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| <b>Institution: Middlesex University</b>  |
| <b>Unit of Assessment: UoA35</b>  |
| <b>Title of case study: Intercultural dialogue: The Danscross/ArtsCross Project 2009-2013 (ongoing):</b> conceived, co-curated and co-directed by Prof Chris Bannerman with Associate Professor Xu Rui from the Beijing Dance Academy   |
| <p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Professor Christopher Bannerman conceived this large-scale project as an extension of the ResCen mission to connect academia more intimately with the arts profession. The project promotes international communication and understanding between the UK, China and Taiwan linking Middlesex University with the Beijing Dance Academy (BDA), China National Academy for Arts Research (CNAAR) and Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA), amongst others. Through collaborative dance-making between choreographers and dancers from these countries, artists exchange perspectives and artistic and cultural paradigms, and present work to international audiences. In China and Taiwan, this develops platforms for experimenting with European artistic methods, and in the UK, it raises the profile of East Asian dance, art and culture, where these endeavours have been under-represented. Through online forums, discussions, seminars and conferences, the project opens dialogue about encounters with, and understandings of, the other. The project achieves reach and significance in conversation with policy-makers and producers in three sectors beyond HE: arts professional practice, cultural policy, and civil society. At its first stage the project was named Danscross, evolving into ArtsCross as further partners were involved. The project has taken the form of a series of intensive workshop/performance periods including discussion groups, lectures and symposia, linked by ongoing communication and exchange. Danscross 2009 and ArtsCross 2012 took place in Beijing, and ArtsCross 2011 and 2013 in Taipei and London respectively. See an overview published in Arts Professional (Bannerman 2013): <a href="http://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/268/article/bringing-it-all-back-home">http://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/268/article/bringing-it-all-back-home</a>.</p>  |
| <p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Since its inception in 1999, ResCen has explored artistic processes, and the role of artists as citizens and representatives of a domain of knowledge. The role of Middlesex as an institution committed to an international mission with postgraduate students in, for example, Hong Kong has provided a base from which significant debates and networks for exchange have been developed. Danscross/ArtsCross has focused on developing understanding and knowledge of regional, national and cultural identities; intercultural dialogue; and associated policy frameworks of East Asia and the UK in and through performance practices. As such, one of the most significant research insights of the Danscross/ArtsCross project to date has been the extent to which it has given grounds for reflection on presumptions and dispositions in language, culture and practice, drawing attention to similarities or differences in experiences of the other. The project has also invited scholarly reflection on processes of making and producing transnational performance, rather than privileging the 'output' or public presentation. The various styles and approaches to performance which fall under the umbrella of 'modern' or 'contemporary' dance have been a particularly important focus for this enquiry, raising questions about alternate, multiple and cosmopolitan modernities, and the efficacy, or otherwise, of 'home' languages in speaking about experience. The range of approaches adopted by academics largely coheres around concepts of ethnographic engagement and the benefits and limitations that these provide in a dynamic environment that often takes on the attributes of a semi-isolated community as the intensity of the art-making process becomes an immersive experience.</p> <p>The larger context is framed by the political history of the two Chinas (the official name of Taiwan is Republic of China), as well as a perceived East-West divide exacerbated by Euro-centric mainstream understandings in western thought and scholarship. The project addresses issues that inhibit understanding of the 'other' in the UK/Western relationship with East Asia. Such issues were identified in 1988 by Chou Wen-chung's address at the International Symposium, 'Music in the Dialogue of Cultures, Traditional Music and Cultural Policy', Berlin 1988, in which he suggested that for successful intercultural creative exchange to take place, people need to understand the histories of artistic movements and cultures within each culture, to take more than just a superficial view of the exchange, and to understand each other's artistic and political context. Other formative research was done by notable scholars such as Rustom Bharucha and Patrice Pavis. Project</p> |

researcher Emilyn Claid notes, Danscross/ArtsCross takes this scholarship of cultural complexity in to the dance studio so that: 'The strength of Danscross, and ArtsCross, is in the daily work of meeting, talking, moving and making, demonstrating how intercultural relations of power, subjectivities and otherness, sameness and difference, rising and falling, are möbiusly-swirled, roller-coastered, and intimately interwoven' (2012: 332).

Numerous researchers from a range of institutions have been involved in Danscross and ArtsCross. From Middlesex, Professor Chris Bannerman has served as conceiver, co-curator and co-director with Associate Professor XuRui of the Beijing Dance Academy (BDA). ArtsCross has involved ResCen Artistic Associates Shobana Jeyasingh (as choreographer, 2009), and Richard Layzell as an artist mentor and workshop facilitator. Middlesex staff members include: Dr Ola Johannson, Dr Alexandra Kolb and Dr Steffi Sachsenmaier. External staff have been involved via an AHRC International Networking Award: Co-Investigator Dr Martin Welton, Queen Mary, University of London and Rebecca Loukes, Exeter University; in addition, 25 other academics from external institutions including partner institutions BDA and TNUA, have been involved over the period. These researchers have produce journal articles and contributed to the ResCen blog (<http://rescen.net/blog/>). Associated articles by these investigators include: Rae, P. (2011) Pigs Might Fly: Dance in the Time of Swine Flu. *Theatre Journal*, 63(3), 403-424. Claid, E. (2012) Rise and Decline: Reflections through Danscross – a Chinese/UK Choreographic Exchange. *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 3(3), 315-333. Bannerman, C., Xu, R. (2011) The Danscross Papers: Beijing 2009, *Journal Beijing Dance Academy*. Beijing: Beijing Dance Academy (85).

