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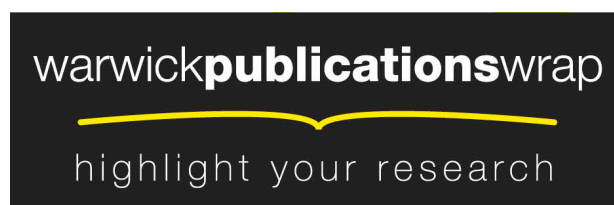
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## **‘Boys don’t do dance, do they?’**

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In 2005, the Warwick Arts Centre launched the ‘Boys Dancing’ project through the formation of the West Midlands Boys Dance Alliance. Aimed exclusively at boys and young men, the project has offered a range of performance-making opportunities with male professionals including Liam Steel (DV8, Stan Won’t Dance) and David McKenna (Beingfrank Physical Theatre), with a view to challenge the perception that dance is primarily an activity pursued by girls and young women. The project involves boys of all abilities and all backgrounds from communities in schools, youth centres and pupil referral units. The stated aims of the project are to nurture discipline in participation, skills development, creativity and creative decision-making, self-esteem and teamwork skills, as well as performance skills in dance and choreography. Drawing on gender studies, ruminations on the negative associations of boys and dance and interviews with key participants, this article explores why and how Boys Dancing has deployed rehearsal, dance and performance methodologies to overtly and covertly challenge normative discourses around boys, young men and masculinity.

### **Introduction**

A few months ago, I went to pick up my seven-year-old son from a child’s birthday party. When I arrived, he was sitting alone, not joining in with the other children who were running around in gales of laughter whacking each other with large caterpillar balloons. When I asked why he was not participating, he replied that there were only pink balloons left. A flustered parent appeared to apologise for her failure to get the right mix of gender-appropriate colours and promised to bring him a red one to school the next day in recompense. It was a moment that crystallised the fact that, despite the persistent challenges we had made to gender stereotyping, my son had already learnt the perils of failing to conform to normative gender roles. He had already learnt a strategy of self-surveillance and careful self-regulation that meant he would sit out of a game rather than be seen with a pink balloon and face the potential ridicule that might ensue.

According to psychoanalyst Ken Corbett, this example is typical of the way that normative notions of masculinity take hold at an early stage. Biological gender is relatively fixed, pronounced at birth and largely unchanged for the vast majority of people, but gender identity in terms of masculinity and femininity is altogether different: according to the highly influential work of Judith Butler (1990), it is contingent and evolves in relation to shifting historical and cultural circumstances.

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One is not born a boy, but becomes one by learning the rules of masculinity appropriate for the given circumstances. As Corbett writes, 'culture and cultural symbols, society and social orders, what we might call "backstories," build a boy' (2009, 11). Ideas of what it means to be a boy seep into everyday conversation, insidiously doing their ideological work in reinforcing gender rules, categories and codes – a father saying 'don't cry like a girl', a mother urging her son to 'be a brave soldier', a friend's mother apologising for only having a pink balloon left. Through such instances 'masculinity is foretold, told and retold, instated, regulated, and enforced' and they underpin 'the coordinates through which masculinity becomes an identity' activated through appropriate visual markers, corporeal enactments and discursive strategies (47). The codes and values of traditional or normative masculinity encompass authority, strength, autonomy, self-confidence and emotional containment that overwhelm a much more complex set of characteristics, including doubt and vulnerability, which exist on the broad spectrum of masculine experience.

