philosophical desire to fairly charge artists for use of facilities. This includes charging different rates across users so they can subsidise independent artists as much as possible through access to affordable space. This then needs to be balanced against external targets for hire and generating income.



Increasing dance infrastructure capacity

WHAT IS THE DEMAND FOR FACILITIES?

It is clear that there is a need for more dance infrastructure of a range of sizes.

The research demonstrated that London's dance facilities are busy. Across all dance providers who responded, more than 3,800 people are based at dance premises across London on any given day. This averages out to around 140 people a day per site.

All providers interviewed agreed there is strong demand for facilities. All believe they could book out extra supply. They also report that there is strong demand for facilities across all types of users. This includes artistic, teaching and commercial uses.

It has been suggested anecdotally that there has been a fall in the reduced availability of facilities for dance over the last five years. Reasons cited were closures from redevelopment and local authority funding pressures, as well as the need to increase commercial hires to operate a viable business model. It was also noted that relationships with higher education institutions have changed. These facilities are no longer playing a large role in the (publicly available) dance infrastructure ecology due to funding changes and income pressures.

WHERE ARE THE GAPS?

Facility users report a need for better distribution of facilities across the city to reduce their overdependence on travel to central London. Evidence shows that the professional dance sector uses facilities outside London. Thirty six per cent of users report using sites outside of the city for dance work. The most common use is for rehearsal. This use ranges in frequency from twice a week to once a year and is often project specific. One of the reasons given was that there are a lack of available large-scale facilities in London which enable rehearsal with a full company and scenery.

In light of the cost of living challenges identified by the sector, some providers have also identified the need for accommodation to be included in new dance space provision. This could support artists from outside London who are travelling in to use London's dance infrastructure. This accommodation would help to offset travel and touring costs.

A PLAN FOR GOOD GROWTH

The data shows that there is room for growth.

By improving distribution of facilities across London more equality of access would be provided. This would help to increase cultural activity and participation.

Growth can be achieved by protecting and developing existing dance facilities, re-appropriating existing buildings for dance use, and developing new premises for purchase or for long term lease by operators.

INCREASING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE SPACE IN EXISTING BUILDINGS

Improved stability of the sector could also be impacted by creating opportunities for long term leases and purchasing of premises.

With a small amount of investment, existing buildings can be made fit for dance activity and promoted to the dance sector. Community halls, leisure centres and libraries are prime examples. Existing building stock should be audited both for its potential to improve fitout and for underused capacity.

INCREASING OPENING HOURS

Many visual artists' studios are open late into the night-time and some provide access 24 hours a day. Similarly, dance facility providers could expand access to help meet demand. This research shows that there are issues with affordability and accessing premises. This highlights a need to consider how existing infrastructure is used. For example, extending opening hours into evenings and weekends would allow more dance artists to access facilities outside of peak travel times. Weekends and school holiday periods is another way to open-up more facilities to the sector.

More intensive use of existing premises has implications in terms of management and operation. However, it is worth considering as improving access and affordability of existing infrastructure can help to strengthen London's dance offering without investing in bigger capital cost of new premises.

SHARING BUILDINGS

Most dance professionals don't share ownership of facilities with other organisations. However, they do see the appeal of opportunities to collaborate, share facilities, skills and development support. Both dance professionals and organisations see the benefit of more co-owned or co-managed assets like studios, offices or performance platforms to help relieve the financial and resource pressures. In this way, space can help to sustain dance rather than be a resource pressure. Supporting such opportunities might be extended to include business modelling and training support.

Creating new dance infrastructure

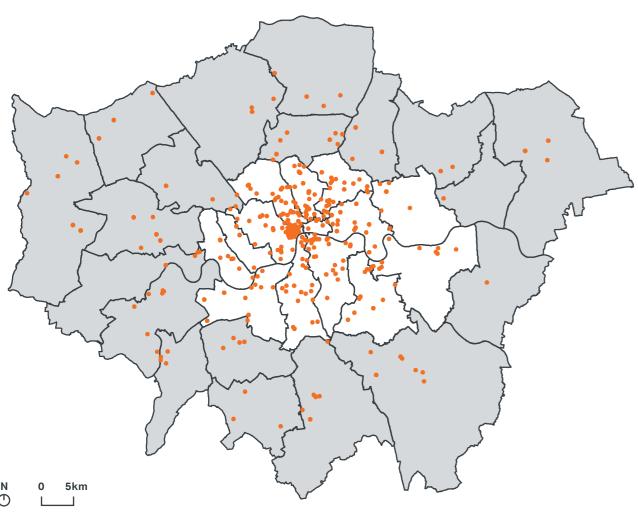
Operators of dance infrastructure have identified barriers to obtaining and managing new premises. Local authorities and developers have a role to play in making sure these opportunities are made available and that they are viable to potential operators. This includes offering affordable rent, brokering developer and operator relationships and offering lease lengths of 25 years and above.

