

review - 19/20



**eCHO**  
Dance Theatre Company  
**eCHO**

**E**cho Echo Dance Theatre Company exists to produce professional dance theatre and to promote interest, participation and education in dance and movement at all levels, basing its practice on a wide range and experience of movement influences from inside and outside the main dance traditions.

2019-20 was another packed and busy year, for which this report provides only a brief overview. I am always amazed at the number, and wide range, of projects we manage to produce. Again, we created our own work, for general and family audiences, and performed it locally and internationally. We supported artists in their professional and creative development. We led numerous and varied participation projects. We created partnerships with organisations in the arts, education and social provision. We hosted classes and projects in Echo Echo Studios. We welcomed artists, audiences and participants, from far and wide to two substantial festivals. Picking a highlight is impossible. All I can say is a big thank you to everyone involved, particularly the four artists of the Echo Echo Ensemble, the staff and the board members. Without their consistent good will, dedication, patience, imagination, adaptability, kindness and integrity of all of them, it simply wouldn't be possible. A big thank you to all of them.

I am looking forward to 2021 when Echo Echo will celebrate its 30th birthday. It seems both long ago and only yesterday that Ursula Laebli and I decided to dedicate ourselves to a shared long-term project. It feels like the tree we planted and nurtured, along with many colleagues, has established itself and borne some fruit. I am fascinated to see what comes next.

*Steve Batts*

Artistic Director





**Echo Echo Staff**

Artistic Director - Steve Batts  
Company Manager - Ailbe Beirne  
Development Officer - Anna Nolan  
Technical Manager - Barry Davis

**Echo Echo Ensemble**

Associate Artistic Director - Ayesha Mailey  
Kelly Quigley  
Zoe Ramsey  
Tonya Sheina

**Echo Echo Board of Directors  
(2019/20)**

Deirdre Gillespie (Chair)  
Cath McBride (Treasurer)  
Esther Alleyne  
Mandy Blinco  
Paul Johnston

*Thank you to all of our colleagues, collaborators, audiences, participants, volunteers and supporters whose input to the company has been invaluable.*

## Production Performance and Touring

### Selected Highlights

#### A Box

A playful children's dance theatre performance by Zoe Ramsey and Tonya Sheina of the Echo Echo Ensemble. In 2019 the show was taken to local community venues, a children's festival in Poland, and on a small tour of Ireland.

*"The show was filled with curiosity to explore and play. My imagination was purely touched and felt like a kid seeing snow for the first time."*

#### Performances

April/May 2019 - Ardnashee School, Derry; Knockavoe School, Strabane; Praxis Care, Derry  
13-15 September 2019 - Take Part in Art Festival, Warsaw, Poland  
20 September 2019 - Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo (Culture Night)  
21 September 2019 - glór Theatre, Ennis, Co Clare  
12 October 2019 - Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre, Limavady



#### Almost Blue

New work for Irish Modern Dance Theatre by Oona Doherty, co-commissioned by Cork Midsummer Festival 2019. Performed by Echo Echo's Steve Batts and accompanied by live trumpeter, John Walsh. The piece is a goodbye dance, a farewell, an attempt to move what has come before and expand through chaos back to the gentle hum that came before the beginning.

*"Eloquent, moving, captivating, exquisite"*

#### Performances

22nd June 2019 - Elizabeth Fort (Cork Midsummer Festival)  
23rd June 2019 - Bandstand, Cobh (Cork Midsummer Festival)  
2nd/3rd July 2019 - Festival of Irish Choreography, Dublin  
11th November 2019 - Echo Echo Festival of Dance and Movement



#### Let's Play

Echo Echo Ensemble - Ayesha Mailey, Kelly Quigley, Zoe Ramsey and Tonya Sheina - and guest musicians, Stephanie Pawula, Amanda Koser and Joleen Mc Laughlin create a vibrant world of improvised play for children. The piece was commissioned for the Echo Echo Festival of Dance and Movement 2019 and followed by a tour in March 2020 to local primary schools, supported by ACNI Rural Needs Programme.

*"Loved it! Was so much fun. Made my day!"*

#### Performances

10th November 2019 - Echo Echo Festival of Dance and Movement  
11th November 2019 - Ardnashee School and Knockavoe School (Echo Echo Festival programme)  
March 2020 - St Michael's PS, St Mary's Park PS, Cumber Claudy PS (ACNI Rural Needs Programme)



## Other Performances and Tours in 2019/20

#### How to Watch Dancing (Looking Away from the Naked Emperor)

Solo performance work by Artistic Director, Steve Batts.  
September 2019 - Festival Contact+, Chisinau, Moldova

*"How To Watch Dancing is a masterpiece from Stephen Batts. His solo refers to artistic activity infused by pedagogical viewpoints, generating for a viewer a field of continuous learning."* Dr Mirva Mäkinen



#### Without

4 week remount of 7-screen video installation, originally produced by Rosemary Lee and Echo Echo for City of Culture 2013.  
The August/September 2019 remount was supported by DCSDC Walls400, Rosemary Lee Projects, and Arts Admin.