Equally, 'it is impossible to speak about masculinity in one voice, no matter how polyvocal... boys are always more than the category that is masculinity. Gender is rarely, if ever, totalizing' (Corbett 2009, 15). Indeed, masculinity is multiple, relational and complicated by conflicting and contradictory elements, being, as it is, always caught up in a complicated matrix of other identities: class, race, sexuality and geographies of time and place. There is also now a widespread recognition that gender is constantly worked towards, in process, rehearsed and performed on a daily basis. In *Gender, Youth and Culture: Young Masculinities and Femininities* (2008), Anoop Nayak and Mary Jane Kehily describe the 'configuration of gender practice' as a form of 'choreography, a set of culturally patterned activities', but insist that this does not mean to say that this 'choreography of gender' cannot be 'resisted, transgressed and reconfigured in new routines' (177). As such, Nayak and Kehily recognise that gender is unfixed and subject to shifting attitudes that constantly demand that behaviours are rethought and remade for new times. Despite the huge theoretical advances made in understanding the complexity of gender identity and the wide spectrum of masculinities encountered in daily life, there are some arenas, such as dance, where gender-normative ideologies remain persistent. In this article, I offer an analysis of the Boys Dancing project developed by the West Midlands Boys Dance Alliance (WMBDA), which was established in 2005 by the education department of the Warwick Arts Centre, Dancescape and David McKenna, Artistic Director of Beingfrank Physical Theatre Company. I am not a dance scholar and I should be clear from the outset that my concern is not so much the dance works produced by Boys Dancing as the aims, processes and imaginative terrain that the boys encountered through their participation in Boys Dancing. My research entails an examination of policy documents, funding applications and evidence drawn from interviews with WMBDA members and observations of Boys Dancing sessions in two secondary schools in the Coventry area during February and March 2012, as the boys and young men developed material for *The Quiet Man Suite*, a dance-for-film project. This article investigates why and how Boys Dancing overtly and covertly challenges the normative discourses around gender, as well as specifically around boys and dance. It also, whilst recognising the nascent stage of Boys Dancing, considers what the legacy might be for those who have participated in the project and, more importantly, for the development of the field itself.

### The trouble with boys and dance

The social construction of gender and the gendered meanings associated with dance play a pivotal role in influencing young people's involvement in dance as, according to Doug Risner, 'the Western European paradigm situates dance as primarily a "female" art form' (2009, 58). From an early age, many young girls are encouraged to pursue dance as a gender-appropriate activity, whereas it is something largely avoided by boys, who are rapidly learning and synthesising appropriate male behaviour, which generally means 'avoiding all that is feminine, homosexual or *unmasculine* to any degree' (62).

The fraught relationship between men and dance has been well documented in recent years. Ramsay Burt referred to 'the trouble with the male dancer' in his seminal *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities* (2007, 9), whilst Jennifer Fisher and Anthony Shay refer to 'the stigma and challenges that arise around the topic of men who dance' (2009, 5). Burt's research confirms that unease with the male dancer is historically and culturally contingent, as 'up until the nineteenth century in Europe, prejudices against the male dancer did not exist', but Burt argues that in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries prejudice against the male dancer has continued to be evident (2007, 9). However, it is important to draw a distinction here between dance as an art form and men who dance professionally, who often encounter these 'negative' associations, and social dance, where there is a significant tradition of men asserting their skills and physical prowess on the dance floor, for instance through movements such as Northern Soul and hip-hop; or indeed, young men who hone their dance moves as part of a portfolio of skills as performers in musicals or members of boy bands. In these cases, dance skills are highly valued.

Nonetheless, in many societies in the West, the male dancing body challenges the very foundations of the masculine ideal and, as such, the male dancer is more often than not connected to a peripheral, failing masculinity or derided as effeminate, 'where "effeminate" is a code word for homosexual', regardless of the male dancer's actual sexuality (Burt 2007, 11). Hence, according to Risner, 'boys who dance, unlike their male peers in athletics and team sports, are participating in an activity that already casts social suspicion on their masculinity and heterosexuality' (2009, 68). Is it any wonder that boys and young men have traditionally avoided dance at a point in their lives when they are busy trying to establish their gendered selves and to assert their sexuality, whatever its orientation?