Partnerships between developers and dance organisations should be established early on to achieve the best outcome. This will help ensure that facilities are suitable for dance.

The data clearly shows that there are cold spots of dance facility supply in parts of London. Anecdotal evidence shows that dance facility users are travelling across London to access facilities. There is a desire for more localised provision that is 'closer to home', reducing travel time and costs. This implies a demand for more facilities in outer London where supply is less concentrated but (in general) where residential values are lower. It also shows that a number of potential opportunities for new dance facilities are being created through regeneration and infrastructure improvements. Dance facilities are versatile and scalable to a range of different new development typologies.

Analysis of the buildings used for dance mapped against transport nodes show there are clear opportunities for more provision in outer and west London. Page 30 overlays dance infrastructure against inner and outer London boroughs.

Inner and outer London dance facility supply



- Outer London boroughs
- Dance studio space / venue

LOCAL PLANS

Local plans set the borough-wide vision and framework for development. A local plan identifies development needs for the area, and opportunities in relation to housing, the local economy, community facilities and cultural infrastructure. Dance facilities are commonly overlooked within local planning documents.

Along with other cultural facilities, dance and/or local Cultural Infrastructure Plans can be referred to within local plans.

NEW NIGHT TIME TRANSPORT NODES

Opportunities to increase the number of buildings with dance facilities and extend opening hours of existing dance facilities should be considered as part of local night-time economy strategies and visions. Transport services enabled by the Night Tube and Overground also have a role to play. The map on page 32 overlays London's dance infrastructure with Night Tube transport infrastructure. This helps to identify opportunities to line up expanded-hours infrastructure along the Night Tube lines.

OPPORTUNITY AREAS, TOWN CENTRES AND HOUSING ZONES

Opportunity Areas, town centres and Housing Zones offer a chance to support the development of new cultural facilities. The map on page 32 overlays current dance infrastructure with Opportunity Areas and proposed Housing Zones. This is an opportunity to increase current supply and its distribution across London.



Dance facilities can be co-provided with other kinds of infrastructure, like housing, through intensification of sites. They can also be provided alongside other non-residential uses. They can be the anchor organisation in new town centre developments and equally small-scale studios can play a role is animating high streets. Multiple workspace uses can be incorporated on one site. This can include dance facilities together with other workspace provision and include flexible working facilities.

Understandably not every regeneration programme will have the capacity to provide new primary dance facilities. However, this study has demonstrated the role that secondary multi-use and community buildings play in providing capacity for dance facilities. This highlights how important it is to consider the needs of dance organisations in developing any community, leisure or cultural facility.

LOCAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Including dance facilities and working closely with dance organisations can bring many things to all scales of new development. Dance organisations attract visitors to sites, provide events programming and contribute to the character and identity of places. They can be a key anchor organisation for new development. For example, a partnership between Eco World Ballymore sees English National Ballet and English National Ballet School move to a new purpose built facility in London City Island. The design of the building will open up the activities of the dance company to the public, incorporating large windows onto public spaces and external performance spaces. Equally, more modest sites can also incorporate dance facilities such as smaller rehearsal studios. A Berkeley Group development at Battersea Reach houses two small scale dance facilities, operated by One Dance UK and BBO Dance (British Ballet Organisation).

EVIDENCING LOCAL NEED

To support the development of new dance facilities, it is useful to understand what the local position is. In his Cultural Infrastructure Plan and draft London Plan the Mayor calls on local authorities to assess and develop their cultural offer by understanding existing cultural assets. This can be done by using and adding data to the **Cultural Infrastructure Map**. It is also useful to further engage local dance organisations and communities to understand both their current and future needs. This review provides the basis for a local Cultural Infrastructure Plans.

Examples of dance infrastructure

Here are a range of different dance facilities that show how dance infrastructure can be incorporated into new development and existing buildings.



BESPOKE DEDICATED FACILITY:

Studio Wayne McGregor

In 2017, Studio Wayne McGregor moved into the organisation's first dedicated home at Here East in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. The 1,600sqm /17,222 sqft creative arts facility has three dance studios, including two of the largest in London.



HISTORIC BUILDING CONVERSION:

Wac Arts

Wac Arts is a charity offering training in performing arts and media for children and young people. It is located in the Old Town Hall in Belsize Park. There are two extensions to the original building, one of which was purpose-built for the organisation in 2000.



COMMUNITY FACILITY:

Artizan Street Library

Created by the City of London in 2012, Artizan Street Library and Community Centre is a multi-use building. It hosts a range of facilities, including for dance. It is fitted out with a sprung wood floor and used for dance and exercise classes.



