

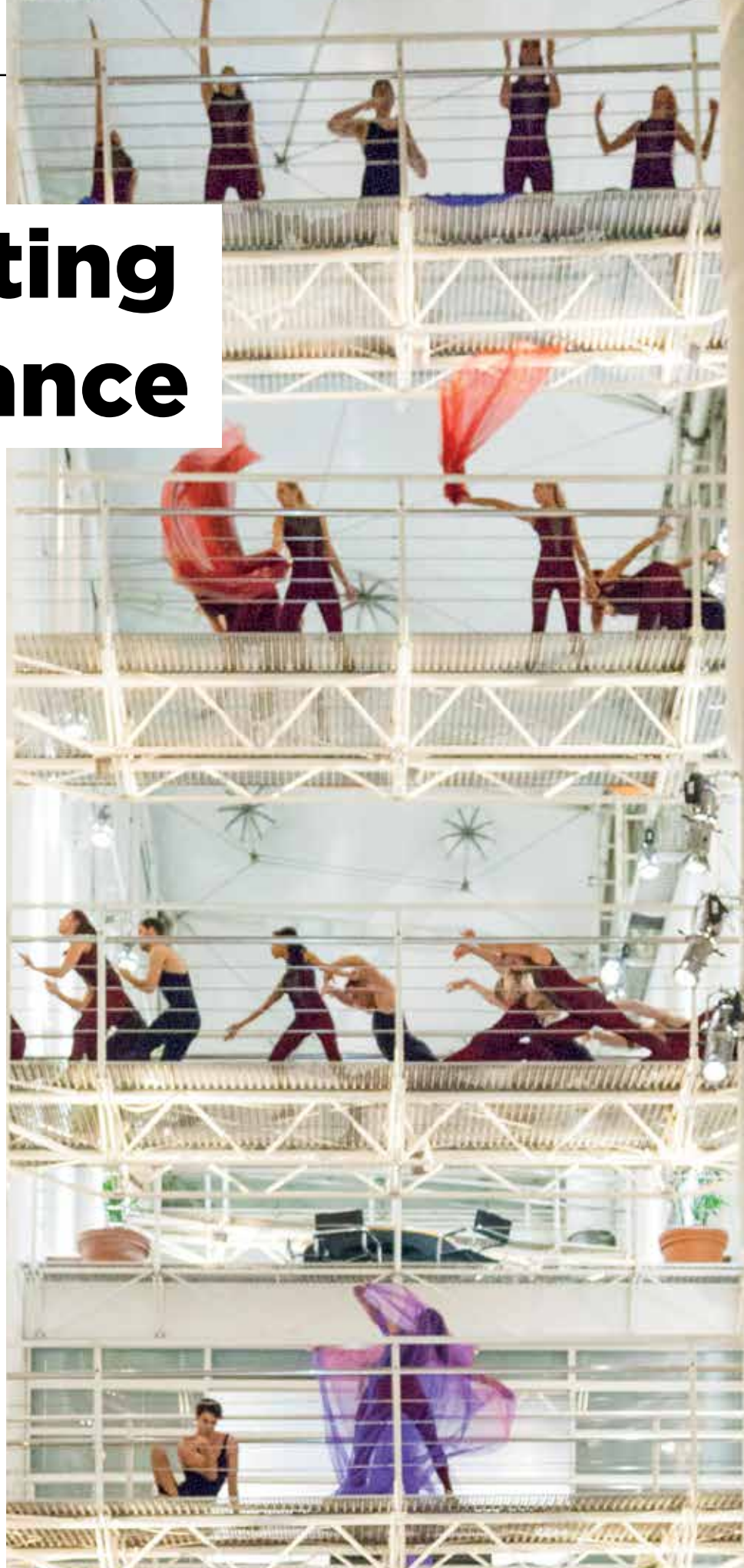
Supporting safer dance

Following the launch of People Dancing and Safe in Dance International (SiDI)'s new online learning course, SiDI's Co-Founders, **Maggie Morris** and **Sonia Rafferty**, explain how safe dance practice is vital for optimising performance, minimising risk and supporting the wellbeing of every dancer

Lots of people see 'health and safety' as a set of rules that are necessary to protect workers but nevertheless can be restrictive and stifling. Certainly, in terms of artistic and creative practice, there are worries that overtly focusing on safety may be detrimental to innovation and risk-taking. But healthy and safe dance practice is so much more than industry regulations; it is the best way to optimise performance and to reduce injury risk.