*"WITHOUT should be on permanent display in the city."*  
The Arts Show, BBC Radio Ulster





The seventh edition of Echo Echo's acclaimed international Festival of Dance and Movement took place in November 2019 including a programme of over 36 performance and participation events reaching over 1,100 people. The Festival has now presented the work of over 270 artists over its first seven years.

*"I was blown away with the sense of community, warmth and friendliness around Echo Echo, which was felt at all the different events and workshops. Throughout the whole festival, I caught myself wishing that I lived in Derry to have regular access to this beautiful community of dancers and to the Echo Echo approach to dance."* Artist Participant Feedback

## Festival Performance Programme

### Collective B - 'Wonderful World'

Innovative Austrian-French collective bring together physical theatre, original music, and contemporary dance in a hilarious yet gut-wrenching portrayal of the media's often distorted relationship with violence. Collective B were Festival 2019 artists-in-residence, supported by The Institut Français.

*"Challenging and stimulating... the timing was immaculate"*

### Nic Gareiss - Solo Square Dance

Solo percussive dance performance by world-leading step-dancer Nic Gareiss. Performed in 3 intimate settings in Derry, Ballycastle and Buncrana. The piece commemorated the 1935 Irish Dance Halls Act which banned citizens from dancing in homes.

*"This was a very special performance. I loved the mix of story-telling/history/dancing. Nic's natural charm shines through in this piece. I felt like I was transported back in time."*

### Ockham's Razor - This Time

A show about time, age and the stories we tell ourselves from the award winning aerial theatre company Ockham's Razor and producers Turtle Key Arts. Three performances and aerial workshops in Derry's historic Guildhall.

*"World class, superb. Fantastic that such art can be seen here. Bravo Echo Echo."*



**CAAKE residency with Art Arcadia**, and performance with Body Wisdom  
**The Station** - Ferenc Fehér  
**See Me Disappear** - Ayesha Mailey  
**Let's Play** - Echo Echo Ensemble

**Mixed Bill** - Oona Doherty / Liam O Scanláin / Off The Rails Dance  
**Festival Class Programme**  
**Festival Discussion Sessions**  
**Festival Closing Party** with DJ Kwame

**Fourth Festival All-Ireland Outreach Programme** in partnership with six dance venues around the island and supported by Irish Department of Culture and Dance Ireland, offered six Artist Bursaries to support members of the Irish dance community, north and south, to attend Echo Echo Festival in November 2019.

## Participation and Partnerships Programme 2019/20

Echo Echo offers a diverse programme of workshops and courses to suit all abilities and levels of engagement including regular classes for children and adults of all ages. The company's participation and education events serve thousands of participants each year and work in partnership with many different groups. The following are just a few examples from over 100 different programmes in 2019/20.

**Body Wisdom** - Echo Echo's long-running project for over-50s has grown to become a very committed core group of members who meet regularly, create movement and poetry, and perform publicly – as well as being a constant source of support and inspiration to the Echo Echo team.

*"Since joining the Body Wisdom class I have written hundreds of thousands of words (imposing many of them on my long suffering Colleagues in Body Wisdom) praising the system of poetic movement taught at Echo Echo. It is a wonderful non-intrusive method of releasing the human potential. I feel very grateful and privileged to have the opportunity."*

Participant Feedback

**Children In Need** - Echo Echo artists worked in partnership with Children In Need for the 2nd year of a 2 year performance project with disadvantaged primary aged children. The project engaged children from St Michael's PS, St Paul's PS, Drumachose PS, and St Eugene's PS in 15-17 weekly dancing and drumming sessions, which worked towards a sharing performance in front of an audience.

*"I feel much of what is offered to children now is digital-based, with more workshops on coding or using apps. It was such an amazing opportunity for the pupils to participate in an arts-based programme, allowing them freedom of expression in a safe environment."* Teacher, Drumachose PS.

### Arts and Older People

Echo Echo continued their successful partnership with ACNI Arts and Older People fund into its 4th year. The project delivered 15 Poetic Movement and Mindfulness workshops in both Praxis Care and Strabane Community Project. These organisations supply services to some of the most disadvantaged older people in Derry/Strabane council area. The project reached more than 40 participants helping to tackle issues of isolation and loneliness and increase health and well-being.

*"Echo Echo have given our service users the skills to express themselves and their emotions through creative dance and movement and to be mindful and in the moment."* Louise Lyons, Manager, Praxis Care

### Good Relations

Echo Echo produced a 10-week cross community project 'Watch our Shared Space Move' with support from DCSDC Good Relations Fund. This brought together over 50 P5 and P6 children from Newbuildings PS and St Columba's PS for a special movement and drumming performance project. Four local primary schools visited Echo Echo Studios to view 'Without' and take part in a movement workshop during Good Relations Week 2019.

