

Our Voice Network: Proposal

For so long, as Black artists, we have been the ‘other’ in the room – we come into spaces and are labelled ‘the black one’. This feeling of alienation makes it difficult for Black artists to feel they have a valued place and voice in the sector. As a key component to ensuring change happens in this area, we propose initiating an ‘Our Voice Network’. We want the ‘Our Voice Network’ to be a space first for Black artists to be freed from being ‘the black one’ in the room – free from the pressure to represent a community or group of people instead of themselves alone -free to speak to the breadth of issues that matter to them instead of feeling obligated to speak up for Black issues because no one else will. The key priorities for this network are: Amplify the work and contribution of Black Welsh and Wales-based choreographers and movement directors; A space that is led and facilitated by Black artists; Be a place for artists to support and connect with one another - to exchange ideas and thoughts – to help to strengthen the contribution of Black artists in the sector; Raise up, develop, mentor, and encourage more Black artists to join the sector.

As well as supporting Black artists contributing to the arts sector in Wales, we hope that this network will be a part of mentoring and bringing up the next generation of Welsh and Wales-based Black artists. However, we do not want to keep our voices, our experiences, and our work within this community. It is important to us to be able to share it with the sector as a whole – the sector is strengthened by a diversity of voices. It is for this reason that we will open up the facilitated sessions to choreographers and movement directors – aspiring, emerging, and experienced – no matter what their race or ethnicity.

We aim to gather artists by first reaching out to choreographers and movement directors we know between us, and then using those networks to reach out further afield to connect with other Black aspiring/emerging/experienced choreographers and/or movement directors. Our aim is to reach up to 30 Black artists through this network.

We know this network is needed we have each seen the lack of support and development opportunities for Welsh and Wales-based Black artists to achieve their full potential – that there is a

great lack of spaces where Black artists aren't the minority, where Black artists are in leadership positions, and where Black artists are recognised for their contribution and asked to share their talent and work as a learning opportunity for others in the sector. There is a great lack of spaces where Black artists are truly seen as valuable equals in the sector and there is no way to make real change towards greater diversity in the sector without Black artists being heard, recognised and valued for all they're *already* doing – and having a space to see other Black artists in leadership positions sharing their experience and work. We hope that the 'Our Voice Network' will be able to come along-side the sector to provide a platform for Black artists to be seen and for their voices to be heard.

In order to ensure the sustainability of this network we will look for existing organisations to offer support going forward. We will also ensure that the process of being connected to the network is informal and light-touch. We will do this by having only one facilitated session per month for people to attend while each individual member has the option to connect with others in the network in their own time.

We would like the Arts Council Wales' Sharing Together fund to cover the cost of a professional Zoom platform to be used by the Network for gatherings and facilitated sessions as well as a resource to freelance dance artists throughout Wales available for the period of one year, the fees for facilitators and access costs to ensure the sessions and gathering can be attended by a wide range of artists.

Budget Outline:

1 Lead facilitator per session (3 sessions) – and 5 Guest Speakers (between 3 sessions) @ £150.00 per session x8 = £1,200.00

1 Year of Zoom - £120.00

Access Costs - £680.00

Total: £2,000.00