This situation is not helped by the peripheral status of dance in schools. According to Nayak and Kehily, although clearly functioning within a web of other influences including the family, media and popular culture, 'one of the most formative arenas in which young people experience and contribute to the production and reproduction of gender is through the institution of schooling' (2008, 109). Through school, young people are coerced and disciplined to become modern gendered subjects by the codes and behaviours that are sanctioned or censured by a wide range of agents: '... the school-based peer group; older children; school as a disciplinary institution and spatial site producing and purveying knowledge; and children's individual and collective understanding of the other inhabitants of that site' (Paechter 2007, 77).

Carrie Paechter recognises that sanctioned physicality is found in physical education, and that boys, in particular, gain credence and 'physical capital' through their ability to perform in this arena (2007, 122). However, whereas dance is included

as part of the curriculum in most official physical education documents, dance is generally excluded in favour of sport by the time children get to secondary schools. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Michael Gard asserted that many physical education teachers are uncomfortable teaching dance, a situation 'compounded by teacher anxieties about adverse male students' reactions towards learning dance' (2001, 229). Colin Noble and Wendy Bradford even go so far as to accuse some teachers of reinforcing negative stereotypes when they ask, 'How many male PE teachers run dance clubs? How many teachers would make amusing asides if boys were to take part in dance clubs?' (2000, 192). However, the last decade has witnessed a significant challenge to these outmoded attitudes, and the pendulum of appropriate masculine behaviour and attitudes to men who dance is shifting course once again.

According to Corbett, '[g]ender is being rethought, and newly lived' in accordance with 'shifting states, identifications, and social expectations' (2009, 95). In the 1990s, a powerful discourse emerged around a perceived 'crisis of masculinity' in response to factors including boys' underachievement at school and the knowledge that men were more likely to be victims of industrial decline, violent crime, suicide and depression (see Nayak and Kehily 2008, 29). In turn, adaptive terms such as 'new man', 'stay-at-home-dad' and 'metrosexual' have emerged to encapsulate new manifestations of masculinity as it is performed in daily life, in response to shifting economic patterns, attitudes to consumer culture and the impact of new technologies.

Dance, too, is experiencing a radical restaging of its relationship with masculinity. As Burt writes, 'dance is an area through which, as embodied beings, we negotiate the social and cultural discourses through which gender and sexuality is maintained' (2009, 150). Therefore, if the social and cultural discourse on masculinity is evolving then this will be played out in and through dance as much as elsewhere. Indeed, a newly re-inscribed relationship between men and dance is evident within popular culture in Britain, through such influences as the film and musical *Billy Elliot* (2000), the popularity of urban dance groups, including Diversity who won *Britain's Got Talent* in 2009, and with English sporting heroes such as rugby player Matt Dawson and cricketer Darren Gough competing successfully on *Strictly Come Dancing*. From street dance to ballroom to ballet, boys and young men are taking up dance in increasing numbers as a means of developing their performance skills, discipline, collaboration, self-esteem, emotional literacy and confidence, with initiatives such as Boys Dancing being vital in galvanising this sea change (see Nightingale 2010).

### **The Boys Dancing project**

Targeted exclusively at boys and young men, the WMBDA aims to create an acceptable and thriving culture of boys' dance. From *Innocence*, the first project facilitated by the partnership in May 2005, which brought together boys with no prior dance experience from three schools in the Coventry and Warwickshire areas, Boys Dancing has gone from strength to strength. Not only has the WMBDA spread to encompass Sandwell and Dudley Metropolitan Borough Councils, as well as Worcestershire, Shropshire and Staffordshire Councils; in 2009, it was selected as part of the People Dancing initiative for the Cultural Olympiad, a three-year programme to foster mass participation in dance and dance-related activity across the West Midlands. Funded by the Legacy Trust UK, Arts Council England and