In the 21st century, there is the research and the technology to move beyond tradition and look deeply into how we dance in order to be more effective practitioners and dancers. Dance leaders benefit from a greater understanding of the different types of dancing body and how the needs of dancers change with their development, level of participation and the stylistic demands of an ever-growing range of genres. We now know more about physiologically >>

Right: Students from Laine Theatre Arts.
Photo: Matthew Tomkinson



effective ways to warm-up and cool down, when and how best to stretch in order to recover and improve flexibility and how to support our bodies with proper nutrition and hydration. By understanding how to structure dance sessions from a physiological perspective, we can enhance the dancer's learning and experience, making it not only safer but more productive. Effective communication will help to nurture a positive environment.

Health and safety guidelines for the physical environment are also important to protect people and this includes knowing how to prepare the spaces in which we dance, ensuring that the facilities used for dance are suitable: the temperature right, floors sprung and so on.

Everyone involved in dance should be able to train, teach, rehearse or perform in a physiologically and psychologically safe and supportive environment. Rather than limiting creative risk, healthy and safe dance practice will support the artform as it continues to develop, enhance performance and, most importantly, support the wellbeing of every dancer.

To keep up to date with the latest recommendations, all dance practitioners – including choreographers, artistic directors and managers as well as teachers and dancers – can refresh their safe practice through continuing professional development (CPD) activities that have distilled research into knowledge that can be applied to everyone's everyday dance practice.

With this in mind, Safe in Dance International (SiDI) and People Dancing recently launched their new interactive online learning programme, Preparing for Safer Dance Practice, at the Jerwood DanceHouse in Ipswich during the first regional meeting in the UK of the International Association for Dance Medicine & Science (IADMS). Held in partnership with One Dance UK and DanceEast, the event focused on The Adolescent Dancer and was a perfect venue and setting to launch this new initiative.

Available to all dance practitioners internationally, Preparing for Safer Dance Practice is relevant to those delivering or dancing in any dance style, from classical ballet and ballroom

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to Hip Hop and Zumba. It works for anyone – teachers, choreographers, directors and dancers – working in any context and at any level, with children or adults, beginners or professionals.

Dance injuries can happen to anyone at any time but they don't have to be inevitable. Of course, being safe is not just about injuries – being healthy in dance also means having the best experience possible. Simple things such as dancing on the right kind of floor, warming up properly, or maintaining a safe environment, both physically and mentally, will all help. In this way, any dancer, whether a professional performing to thousands on stage, a three year old at her weekly local dance class or an older adult dancing for their health and enjoyment, will be able to get the most from their dancing. Preparing for Safer Dance Practice will help all dance leaders provide an effective and enjoyable experience for all those who dance, regardless of age or experience, at the same time as being mindful of injury risk.

Anna Leatherdale, Producer at People Dancing, describes the new learning package as “every dance leader's passport to safer dance practice”. She says, “This is all about ensuring dancers' safety and wellbeing, creating and managing hazard-free environments, being risk aware, becoming familiar with safety laws and regulations and always upholding the principles of safe practice, including when conditions may be less than ideal.

“In joining forces with Safe in Dance International we have pulled together the knowledge and experience of both organisations to ensure that this online course is universally relevant

and integrates the most recent dance science research into practice.”

The programme puts safe practice at the heart of all dance contexts and is built on four key learning units:

- Preparing the Dance Space
- Protecting the Dancer
- Protecting the Dance Leader
- From Preparation to Application.

The course can be used as a stand-alone learning resource or to support practitioners when registering for the Preparation for Healthy Dance Certificate (PHDC), which is administered by SiDI. The PHDC gives any practitioner an international professional evaluation of their knowledge and understanding of preparation for healthy dance. It gives the practitioner evidence for parents, employers and students that they can prepare effectively and safely for leading or delivering dance. The evaluation also offers a unique CPD opportunity – the course plus evaluation awards six hours of CPD from SiDI as endorsed by the Council for Dance Education and Training.

Preparing for Safer Dance Practice is available online at an introductory offer of £59.50. The course and evaluation, awarding six hours of CPD, and the Preparation for Healthy Dance Certificate is now being offered for only £84.50.

To sign up, visit www.safeindance.com/preparing-for-safer-dance-practice or www.communitydance.org.uk/saferdance

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