

# YOUTH DANCE ENGLAND

## **NATIONAL YOUTH DANCE FESTIVAL, LEEDS 17-21 July 2006**

Over 130 young dancers and 20 leaders converged on Leeds 17-21 July for the National Youth Dance Festival. The Festival, which was organised by Youth Dance England, brought together 11 youth dance groups from across the country to dance, choreograph, perform and party. Based at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance the Festival culminated in public performances at the West Yorkshire Playhouse on Friday 21 July.

This was the first time that Youth Dance England has ever staged a festival in this format and it was the first National Youth Dance Festival since 1991. The five day event included three days of dance technique classes and choreographic workshops, led by a specially selected artistic team and two days preparing and performing two shows for a public audience.

The types of dance performed included breakin', contemporary, reggae, street dance, hip hop and physical theatre with groups travelling from as far away as Truro in Cornwall, Southampton, London, Fenham near Newcastle, Lancaster and Birmingham as well as Yorkshire. Each group was selected not only on the quality of its performance and choreography but also on its commitment to be part of an intensive workshop programme.

The focus of the Festival was on Choreographic Investigation and the young people worked with one of a team of six choreographers for the first three days and shared their work with each other mid week. The team included: Director Bettina Strickler, founder member of Protein Dance; Adele Thompson, founder member of Stomp; Stuart Waters from Motionhouse Dance Company; Tom Dale, an independent choreographer based at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds; Heidi Rustgaard, Co-Artistic Director of h2dance; and Tom Roden and Pete Shenton, Co-Artistic Directors of dance theatre company New Art Club. In the mornings the young people took part in a range of technique classes from bollywood, ballet, contemporary, street dance and pilates taught by experts from Leeds and across Yorkshire.

The final performance was a real celebration of some of the best of youth dance – moving, intense, energised, committed and of a very high quality – engaging audiences of all ages – but in particular connecting with the hundreds of young people in the audience.

The next NYDF will take place in the North West in July 2007 – application packs are available from YDE in September and the deadline for applications is the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

**Youth Dance England** is the national agency to support and promote opportunities for young people in dance. Formed in February 2004, YDE identifies the full range of dance activities available to young people and seeks to create new partnerships between those providing and supporting these activities. Working across the arts, education, community and private sectors, YDE will position youth dance as innovative, transformative and committed to excellence and diversity.

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