

NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2024

TAKE FIVE

Dave Brubeck's iconic instrumental piece, "Take Five", has stood the test of time. It is an absolute favourite of mine. It was the first record I owned and I am old enough to have seen Dave Brubeck play it live on the South Bank in the 70's. Listening to it recently I felt its quirky, off-beat rhythm still invites us to go in a different direction, to try a different route. And this is what has characterised Sage's work so far this year. We have had the privilege of working with five different choreographers and together we are exploring five very different dance styles. Fortunately they are choreographers who don't have pre-conceived notions of what older dancers can and can't do, and who work with us in very positive ways to help us experiment and keep on learning. Sage has always worked hard to overcome the stereotypes that many people hold about older dancers. We have always wanted to dance rather than waft about the stage and these five choreographers have certainly helped us to challenge ourselves and to keep challenging those stereotypes.

Our five dance directions this year

Our first piece is very much in the classical ballet tradition. Since January we have been fortunate enough to be working with **Jennifer Jackson**, a former soloist with the Royal Ballet, a lecturer at the University of Surrey, and choreography tutor at the Royal Ballet School. The work is called Sycamore Gap and inspired by the felling of the ancient tree on Hadrian's Wall in September 2023. The choreography is in three parts; Resistance, Falling, Regrowth and danced to



a Bach cantata, Caroline Shaw's The Beech Tree, and a poignant cello piece specially composed by Riccardo Pes, Lament for the Tree. What is emerging is a beautiful, lyrical piece which is wonderful to dance and hopefully will be wonderful to watch.



In contrast our work with **Sarah Miller**, a teacher at The Place and someone we have enjoyed working with before, is in the folk dance tradition, and is danced with joy and gay abandon. However it too requires its own discipline. It is a piece which demands accurate placing and requires us to fully engage with each other, acknowledge each other, and really dance as a company. The music is a fantastic Irish Reel which will hopefully get our audiences joining in!

Our third piece is by **Marie Forbes**, again one of our favourite choreographers. She is working with us on a jazz piece danced to a great song by Buddy Guy, "Damn right, I've got the Blues". Marie has a very distinct style. Her pieces appear very relaxed and free but it takes a lot of hard work to get that louche, laid back feel. We look forward to performing it with as much confidence and style as we can muster, taking inspiration from the Rambert's wonderful "Rooster" performance of some years ago.



We are exploring our fourth route in the company of our old friend and colleague **Kim Mendez**. As a professional from the ballet and West End stage, Kim's pieces are always quirky and fun but this one also has a serious message about climate change. Heavy rain and floods have become regular destructive features in our lives. Living with the uncertainties of global warming, we have to rely on individual and collective resilience and hope. One such symbol of

hope is a rainbow. The piece begins within a storm but goes on to celebrate the rainbow's transient beauty, each dancer reflecting a different colour. Each colour will also be celebrated in poetry and music. We are very fortunate to be working again with Michèle Roberts, a member of the Rack Press Poets, and Alice Jelaska, a freelance musician, who we know will help us make a memorable and unusual piece.

Last but not least we were lucky enough to end our spring term with two workshops led by **Kelly Craige** who introduced us to Bob Fosse in spectacular fashion. A young American professional dancer who has appeared in many stage musicals, she lit up our rehearsal room and achieved a lot in just two sessions. She is now resident in the UK and about to start a Masters degree at the Trinity Laban, so we will definitely be asking her back to choreograph a whole piece with us next year. We have long wanted to do a piece based on the great music of our youth, and she is definitely the woman to do it. As a company we created a piece danced to Marvin Gaye's "Heard it through the grapevine" for our Posh Club performance last Christmas, which went down well and was fun to perform, but we definitely need to work with a professional like Kelly to create a much more polished piece worthy of that fantastic music.



Our next performances

Life Lines for the Bloomsbury Festival at Conway Hall, October 19th

Tickets £12 (£10) <https://bloomsburyfestival.org.uk/events/life-lines/>



We have taken part in the Bloomsbury Festival for a number of years now and are delighted to be doing so again. We will be joining forces with the Rack Press Poets, Nicholas Murray and Michèle Roberts, and the musician Alice Jelaska to present a full programme of dance, poetry and music from 1:30 to 2:30 pm in the Conway Hall.

Critical Moment at The Place, November 30th

Tickets £20 (£18) <https://theplace.org.uk/events/critical-moment>



We will be presenting our new pieces, "Sycamore Gap" and "Rainbow" at the Critical Moment event, a platform for older dance and dance theatre choreographers, to be held at The Place Theatre on Saturday November 30th at 7.30pm

Showtime in Ightham, December 6th

Ightham village hall from 6-8pm.

We have been invited to perform at Ellen Bunting's regular Christmas show which brings together dancers of all ages and all styles. Ellen is an experienced professional and dance teacher, who has had a fascinating international career and teaches tap in London and the lovely Kent village of Ightham, where she now lives. Some of us Sages go to her classes.



If you want a fun evening and a drink afterwards in the legendary George and Dragon pub, where Guy Fawkes is reputed to have hatched his infamous Gunpowder Plot and where he fled and was captured when it failed, then come along. Help us to end our dancing year with a bang!

Barbara Berkeley-Hill