*"I couldn't believe the difference in some of the children in my class who had difficulty with co-ordination and who pre-workshop would have struggled with confidence and self-esteem. The positive difference the sessions made with these children is just one example of the fantastic benefits the programme had."* Teacher, St Columba's PS



Photo - Living Witness Productions



Photo - Living Witness Productions



Photo - Living Witness Productions



Photo - Patrick Duddy Photography

### Participation Programme Partners

First Act Youth Theatre with Mary Fitzpatrick  
Wing Tsjun with Karen Cassidy  
Aikido with Aureli Oslé  
After Schools clubs with Good Shepherd PS,  
Cumber Claudy PS, St Marys PS, Park Village  
Youth 19 / Rewire Festival  
Tuned In Project

Stage Beyond Theatre  
Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre  
Old Library Trust  
Rose Bruford College  
Newry Dance School  
Sligo Institute of Technology  
Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin  
National Centre for Dance, Bucharest, Romania

Celestial Beavers Eco Farm, Russia  
Firkin Crane, Cork  
DanceHouse, Dublin  
Festival Dance Studio, Chisinau, Moldova  
Millennium Forum  
Derry Playhouse

*With thanks to all of our partners and their staff.*

## Echo Echo Contact Improvisation Festival 2019

After the resounding success of Echo Echo's first Contact Improvisation Festival in 2018 the 2nd edition was produced on 24th - 31st May 2019. As the only CI festival on the island of Ireland, the 2019 programme offered a rich and varied week of participation focussed intensives, classes and jams delivered by a host of renowned international contact teachers and movement artists: Mirva Mäkinen (Finland), Steve Batts (Northern Ireland), Robert Anderson (England), Yulia Bodrova (Russia), Miguel Silva (Portugal/Ibiza), Jörg Göenner (Germany), Aureli Oslé (Spain/Ireland), Olek Wójcik, Ayesha Mailey and Kelly Quigley (Northern Ireland), Elise Nuding (Sweden/Ireland), Karen Cassidy (Northern Ireland). Over 40 people of all ages and levels of experience participated in the festival, with around a quarter of them travelling from outside the UK/Ireland. A special pre-festival CI Weekend Workshop was offered at DanceHouse, Dublin in partnership with Contact Improvisation Ireland.

*"It is such a joy to work with world-class dancers and improvisers. Even sore muscles during the first couple of days are soon forgotten as morning stretches begin. The festival is a melting pot of ideas, bodies and movement, with invaluable personal and professional friendships that are quickly established."* Lina Furnell, Participant



## Residencies and Collaborations 2019/20

### Echo Echo Studios - Residency Programme

Echo Echo is committed to supporting artists at different stages of their careers and to nurturing new talent. The company supports individual artists, residencies, placements and international students, and helps to develop their artistic practice through new work, performance, training and education programmes.

Robin Wilson (Ireland)  
Maggie Hannon (Ireland)  
Virginia Negru and Catalin Diaconu (Romania)  
B and B (Lithuania)  
Collective B (Austria/France)  
Olek Wójcik and Laura Vlad (Derry/Romania)  
Benno Voorham (Sweden) & Abdalla Al Omari (Syria)  
Grete Smitaite (Lithuania)

### Collaborative Projects and Performances

Dance programming for civic events/festivals including Derry Halloween, Carnival of Colours, and major outdoor performance projects with LUXE (Galway, Dunree, Dundalk), and In Your Space Circus.

'sonic arrangements in the infinite fill' - Echo Echo Ensemble collaboration with Candida Powell-Williams at Void Gallery and Walker's Plinth, Derry Walls, 24th August 2019.

'No Other Word For It' - an immersive installation by Ailís Ní Ráin - 26th Jan - 9th Feb IMBOLC Festival 2020.

Ryan Vail & Elma Orkestra - Zoe Ramsey and Tonya Sheina of Echo Echo Ensemble performed in the 'Arrival' music video with the NI Music Prize winners.

### Performances at Echo Echo Studios

Ulster Orchestra, Phil Kieran and local emerging musicians - 26th June, Celtronic 2019

Stephen James Smith performance evening - 5th July 2019, Youth 19

Makey Uppers Christmas Double Bill - 22nd/23rd December 2019

One Step Forward, Two Sips Back - Leanne Devlin and Limbo Theatre Company - 22nd February 2020

'The Other Selves' pre-premiere of new work by leading European dance and movement artist Benno Voorham and visual artist Abdalla Al Omari (Syria) in March 2020.



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## Funders

Echo Echo Dance Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges support from the following:

### PRINCIPAL FUNDER



### Core & Project Funding

