

The Birth of a National Dance Company for Wales

Collated by Ann Sholem, this three-book series is an archive telling the story of the birth of a National Dance Company for Wales. It celebrates the life and work of the Company over a thirty-year period from Sholem's perspective.

In 1983 the Welsh Arts Council offered an initial three-year funding commitment to develop a pre-existing company, Jumpers Dance Theatre. The Jumpers' Board appointed Roy Campbell-Moore as Artistic Director and Ann Sholem was the first resident dancer and choreographer. To recognise the new direction of the Company, it was renamed "Diversions" in 1984. Campbell-Moore and Sholem led the Company for the following thirty-years. Following its success, it was renamed "National Dance Company Wales" by the Arts Council and National Assembly of Wales in 2009, solidifying the Company's status as an international leader of contemporary dance.

Since its inception, the Company consistently created a programme of dance activity which was both popular and artistically adventurous. Its performances were high on personality and enthusiasm and a devoted following quickly grew across the whole of the UK and abroad. The Company was passionate about "taking Wales to the world and bringing the world to Wales", working with international choreographers and dancers and touring abroad. The Company always offered a wide range of activities to complement the repertory dance performances, including summer schools, youth dance programmes, and "Alternative Routes" supporting the development of new choreographers.

The success of the Company was thanks to the world-class dancers, choreographers, designers, managers, office and touring staff who gave dedicated and long-term service. Excellent middle-scale theatres in Wales gave loyal support presenting the Company every year and hosting residencies in collaboration with local schools and colleges. The Company enjoyed constant support from Arts Council of Wales which gave an excellent platform for development and expansion.

Book One (1983-1999) shows the early days of the Company when it was a young, committed team who turned their hands to every aspect of performing, teaching and touring. The archive also shows the Company growing the quality of its repertoire and how it soon attracted invitations to perform abroad.

Book Two (2000-2008) shows the opening of the Dance House at the Wales Millennium Centre in 2004, which gave Diversions a permanent home of high quality and distinction. This new home was a facility to create dance of international standards and enabled the Company to host events and collaborative dance programmes involving people from all over Wales. Collaborations with Welsh National Opera and National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales also gave opportunities for Diversions to reach out to new audiences everywhere. Ann Sholem took over from Roy Campbell-Moore as Artistic Director in 2005.

Book Three (2009-2013) shows that in 2009, it transformed into National Dance Company Wales before performing alongside English National Ballet and Scottish Ballet in a specially created programme for the 2012 London Olympics and then performing at the Royal Opera House in London in 2013 to cement its status as a Welsh and UK success story.

Archive created by Ann Sholem

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