

**METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK FROM  
CHOREOGRAPHIC LABS / PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESIDENCIES 2015**  
LED AND FACILITATED BY CHARLOTTE VINCENT

**VINCENT'S CPD METHODOLOGY**

Charlotte Vincent's **Continuing Professional Development** work is designed to bring choreographers, theatre makers, performers (and sometimes live musicians, producers and visual artists) together to explore the act of making new performance work.

With over 25 years of professional creative practice behind her, Vincent facilitates, cajoles, teases and entices participants to make the most rigorous, playful, honest and universally meaningful work possible. Then aim is to clarify conceptual starting points, work with precision, deepen understanding of what performance can be, develop the craft of composition, imagine new metaphors, find new forms, take emotional risks, avoid navel-gazing and make the personal political.

What unites the diverse practitioners who come on Charlotte's intensives is a desire to clarify their own practice, undo habits that no longer serve them, develop new approaches to crafting interdisciplinary performance and find the most appropriate language to say what it is they are trying to say.

Labs can be 2-5 days long with 8-10 participants of different ages and experience, from different cultural, technical and formal backgrounds, at differing stages of their making careers. The focus of the time spent together is to collaborate, to support each others' learning, to develop personal skills and understanding, to gain confidence, explore vulnerability and failure, be meticulous and direct with critical feedback and to share intimate thoughts about their individual approach to making work.

Each day generally starts with a warm up for the body to prepare the mind for the demands of the work. One x 2 hour session per participant is dedicated to exploring an embryonic or more developed performative, choreographic or conceptual idea, task or fragment of material. These are shared and used as a springboard for that participant to fully investigate and workshop their idea. In so doing they and other members of the group witness Charlotte's directing process and her skilled and intelligent interrogation of the material presented alongside processing their own thoughts and critical responses to the material being explored and exposed.

Observing and workshopping another artist's messy process, witnessing ideas and concepts unravel and reform through skilled facilitation allows participants to share responsibility, offer ideas into the mix and to reflect on their own processes and challenges when making newly devised work.

Watching stale physical habits and failing languages transform into new ideas and humorous, intelligent and most importantly watchable material is very satisfying. It engenders confidence in artists who are feeling unsure about how to continue with their practice and process. In this sense the weeks are deeply transformative and impactful.

Charlotte's distinct method of facilitation is made explicit as she leads the group, offering candid insight into how she holds the space for honest creative exchange and collaboration. Participants learn to ask useful questions and set useful tasks and are offered concrete techniques and tools to further their own practice. Vincent's CPD Residencies and Labs, informed by over two decades making and touring interdisciplinary, collaborative performance work, explore *how to move people and make them think*.

## THEMES COVERED DURING A TYPICAL WEEK MAY INCLUDE:

- Clarifying Concept, Context & Content
- Bringing yourself wholly to the work
- Being yourself in performance, not something 'other' / fictional
- Working from the inside out (emotion / thought / feeling / intuition into movement / action / way of being in the space)
- Questions of concept, persona, design and activity on stage: Who are we? Where are we? What are we doing here?
- Awareness of movement as an abstract language – are you abstracting yourself in performance or trying to stay more human?
- Skills and understanding of how to 'move' an audience
- How the individual / personal can become universal / political
- Being aware of what is pre-conceived 'dancer behaviour' and therefore well trodden territory/ cliché in performance
- Translation as a choreographic tool (music to movement/ text into performance/ structure as metaphor for content)
- Interdisciplinary Practice - finding the most appropriate language to say what you have to say
- Offering and receiving useful feedback (Liz Lerman influenced)
- Action -v -Intention - is what you are doing being 'read' in the way you intended?
- Distillation and specificity - how less is often more. How to strip back and stop embellishing
- Being rigorous / logical / practical / efficient in practice
- Building awareness of when you are 'pretending'
- Setting clear and meaningful tasks to develop new material
- Putting pressure on material / a task in order to push the material into new realms of difficulty – and how the attempt to articulate something becomes the content / material, rather than the material itself
- Comedy emerging from earnest commitment to slightly a skewed task. Don't be afraid to press the material out of shape. Don't try to be funny.
- Understating the performance of text so it doesn't stray into melodrama, bad drama, dialogue or a 'play'.
- Understanding the performance of movement so it doesn't stray into familiar, meaningless, 'moving wallpaper' contemporary dance technique on stage
- Techniques for restaging improvised brilliance
- Unique Selling Points - What will distinguish me as an artist?
- What is my enquiry? Developing clarity of intent
- How a fragmented / episodic / deconstructed form / structure of a work can act as metaphor for the human condition / universal truths
- Neutrality on stage - Is there such a thing?
- Can we be gender neutral on stage?
- Testing vanity and the over-emphasis on 'beauty' in dance. Finding beauty in the bleakness, poetry in ugliness, not being afraid of breaking the conventions of dance
- How to hold a safe space for physical and emotional creative exploration (approaches that locate the work as work, not as therapy)
- How to remain objective when things get personal