NEW-BUILD GROUND FLOOR:

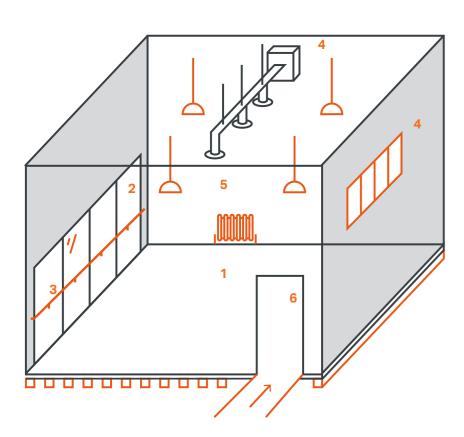
Canada Water Studios

Canada Water Studios was finished in 2014. It is on the ground floor of a new residential building. The 279,000sqm/3,000 sqft unit includes dance facilities for rehearsal and teaching as well as for the community.

Dance rehearsal facility design

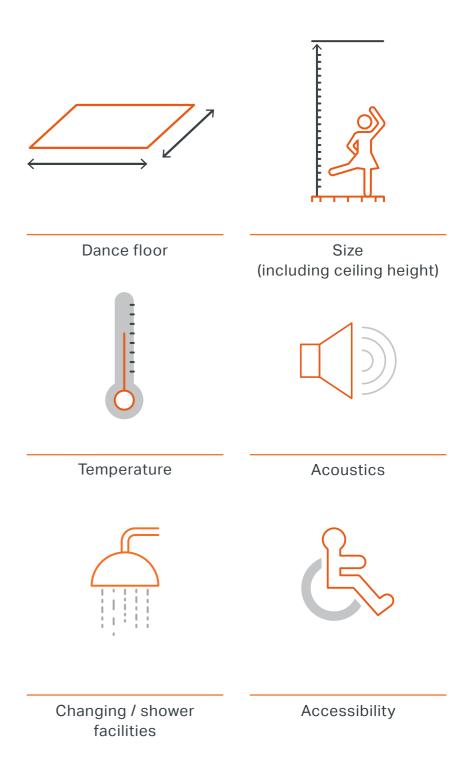
This guidance acts as a checklist of considerations for local authorities, developers and those planning new dance facilities. More detailed information can be found in the Mayor's **Cultural Infrastructure Design Toolkit**.

These features are considered essential for professional dance uses. Many are necessary to prevent injury. Acoustics are vital to allow for multiple practices or uses, cancelling out music and heavy footwork noises. The need for extra features like barres and mirrors varies according to dance practices. It is also advisable for building owners and operators to sign up to the **Equity and One Dance UK Fit to Dance Charter**.



FEATURES OF DANCE REHEARSAL SPACES

- 1. Dance floor
- 2. Mirrors
- 3. Barres
- 4. Ventilation (passive ventilation where possible)
- 5. Heating
- 6. Facilities cater for a range of mobility and access needs



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DANCE FACILITIES INCLUDE:

Facilities hosting dance facilities might also include the following ancillary features:

- communal space which could also accommodate hot desking
- offices
- storage
- servicing

Hot desking and office spaces can allow for more revenue generation. They can also accommodate administrative uses that dance facility users might need alongside rehearsal.

The requirement for servicing refers to the potential need to accommodate deliveries and the movement of props, sets and equipment. The need for storage reflects reporting from dance facility users that there is great difficulty when a facility cannot accommodate storing props, scenery and equipment overnight and they must dismantle and take them away after every use.

When developing new dance facilities, it is advisable to partner with an operator or seek relevant expertise at an early stage, to inform the design and operation of the facility. To find an operator you may wish to advertise the opportunity with local dance networks, trade press and on trade websites. Advice can also be obtained from local authority arts and culture services, Arts Council England and City Hall's Culture and Creative Industries team.

When developing new dance facilities, it is advisable to partner with an operator or seek relevant expertise at an early stage, to inform the design and operation of the facility.

Accessibility

Dance is an inclusive and accessible art form.

The environment in which dance takes place must be inclusive with clear provision for disabled people. As well as meeting legal accessibility standards, think beyond legislation. Facilities should include considerations for a range of requirements including wheelchair users and those with visual and hidden impairments. Key design considerations beyond legislation include:

- access to backstage areas such as changing and dressing rooms
- cafés and communal areas

Environmentally sustainable growth

Design, build and operation of new facilities should be environmentally sustainable. Once up and running, there should be a sustainability action plan.

USEFUL WEBSITES AND WEBLINKS

onedanceuk.org
cae.org.uk
juliesbicycle.com
communitydance.org.uk
londondance.com
Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary planning guide
Specifying Dance Floors, a guide for architects (Harlequin)
The Fit to Dance Charter (Equity and One Dance UK)
Inclusion by Design (Design Council)