

The Lowry Centre for Advanced Training

Outcomes & Student Stories

THE FUTURE

The primary aim of the scheme is to provide a strong foundation from which students can access professional training conservatoires, advancing their potential towards a sustainable and successful career in dance whether as a performer, choreographer or otherwise.

During their time on the scheme, students and their families are given ongoing bespoke advice about vocational schools, universities and colleges that specialise in dance nationally and internationally. This is done via a minimum of 2 annual 1:1 tutorials with CAT management, as well as more specialised and intensive group sessions in their final 2 years on the scheme.

Students who are preparing to leave the programme at 16 or 18 years participate in an 'Audition Toolkit' course in their final year of CAT, which prepares them for the application and audition process. This course runs over 3 days, enabling students to visit 3 of the leading dance conservatoires in the UK: Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London and London Contemporary Dance School.

Lowry CAT graduates are currently furthering their dance training in institutions including the following:

[Ballet West](#)

[Central School of Ballet](#)

[The Hammond School](#)

[Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Dance](#)

[London School of Contemporary Dance](#)

[London Studio Centre](#)

[Northern School of Contemporary Dance](#)

[Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance](#)

[Dundee and Angus College](#)

To further give you an insight into the support and opportunities we offer our current students and graduates, we have invited some of them to give their first-hand accounts of the CAT scheme, in our **current and alumni student stories**:

Abbie King – graduating in July 2020

I discovered the CAT Scheme through a post on Facebook. I'd been dancing for 11 years before I started at CAT, but I had never learned contemporary dance before. The financial support of a Department for Education grant had a huge impact on my dancing – it meant I could turn up to classes without worrying if I can afford to be there.

The CAT Scheme has taught me to always believe in myself and I'll reach my goals. It's already led me further than I ever thought possible – now I'm moving to Newcastle for further training at Dance City and I plan to just keep dancing for as long as I can!

My advice for anybody interested in auditioning would be to just go for it!! It's an amazing day and is 100% worth it.



Rebecca Dodd – current student



I discovered the CAT Scheme through a friend. Before CAT, I was in a local musical society, danced at school and at home in our loft.

The CAT Scheme has taught me that to dance, there is no right or wrong and no finished product – you're always on a journey. I have already seen huge improvement in my dance and my confidence has grown. The financial support of an MDS Grant has been extremely helpful and given me this opportunity. I'm quite interested in Musical Theatre and if I did that, my biggest aspiration would be to be on the West End. I've always wanted to travel so dancing on cruise ships would be another amazing option. I would just love to share my story and journey!

My advice to anybody interested in auditioning would be to just do it! I didn't have much experience in dance beforehand, but I just loved it. Do not let your fears hold you back – even just the experience of auditioning is worth it.

I am so happy for the existence of CAT, because it means that although I live in such a remote place, I still had this opportunity.

Isaac Peter Bowry – Lowry CAT Alumni

I discovered the CAT Scheme from my high school dance teacher, who found out about a workshop a week or two before the audition.

My previous dance experience was very minimal – it was just an after school dance club & some musical theatre, neither of them taught ballet or contemporary technique, they just involved learning routines and performing them.

The CAT Scheme taught me so much! Aside from dance technique, creativity & all the physical aspects of the training (all very important to lead me to where I am now), but it also taught me why I was putting in the hard work during classes and that my love for dance could become my career! Without a grant from the MDS, I wouldn't have been able to afford the tuition.... if I didn't have that financial support, I wouldn't be a professional dancer now and I most probably wouldn't have taken dance further after high school. I didn't have much interest or the same level of passion and love for other subjects, but I would have followed the norm and studied something I thought I had to do.

After graduating from the CAT scheme, I started full time vocational training at Elmhurst ballet school (previously known as Elmhurst school for dance) and after graduating in 2016, I've been working professionally since. This includes 2 major UK Companies – Matthew Bourne's New Adventure and the Birmingham Royal Ballet. I now want to keep pushing my career forward and to work for 1 major classical ballet company for the rest of my career as a performer.

For anybody interested in auditioning, my advice would be to just do it, even if you're unsure if this is for you or not. Show off your love and passion for dancing! I honestly owe my entire life and career to finding out about CAT, gaining a place, getting the financial support and of course the teaching staff who uphold an extremely high standard of teaching AND genuinely care about the students! I still have support from the CAT scheme now and even if I don't know the current students, they are still my CAT family! Everyone at the C.A.T scheme becomes a family.



Ellie Chadwick – current student



I discovered the CAT Scheme whilst online looking for dance schemes in the area.

Due to moving around a lot, I went to many different dance studios and workshops, but generally didn't do much dance, yet I always wanted to do more as I loved it. The first time I auditioned I didn't get in, I became so much more determined and worked really hard for a year, then I got in the next year!

The CAT scheme has taught me determination and to aspire to my goals in dance, that there is always something to improve on, which motivates me to be a better dancer. 3 years ago I was very underconfident, yet the CAT scheme has helped me gain confidence not only in my dancing, but in myself as a person too.