## FLICKR PHOTO ALBUMS OF PAST RESIDENCIES & LABS CAN BE FOUND HERE:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/132150614@N07/albums/72157656043155629>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/132150614@N07/sets/72157661756553122>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/132150614@N07/albums/72157657600981663>

## FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS BRIGHTON, NEWCASTLE, LEEDS, 2015

- I feel this week has given me confidence to move forwards, a creative burst and new energy. I was able to reflect and find clarity of what I want to do, what really interests me in dance/dance theatre at this point.
- There are words that kept/keep coming back to my mind... **clarity, rigour, precision, ownership...** I go away with a lot of clarity on who I am/want to be as a choreographer / director. I have new means (toolbox) to discover and articulate what I really care about and what excites me on stage; and a new knowledge of how I might achieve the kind of result that is in my head without getting lost on the way.
- I certainly ended up challenged and knocked out of my comfort zone (a place of things I know) - which is exactly what I hoped for! What I didn't expect was to leave with THIS MUCH clarity, with a giant toolbox/a checklist to turn to the next time I get stuck on that stupid fence. I know to fight the instinct to stop when I hit upon 'uncomfortable' - throughout this week I have begun to learn how to keep going through it; with clarity, with direction, with vision, with the feeling of ownership. I break down my own boundaries quite easily as a performer, I know now I need to practice the same as choreographer (and I understand better why I find this so much more difficult). I cannot wait to get back to the studio.
- It is so important to have these opportunities to take time to reflect and challenge your practice. It was a supportive and honest environment which enabled the week to be so revealing and testing for us all. I haven't put myself in this type of learning context for a very long time, so thank you for all for you support. I've learnt to ensure the concept is clear and not try to cram too many ideas into a piece. It's ok to allow some ideas to fall aside to find what you truly want to say. Maybe dance isn't the best way of saying everything you want to say. Challenge your starting points and tasks, don't be too prescriptive at first and then work with what is in the room, something you never imagined may arise and change everything!
- Great week – want to say – really valuable. Thanks for your support – it's honestly been one of the most inspiring experiences in my career.
- I am inspired by how specific you are with what you are - and are not interested in, but more so, how important that is.
- What a hugely inspiring bunch of people. I'm struck by how there's a rawness and honesty to this performance-focused and audience-aware approach.
- I have learnt that directness does not need to feel direct if you know how to articulate it.
- I've learnt to recognize 'spillage' (separating what is relevant to the work from what isn't, or making it relevant); define tasks, responding to them and observing others respond to them in their way, be more aware of the transition from preparing to performing; not to be afraid to have a critical voice and an identity.
- The week was truly what I needed at this moment in time, and I'm very thankful to you for being so open and honest with your advice. I'm feeling way more confident. Spending a week taking time and seriously discussing our work and ourselves has reassured me that I am not totally crazy or useless. A new question has popped into my head since the week which is "What shall I do next?" which has a much more positive tone to it than it used to, as I now know that I will do something, and I'm very excited about that...whatever that is. I've realised how important it is to discuss and try out ideas.

I've been sat on top of my own ideas, on my own, for a long. Also workshopping my ideas with you made me so excited that I couldn't sit still on the train journey home. The week dug me out of myself-made hole and made me quite excited about doing something, and for that Charlotte, you are and will always, be a MEGA BABE.