Advantage West Midlands, this programme has enabled dance classes, performances and residency programmes with boys of all abilities and backgrounds in primary and secondary schools, youth centres, after-school groups, pupil referral units and young offender institutions. The work has been multifaceted and has included a residency in 2009 with Liam Steel, a highly respected dance and physical theatre artist who has directed, choreographed and performed with companies including DV8, Frantic Assembly and his own company Stan Won't Dance; *The Balancing Man*, a performance project run by McKenna in schools during 2011 prior to a public performance at the Warwick Arts Centre; and a four-day 'dance for the camera' project inside Stoke Heath Young Offender Institute in Shropshire, also run by McKenna in 2011.<sup>1</sup>

In the 2009 funding bid for People Dancing, Boys Dancing was clearly framed as a way of addressing the gender deficit in dance. Describing the number of identified partners, the proposal adds, 'they recognise the massive balance towards girls' participation and wish to provide the counterweight' (1). McKenna has been the driving creative force behind WMBDA and remains a passionate advocate for widening access for boys and young men in dance. On the website for his company, Beingfrank, he roots this in his personal experience:

I wanted to create a company that would enable boys and young men to be inspired about dance at a young age and at the same time see it as being masculine. I was about 18 myself before I myself was exposed to a performance that I could relate to as a male dancer.

McKenna's experience is not untypical as, according to Burt, 'a large number of male dancers did not actually discover dancing until their late teens or early twenties' (2007, 11). McKenna determined to provide a platform to show boys that 'dance could showcase them as strong, powerful, skilful'.<sup>2</sup> A significant aspect of Boys Dancing has been the provision of male facilitators as positive male role models. Another aspect has been embedding trips to see dance companies such as Motionhouse and The Hofesh Shechter Company, as a way of showcasing inspirational practice involving male dancers. In an email to the author, Alexa Pugh, a Community Arts Officer for Shropshire Council, stated:

It has been fantastic for the boys involved to work with the male dance artists, they have acted as strong role models for the boys and advocates for dance and have really helped break down the misconceptions that people have around dance being for women... By seeing other professional male dance groups perform, their attitudes have slowly changed.<sup>3</sup>

Recognising that 'the gender of the teacher can determine the perceived gender of the subject' (Noble and Bradford 2000, 193), the WMBDA has also been concerned with opening up dance teaching and community work as a potential career path for male dancers, by offering mentoring and apprenticeship opportunities for emerging artists, enhancing professional development and facilitating leadership capacity in the region.

In some areas, secondary schools and youth centres struggled to recruit boys to the project. In contrast to boys in primary schools, who embraced the Boys Dancing project wholeheartedly, Pugh found that 'the boys from the youth centres had a

number of reservations about being involved in the project and had fears about being called “gay” [as] it really challenged their sense of masculinity’. More worryingly, Pugh and Clare Mitchell, an Arts Officer for Warwickshire County Council, both faced as many challenges dealing with the problematic gender perceptions of their colleagues as they did with potential participants.

In a telephone conversation with the author, Mitchell admitted to being ‘amazed at the level of prejudice’ she faced from some youth workers, who were uncomfortable talking about dance as a viable, legitimate activity for boys. They also expressed concerns regarding child protection due to the fact that dance involves touching and, therefore, introduced issues regarding policing inappropriate contact. She admitted, ‘It has taken a long time for the whole staff team to recognise that boys will dance . . . there was a lot of resistance and I certainly had members of staff completely opting out of projects claiming that the boys won’t do it, even without implementing any meaningful consultation with the boys themselves.’<sup>4</sup> Equally, Pugh found that ‘youth workers were loath to refer to the project as a dance project and were keen to use other words to describe it’. Hence, Pugh recalled trying to find new ways to promote the project that would downgrade the focus on dance by emphasising opportunities to access music or film-making.

