

Black Lives Matter: Our Commitments

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At Dance Base we are proud to be part of the Black Lives Matter Mural Trail with the fabulous installation on our Grassmarket doors, realised by Dance Base collaborator Wezi Mhura and visual artist Shona Hardie.

We told you that this was not all we'd be doing, and promised to come back with other firm commitments to anti-racism that will continue to inform all of our activities. We are determined to remove any barriers that exist to Black artists in particular in accessing and benefiting from Dance Base services, and to critically re-examine our own structures and their impact on opportunity.

As a starting point, we are making three practical commitments that will lead to discernible change within the next twelve months. These are in addition to a wider range of existing agreed actions across all areas of equality, diversity and inclusion. They are not an exhaustive commitment, and we welcome all input on what else needs to change. Our goal is to do the work of becoming as anti-racist as possible without putting the burden of education on our POC friends and colleagues. However, where further education is needed, we commit to pay fairly for that labour, every time.

Our initial commitments are:

Ensuring that we are working effectively with people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups from across Scotland

We will work with collaborators from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, alongside other Scottish dance organisations, to meet people from across Scotland with interest in dance but no connection with our organisations. We will ringfence specific funding to support new work with POC individuals and Black-led groups to support their interest and potential, and will agree and deliver activity through 2021 and beyond.

Ensuring that diversity of race and ethnicity is central to the way that we select artists to support

We will ensure that all decisions on supporting artists will be made on clear criteria that include the diversity of race and ethnicity of recipients, and that people of colour will have paid roles on advisory panels for all significant artistic opportunities. We will ensure that those advisors have suitable support structures when working on selection panels. This will commence immediately and will be fully in place from April 2021

Ensuring that the staff of Dance Base more accurately reflect the diversity of Scotland and the diversity of the sector.

We will set up a paid programme of support, including outreach to communities, mentoring and paid internships that identify and support people from Black, Asian and Minority ethnic groups to gain experience of working with the organisation and the dance sector, and put them in a strong position for applications for longer term employment. Planning for this will start immediately and the first programme will be implemented in the spring and summer of 2021.

In addition to these three new and specific commitments I as Chief Executive will sit on the Dance Base Equalities Team, not as chair of the meeting but as an active participant, and that I will identify action points in each meeting, which will be carried out at executive level and will be reported to the Board, as part of a standing agenda item.

We will publish an updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan on our website by the end of October 2020, and provide information on our performance against agreed actions, including a specific section on anti-racism.

These are steps on an ongoing journey, and further commitments and specifics will follow. Anti-racism must be a continuing commitment and we expect to be held accountable on these matters. Feedback is welcome, either sent directly to me or sent anonymously to safespace@dancebase.co.uk.

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