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Beijing Municipal Commission of Education (BMCE) £200,000 over two years (2008-09)

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Tal Foundation funding over three years totalling £650,000. (2011-13)

AHRC International Research Networks Award (AH/J00264X/1) £38,000 over two years (2012-14)

As far as we know Middlesex is the only University to undertake such a collaborative research-driven performance project with Chinese, Taiwanese and UK partners. The project has received wide attention for its innovative nature (see Chinese and Taiwanese television references); and the British Council and the Research Councils UK Beijing Office, have indicated that this is unique.

### 3. References to the research

Evidence of quality of research: Published work includes performance works, weblogs, website articles as well as articles in scholarly and professional journals. The main performance outcomes are now available as DVDs and in online form (English and Chinese platforms). The selection process for creative artists involved independent professional scrutiny and the resulting artworks were placed in professional arts contexts with critical commentary and review.

References (for all items see Bannerman REF2 submission / also available from Middlesex University)

Bannerman, C (curator/editor/author), with Welton, M (co-author) (2009-ongoing) 'ArtsCross: intercultural Dialogue and exchange in and through the performing arts', available at [http://www.rescen.net/events/ArtsCross\\_index.html#.UkvZhLwapiU](http://www.rescen.net/events/ArtsCross_index.html#.UkvZhLwapiU)

Type of output: web content - inc. extended essays, blog, video and conference documentation.

Bannerman, C., Xu, R. (2011) The Danscross Papers: Beijing 2009, *Journal Beijing Dance Academy*. Beijing: Beijing Dance Academy (85).

Type of output: Published key note conference paper

Available from <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/10426/>.

Danscross/ArtsCross Beijing 2009: Dancing in a shaking world (DVD)

Type of output: Video Documentation of Creative Processes and Performance events, Available from ResCen, Middlesex.

ArtsCross Taipei, 2011: Uncertain...waiting...(DVD)

Type of output: Video Documentation of Creative Processes and Performance events, Available from ResCen, Middlesex.

ArtsCross Beijing 2012: Light and water (DVD)

Type of output: Video Documentation of Creative Processes and Performance events, Available

from ResGen, Middlesex.

#### 4. Details of the impact

The Danscross/ArtsCross project has had significant impact for academics, artists, audiences and for cultural policy and diplomacy, addressing issues that inhibit understanding of the 'other' in the UK/Western relationship with East Asia. The activities undertaken publicly demonstrate the commitment of important national institutions in East Asia (such as the BDA, CNAAR, TNUA and others) to developments such as: the freedom of the individual artist and researcher, the importance of critical international/intercultural dialogue in the arts, the thinking artist and the questioning student, debating national and cultural identities in and through the arts, the engagement of policy-makers with culture and cultural exchange, the nature of, and future for regional relationships between China/Taiwan/Japan.

The main themes of ArtsCross 2013 include cultural expectations of the other, intercultural dialogue and translation, and mutual expectations of what is dance, choreography and research. These themes are explored through choreographic exchange that involves artists from the three international locations taking part in the process of dance making, rehearsals, academic observations, blogging, discussion and debate, workshops, a conference and a performance.

#### Two specific areas of impact are;

**Dance making and arts sector impact:** The project develops the professional performance cultures of China, Taiwan and the UK. For China and Taiwan, it develops platforms concerned with exploration and investigation. The project has allowed inclusive practice, inviting dancers with disabilities to dance in the project. It thereby extends the 'licensed' arena of dance in China by producing experimental contemporary performance works dealing with SARS, Christianity, critiques of traditional culture, disability (including the first public / televised performance by a disabled dancer in China), etc. In the UK, where East Asian arts and dance have been historically under-represented, the project has been part of an awakening interest in institutions such as the British Council, in presenting and developing East Asian performance in the UK. This allows new platforms for East Asian artists, and widens the UK dance audience demographic.

As such, the project has been key in developing the performance practices of artists and performing arts students in each national context (UK see Annie Lok at <http://www.stepoutarts.co.uk/>). These impacts are evident in the participants' observations. A dancer from Beijing, who has been part of the project since 2009, says that the working methods of European choreographers have opened her eyes to the possibilities of dance, where 'anything is possible'. These methods have changed the way she works as a choreographer and teacher. A choreographer from the UK says that the project is unique, in that he has to come up with diverse ways to communicate with dancers whose first language is not English. A young 18-year-old dancer from China suggests that the challenge of working with older, more experienced dancers from international locations makes her 'step up' her practice. While a UK dancer finds it challenging and eye-opening to work with a Taiwanese choreographer who communicates ideas with lots of words and complicated back-stories.