- I've learnt how important it is as an artist at any point in their career to have time out, in a creative sense ... space and support out of our normal places of work to realise the 'norms' or 'comfort zones' in which we work artistically. We can realise habits and ways in which we work (productive or otherwise), stale ways of working, break through barriers, and refresh ourselves creatively. Sharing and seeing other people skills in an open working environment, we learn from others input into the group. The power of getting a group of women from all different dance backgrounds and bringing different creative ideas in one space 'thinking' and being allowed to be, to breath, discuss, shout, cry, get frustrated, work it out, and find a way forward. Learning from each other - I felt I was learning more by reflecting those learnings from other people back onto myself and how I create/perform/think. You can learn so much from watching other peoples' processes.
- I really enjoyed how Charlotte works delves to find what is at the root of peoples work what is driving the work or movement or being. Stripping back the layers of self, to grab the essence or truths of who you are, or what you can offer, or what it is you want to say. Then trying out different tasks to get to show this. Charlotte then twisting it and turning it on its head and playing with how it could be performed, working the body, forming, morphing into something that transmits to others, whether in the original form or shaped into a new version, and clear and direct constructive feedback.
- I enjoyed working with Charlotte a lot - how you work, how you shape pick and pull on the spot. I have worked in that way before but never felt completely comfortable or able to really open fully in those moments to be truly vulnerable (in a positive way) to create from, I felt a trust within the group and especially with you. I enjoy how you simplify to make what we showed or shared speak, and speak in a vey honest way that can easily touch people watching it. I learnt to simplify the idea, essence of the idea, refining. Discovering what your own rules are and generally being reminded that the first idea is best.
- After the week it feels clear that I will always want to perform/create/respond. I came to the week with a few of ideas of work, or with ideas what my next move 'should' be, (although a lot of those 'shoulds' quickly got thrown out of the window, (in a positive way), but through the week those ideas got chipped away and became clearer and distilled down to a core idea that seem to be the most important one to start to explore and create from.
- Charlotte... I always knew it... thank you so much... it was so positive to be around you and hear you speak and let everything fall in to place... I feel so much more confident in just being me, and in analysing and in being proud as a female. Thank you for your generosity and for making yourself so available and open during the residency.
- A bit about the structure (of the week): I found it extremely useful to run it in this way. It never stopped being relevant to my work or my questions, I continually had opportunities to put into practice, reflect and feedback on something we discussed a day before or just half an hour earlier; observing your approach and direction applied to very diverse work allowed me to understand how I might apply it to my own work. I never once felt unsafe - I always saw a clear purpose to what you were doing or saying and never lost sight of our aims.

- I have learnt a lot, perhaps not in the way I expected. However, all knowledge is valuable if you know how to channel it. I have asked myself a lot of questions. Some of them have been answered this week.
- I feel surprised/ inspired/ confused/ proud of what I expressed in my performance. I am certainly onto something here. I generated some new movement that I have never expressed with that emotional intensity before, in front of an audience. We will certainly leave this Choreographic Residency with a different perspective on life/ performance/ ourselves/ others... How exciting!
- I really miss working in such depth, intellectually engaging in the process; it was a real treat to join in and having you leading the group on all those investigations. If only there were more opportunity to engage in intelligent work out there and to be directed in such a way!
- I just love how you cut through all the bullshit and get real... feeling inspired.

## FURTHER DIRECT OUTCOMES FROM VINCENT'S CPD LABS AND RESIDENCIES

Following the Leeds Residency, Choreographer **Ella Mesma** asked Vincent to continue to mentor her with the support of ADAD Mentoring Award. ADAD is a national organisation that supports the practice and appreciation of dance of the African Diaspora. Ella is also being mentored by Charlotte as part of the nation-wide **The Bench** Programme 2015/16 ([www.the-bench.org](http://www.the-bench.org)). She worked with Ella for two days in Leeds (11/12 Jan 2015) shifting Ella's research for her new production **Ladylike**, elicited this response from Yorkshire Dance's AD **Wieke Eringa**: *'Charlotte I could cry with joy for what you achieved with Ella the last two days. Literally. You are one in a million. You are INCREDIBLE.'*

**Kiera Martin's** draft presentation of her solo **HERE COMES TROUBLE** (Directed by Charlotte Vincent) shared during the Leeds Choreographic Residency was met with positive, insightful and useful feedback from participants and Yorkshire Dance staff. Sharing it in a safe context gave Kiera a huge boost and she has since gone on to premiere the work and is gathering interest from Festivals and venues across the UK. The work will tour in 2016/17.

Following the Brighton Lab, performer **Victoria Fox** (CandoCo / Jasmin Vardimon) has approached Charlotte to devise direct a new solo show about a mother's return to the stage, to be researched in 2016.

Following the Newcastle Residency Director **Nadia Ithkar** has asked Charlotte to mentor / dramaturg her new ACE funded R&D process working with the women of Yorkshire around the endings, turning points in their lives and survival in 2016.

Following the Newcastle Residency Dancer/Choreographer **Anthony Lo-Giudice** has asked Charlotte to continue to mentor him as part of the **Expanding Horizons** CPD Programme at Dance City.

Following the Brighton Residency Dancer / Choreographer **Bridie Gaine** is moving back to the UK to make the kind of kick ass work she knows she can make.

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