Underpinning the Boys Dancing project is a desire to challenge and dismantle the traditional gender polarities that activate such views, but this has often necessitated a working practice that appeals to normative gender roles as a way of gaining trust and respect. A key theme in literature concerned with adolescent masculinities is the significance of danger and the extent to which a young male is prepared to embrace and enact risky behaviours as a challenge to accusations of vulnerability or being scared. This can result in public displays of aggression, competitiveness, physical skill – ‘cock of the walk’ stuff – associated with fighting, high-risk sports or occupying public space in an intimidating manner. Recalling attempts to attract ‘challenging’ and ‘hard-to-reach young men’, Mitchell spoke of staff who were literally enticing young men off scaffolding towers, where they were practising their own undisciplined version of parkour, by inviting them to develop their physical fitness and ability to land safely. Some of the initial sessions with these reluctant young men adopted a ‘traditional boxing club atmosphere’, with extremely fit dancers challenging them to emulate their ability to do press-ups and hang upside-down, as a means of countering any residue of prejudice that male dancers were lacking in some way. Whilst this could be interpreted as simply reiterating ‘the association of sports with heterosexual “respectability” and dance with homosexuality and deviance’ (Gard 2001, 230), it was a strategy for engaging the boys that worked to open up the non-normative space of dance. But what sort of dance?

One of the challenges of Boys Dancing, according to Pugh, Mitchell, and Sarah Jassal, Dance Development Officer for Dancescape, has been to get the boys to appreciate dance styles other than street and hip-hop. In the 2009 application to People Dancing, the WMBDA stated that ‘The physicality, competitiveness and energy of street dance, breakdancing or capoeira are attractive to some, and together show the popular face of dance for males’. Indeed, the desire to refute the association of dance with effeminacy can lead to a particular form of hyper-masculine display that situates dance as sport or fighting, as in some manifestations of street dance and hip-hop crews (see Burt 2007; Gard 2001). Arguably, the appeal of these forms is that they adhere to a particular performance of normative masculinity that foreground the

male pack, physical strength, muscularity and athleticism whilst subordinating any display of emotion or delicacy. The challenge for the Boys Dancing facilitators has been to embrace the normative as legitimate – the young male as strong and powerful – whilst opening up a wider spectrum of emotional states and responses through a variety of choreographic forms and imaginative triggers.

According to Mitchell, it was important that:

We absolutely had to start where they were... if we'd started by delivering ballet the young men we were working with simply would not have taken part at all... we had to accommodate their insecurities and, more importantly, the pressure of their peers. We had to offer dance activity that was "cool" and made them "look cool".

McKenna is alert to this dynamic and, in an unpublished document outlining the remit for *The Quiet Man Suite* (QMSD), is clear that working with boys and young men comes with a certain responsibility to meet expectations and preconceptions. As such, 'the movement vocabulary we use initially to inspire the young men could be considered "cool or funky"', but the trick is then to take that material and to manipulate and extend it to incorporate other modes of physical expression' (7).<sup>5</sup> Having watched McKenna work, this can be as simple as developing some movement material and then asking the participants to slow it right down or convert it to pair work, or combining elements and allowing layers of complexity to emerge that complicate a display that could initially be interpreted as simply machismo in action.

Boys Dancing has successfully opened up a different lens and set of bodily practices through which young masculinity can be articulated. It has created an environment where the variegated culture of masculinity can find a space of embodiment and questions of emotional risk, perceptions of the body and physical intimacy can be explored in a safe, non-judgemental arena. Picking up on this aspect, Mitchell stressed that: 'It's really nice to witness boys and young men sensitively holding and touching each other without it being misread as a child protection issue'. Of course, much of this work is being done in an unspoken way and, when asked, the boys and young men stressed their appreciation of being creative through physicality and learning new moves and routines, as well as transferable skills such as listening, communication, focus, trust, teamwork and the discipline of rehearsing and rehearsing in order to 'get it right'.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, by encouraging creative exchange, physical expressivity and movement material that shift from aggression to delicacy and brusqueness to sensitivity, the Boys Dancing project explores and validates the full spectrum of masculinity.