The project has also facilitated links between UK arts organisations and East Asia, including for example people/organisations like Alistair Spalding, CEO and Artistic Director Sadlers' Wells Theatre, London; Eddie Nixon, Director The Place Theatre; Jih Wen Yeh Director, Step Out Arts, UK; and Dance writer Donald Hutera (e.g. see article in professional journal, Dance Europe No. 169 January 2013 pp. 36-37)

**Educational policy and diplomacy impact:** In many ways, the project's significance stems from the fact that it is participating in ongoing debates in public and Communist Party forums about the future direction of China and its relations with the region and the wider world. Danscross/ArtsCross represents an intervention in these debates, promoting the cause of the modernisers in a society where symbolic gesture is potent. The project has represented a fundamental shift in the relationship between the field of international research and professional dance practices, and between Chinese conservatoire institutions such as the Beijing Dance Academy (BDA) and the governmental research agency China National Academy for Arts Research (CNAAR) (as evidenced by BDA & Beijing Education Department letters). In addition, involvement (supported by British Council Arts Officers) with Penghao Theatre, the first theatre in China that is independent of the state, supports these developments and offers the validation of international arts and HE research collaborations, both important indicators of achievement in China. It alters the place and purpose of dance in China, and acts as a vehicle for progressing artistic and policy exchanges

between Taiwan and China, and East Asia and the UK. To elaborate, while the Chinese contemporary visual art world has challenged social values for some years, dance has largely tended to act as a carrier of culture, preserving 'traditional Chinese classical and folk forms' or as a vehicle for glorification of the spectacular and virtuosic technical achievement of dancers, and by implication, China.

In contrast Dancross/ArtsCross is participating in an initiative that, through its significant collaborations, opens Chinese society to art in a mainstream theatre context that is informed by a critical stance, not reflecting current values nor presenting governmental views, nor conserving a theatricalised version of traditional forms. Such impacts are underlined, for example, by the invitation extended to Bannerman to attend and respond to issues and concerns prior to the 2009 performance which was viewed in advance, (in closed session), by the Communist Party Chairman of the BDA, and a committee of the Communist Party. This invitation to a foreigner was the first ever extended in BDA's history. Further, Dancross/ArtsCross presents a research-driven response to contemporary Chinese, Taiwanese and Western life and art, and did so in mainstream professional theatres (e.g. 2009 -1,500 seat theatre).

As an on-going face-to-face and online forum for debate regarding issues of Chinese/Taiwanese/UK national and cultural identities and their significance and interaction between China, Taiwan, Japan and the UK, the project establishes new channels for cultural diplomacy to strengthen dialogue which is a prerequisite for stable and positive relations in times of turbulence and change. In the UK, the project demonstrates the efficacy of Arts and Humanities research as an agent of change and involving arts professionals to ensure wider real world relationships and the involvement of British Council Arts Department and DCMS. In addition, Prof Bannerman advised the British Council on the development of their Olympic Big Dance project and advised BODA, Beijing Olympic Development Committee on their Beijing Wishes project which culminated in a film shown in Trafalgar Square, London as part of the Big Dance Olympiad project, <http://www.bigdancelegacy.co.uk/> and <http://www.Vimeo.com/58998067>.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

### Individual corroboration:

Director of the Academic Committee, Beijing Dance Academy and former member of the Executive Committee for Arts Education, Ministry of Education, China (*Yisheng has provided a statement in order avoid translation difficulties – this is available for audit from Middlesex University*)

Chief Executive and Artistic Director of Sadler's Wells Theatre

Director of Theatre and Artist Development, The Place

Director of Foreign Dance Studies and Dance research Institute, Dance Institute, National Academy of Arts Research

Minister Counselor, Cultural Office, Chinese Embassy, London

### Media coverage /TV Clips: (available online or for audit from Middlesex University)

[http://rescen.net/events/danscross09/DANSCROSS09\\_tv\\_clip.html](http://rescen.net/events/danscross09/DANSCROSS09_tv_clip.html)

<http://english.cctv.com/20091110/101059.shtml>

<http://bugu.cntv.cn/language/french/journaldelaculture/classpage/video/20091110/109571.shtml>

Xu Rui discusses ArtsCross London as part of BBC World Service's *The Forum – Letting Go: Can letting go of places, people, ideas and traditions bring big rewards?*:

Full programme: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01fnz3r> (full 44 minutes)

Extracts: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01fwdvl> (short 13 minutes)

### Blogs: (available online or for audit from Middlesex University)

Archive UK Blog: <http://rescen.net/blog/> with 11,000 unique visitors per month this provided an important vehicle for international involvement.

Archive Chinese Blog: <http://blog.sina.com.cn/danscross>

Acknowledged in other blogs: <http://masque-arts.blogspot.com/2009/05/interesting-project.html>

### Quantitative indicators: (available audit from Middlesex University)

Audience numbers: During the 4 projects over 5,000 audience members have seen the work

Participant numbers (dancers/choreographers/academics): 125 dancers, 36 choreographers and 25 academics.