**‘Taking the lead – Exploring a New Discourse Around the Shifting Role of Disabled Dance Artists’**

**PhD Studentship** – University of Coventry

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**Abstract**

Much existing research into this area of dance offers perspectives on access to training and access to dance in general terms, as students and dancers and as audience. This research asks, what are we creating access for? It will use in-depth examination to highlight the question of what the dance and disability sector look like in the future? Focussing on real life experiences to explore the development of this area of dance and where the practitioners will be placed in this sector and also in the dance community in a broader context.

Increased visibility of disabled people in dance has led to greater opportunity being offered in a range of settings, also, there are certainly more disabled dance artists working and training in dance than there has been in previous decades. The hypothesis of the study is focussed on exploring a perceived discrepancy between this hiatus in the dance community 20 years ago and the number of disabled leaders, (choreographer, teacher, lecturer, researcher etc.) currently working in dance Through engaging with this rationale the study will ask: Where are all the disabled leaders? It is expected that findings from this examination will inform and develop current theory relating to the dance and disability sector, through providing forums for sharing practice and theory, also through working with relevant organisations and individuals. It is proposed that the outcomes of this research have the potential to extend discussion in this area, beyond the ‘inclusive’ dance community and offer a perspective and practical suggestions for the dance sector in general.

The research will take a strongly qualitative stance and use case studies, interviews and observed/experiential practice to gather perspectives relating to the hypothesis.

I Have worked in a variety of settings, including ongoing employment as an associate artist and teacher for Candoco Dance Company, an artist practitioner for DanceEast, Dance4, Graeae Theatre Company and Scarabeus Theatre Company. Recent teaching work has included, UK, Croatia, Turkey, Spain and Vietnam. I have been involved in dance pedagogy across both FE and HE contexts also through workshop facilitation for a range of participants. In 2009 I completed a Masters, this sparked an interest in dance research and alongside maintaining aspects of my teaching and choreographic projects, I started my PhD research at Coventry University in 2013.