### ***The Quiet Man Suite (2012)***

The culmination of the Boys Dancing project for the Cultural Olympiad was *The Quiet Man Suite*, consisting of six short dance films made with boys and young men from schools, youth centres and pupil referral units in Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire and Warwickshire. With overall artistic direction from Steel, the day-to-day creative process was managed and led by McKenna, working with a team of six male dancers selected on the basis of their previous involvement in, and commitment to, Boys Dancing projects, as well as film-makers and composers. The dancers rotated



around the different regions, with one taking responsibility for developing a film in each of the areas, whilst the film-maker and composer altered for each film.

The decision to produce dance for film was significant. For those reluctant to expose their work on stage, 'most often lads in youth centres and pupil referral units serving deprived areas', McKenna argues in the QMSD that 'this artform allows a level of liberation for boys to explore and express issues of masculinity that are sometimes harder to express live on stage'. Equally, film was chosen as a way of countering the ephemerality of the live performance event. McKenna hoped that it would facilitate a reflective space after the performance, in which the boys could contemplate what they had created and why. DVDs of the work were distributed to all the boys and organisations involved, for screenings at home, in assemblies and at parents' evenings. The BBC also received copies with a view to *The Quiet Man Suite* being included in Big Screen programming during the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Great Britain during 2012. In this way, WMBDA hoped that the film would act as a trigger for an ongoing legacy of boys' participation in dance.

With a stated aim to explore 'issues of masculinity, strength, sensitivity, independence and cooperation', it is clear that *The Quiet Man Suite* continued the thematic concern, not only with getting boys to dance, but with allowing a space through which normative gender ideologies can be tested and critiqued. To initiate the project, the creative team embarked on a research and development phase in Autumn 2011 led by Steel. Steel was invited to 'act as a provocateur for the team, spurring them to explore, experiment, innovate and take risks in how they think about both dance and film' (QMSD). Viewing a montage of filmed improvisations from this research and development, the concern with asserting, negotiating and testing masculinity is clearly evident as the male dancers experiment, dancing with loaded symbols of traditional masculine status: pool cues, footballs, baseball bats, a remote control car and a toy helicopter. Themes of strength, restriction and gender surveillance are evident as the male dancers attempt to navigate and traverse the studio space using bricks or become literally entangled and confined by the male uniform of trousers, braces and tie.

This phase established themes and movement vocabulary that the dancers would develop with their young male participants. One idea that translated to the workshop phase was the prevalence of gang culture and the risks and violence associated with that. The decision to tussle with this territory provided a way of playing up to what the boys wanted by allowing them to create a 'mob sequence' that showcased them as moody, aggressive and 'hard'. Working with a group of 11–13-year-olds, McKenna called out the commands 'power', 'no fear' and 'intimidating', encouraging the boys to heighten their performance of a particular version of traditional masculinity that evaded any possibility of vulnerability as they wielded baseball bats. They were exploring the physical exhilaration of the pack, control and an occupation of space through dance moves that aped the swagger and aggression of young male gang culture.

But, there was also something else going on here. Learning and drawing attention to an expressive language of hyper-masculine gestures served to highlight its performed nature and provided a platform to be undercut and played with. Using proper baseball bats meant that the boys had to take care and be disciplined in their movement material; as they swung the bats rhythmically around as other boys dodged and darted around them, emphasising collaboration and teamwork, they

were acutely aware of the potential damage they could inflict. When I talked to the participants, they understood and articulated this in two ways. On the surface, they appreciated the aspects of physical risk and the need to be controlled and responsible for their actions. However, they also engaged with the symbolic meaning of the thematic territory in terms of the need to 'make choices', and referred to the 'bad road and the opportunity road' that lay open to the characters they were portraying. They could be part of the gang and potentially limit their futures, or they could take an alternative path that required a different kind of strength.

Choices and consequences became key themes, particularly explored through a sequence using a slowed down version of the popular street dance technique of 'tutting'. The boys knew that this sequence would be filmed in a candle-lit church as an older male figure is shown in turmoil grappling with a pool cue. The character is looking to God, or his 'inner God', for guidance and the boys are there to represent his struggle and sadness. The man is asking for help, looking for answers: characteristics not associated with normative masculinity. Hence, rehearsing, performing, filming and viewing this sequence opens up the potential for the boys to access a fuller spectrum of male experience than that expressed through the mob section. McKenna invited the boys to imagine what it meant to feel doubt and how that might be expressed through the choreographed movement vocabulary and facial expressions. The boys responded with downbeat faces that signalled contemplation and uncertainty, their movement slow, precise and controlled, qualities all the more evident when contrasted with the physical and verbal bursts of energy that punctuated the end of rehearsals as they returned to 'normal'. During an interview with the author, McKenna explained this as being one of the ways by which the project accesses different imaginative terrain 'that can be more subtle, emotional, more considered and sensitive'.

But this is not to suggest that the 'trouble with boys and dance' has been erased during this project. Observing one session in particular, when the young men found it really difficult to focus and concentrate, there was arguably a tension between the dance activities they were engaged in and the way that they felt compelled to continuously perform displays of non-conforming behaviour, banter, back-chat and physical horse-play. Whilst this behaviour is not untypical of young men in group situations, there was a sense that it was designed to shore up their masculine credentials in order to offset the potential associations of the activity they were engaged in, particularly when other members of the school community entered the room or were able to observe events through glass doors. This concern was similarly evident in the language used, such as 'well played lads' and 'result', that accompanied a skilful execution of a dance move and was more akin to the sports field than elsewhere. It was also clear that for some, the decision to pursue dance at school and beyond was highly charged, with one participant admitting that some of his peers 'call me queer, they call me gay-boy, they call me gaybo, everything around the lines of homosexual'.

By creating a widespread regional culture of boys' dance, this kind of prejudice has and will inevitably become less viable, a situation also facilitated by the fact that Boys Dancing is successfully seeding a new generation of male practitioners with Pugh, Jassal and Mitchell all confirming that the project has encouraged further activity such as after-school clubs and boys taking dance at GSCE, BTEC, A level and in Further and Higher Education. However, perhaps more importantly, since 2005 Boys

Dancing has enabled a creative space of imagination, play and expressivity for hundreds of boys. Corbett stresses the importance of the imaginative terrain, asserting that 'imagination is not simply a confrontation with reality but a means of altering it; that imagination is actually an instrument for the elaboration of reality; that freedom is dependent on social conditions that can be refashioned by acts of imagination and will' (2009, 139–40). In exercising the imagination alongside the body, and confronting the 'trouble with boys and dance' in an affirmative way to positively undo the association of boys who dance with a failing, peripheral masculinity, Boys Dancing opens up the potential for other ways of interpreting the self, others and society.

**Keywords:** dance; gender; boys; masculinity; rehearsal

## Notes

1. The resulting film *Bricks* (2011) was identified as a best practice case study in The Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association Report *The Role of Culture and Sport in reducing Crime and Anti-social Behaviour*, 2012.
2. Interview with David McKenna by the author, 9 March 2012. All subsequent references refer to this.
3. Email correspondence between the author and Alexa Pugh, 24 April 2012. All subsequent references refer to this.
4. Phone interview with Clare Mitchell by the author, 23 February 2012. All subsequent references refer to this.
5. Document on *The Quiet Man Suite* given to the author by Brian Bishop, Warwick Arts Centre. All subsequent references refer to this.
6. Taken from individual and group interviews with boys at Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Coventry, on 20 February 2012 and Coundon Court Secondary School, Coventry, 1 March 2012. The boys have not been identified by name. All subsequent references refer to these interviews.

## Notes on contributor

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