The scheme has led me to believe in myself and always strive to improve. My time here has made my love for dance even stronger. It has made me a happier person as now, I always have something in my week that I really look forward to. My future aspiration is to strive to become an all-round better dancer, by becoming not only stronger but gaining even more self-belief.

If you're thinking of auditioning, just be yourself – in the way of how you dance and who you are as a person. If you don't get in first time, there is always next year to come back as a more resilient and stronger dancer.

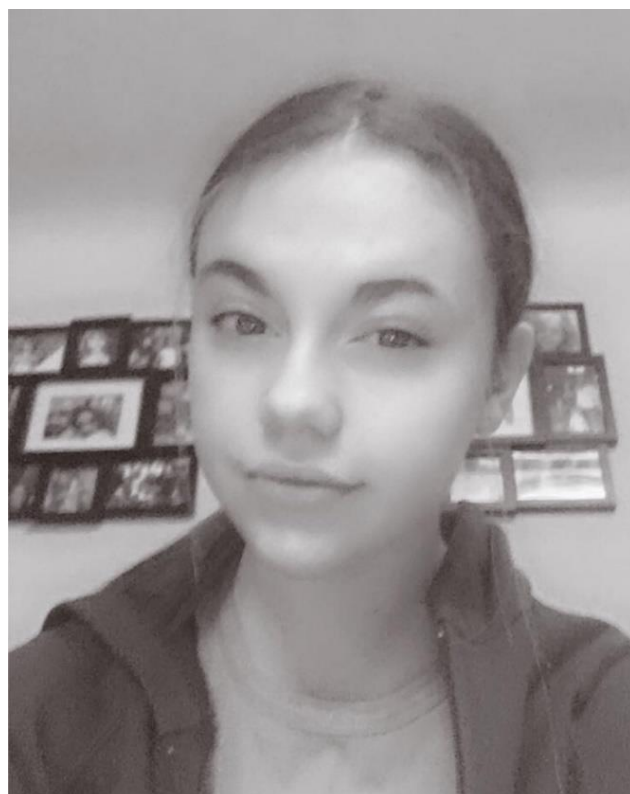
Kirsten Hemsley – current student

Before CAT, I went to a dance school near where I live 2 times a week and did additional dance classes at a dance college on Sundays. Then our school had a CAT Taster Workshop, which led to me auditioning for a place on the programme.

So far, CAT has taught me that when I'm dancing, to always try new things and dance from my heart even when people are watching. I have become so much more flexible and have a much better understanding and respect for Yoga and Pilates. Eventually, I hope to get a very high dance and drama A-level and to be accepted into a very good dance school or university.

The financial support has helped me and others because without it, we wouldn't get to be taught by our knowledgeable and amazing dance instructors and also we wouldn't get to train in an amazing space like the Lowry.

If you are not quite sure if this is what you want, then the best thing to do is come to the audition and while you're there, you will get a great experience and meet loads of new people. This could be the realisation point of realising what you want to do in life! If you get in, then in a way, you have joined a new family!



Holly Rush – Lowry CAT Alumni



Before CAT, I went to local weekly dance classes where I did Jazz, Ballet & Tap. I did dance at high school, I was very lucky to have a PE teacher who was very passionate about dance. She invited outreach groups from Ludus and Rambert to come and do workshops. I then went to an audition workshop at The Lowry for a youth project. I got picked out, (this was a surprise, I had no intention of getting picked I just wanted to have fun!). It was through this I met Jonathan Poole (previous CAT Manager) who told me and my parents about the CAT, which had not started yet.

The Lowry CAT taught me discipline, awareness of my body and it sparked my creativity. Currently, I am focusing on my own artistry. I do not call myself just a dancer. I am a mover & artist. After Laban (Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London), I became rebellious. I knew I did not want to do just dance and be conventional. I toured my first choreography to London and Manchester, performing them in clubs and pubs. I then went on to movement direct at National Youth Theatre for three years. I also performed with interdisciplinary companies, where I performed alongside actors, musicians, live artists, even comedians – I even performed internationally! I knew I did not fit into conventional work and so I embraced my uniqueness by learning different theatre practices such as clowning. Clowning inspired me to work with my vulnerability and from this, I created a solo which was performed in festivals and night clubs. I am still creating and performing and have taken another direction into fitness and wellbeing. In short, the CAT scheme has not just opened doors to dance, but many others doors which have challenged and matured me in ways I would never have predicted.

I dream of touring my work around the country to festivals and non-conventional settings. I want to teach my practice and choreograph companies and youth companies internationally. These companies could be schools, circus, dance, drama etc... I am passionate about accessibility, especially for youth and mental health.

The CAT scheme is not just about training for me, but having lots of fun. I have lots of fond memories and made friends that I am still in touch with. Even if you decide not to take a dancing career afterwards, the CAT scheme will have trained you in so many other ways that will help with whatever you decide to do with your life!

So if you're interested in auditioning, do it! You have nothing to lose!

Annie Bracken – current student

I noticed an advert for The Lowry CAT Scheme at The Lowry and decided to audition for a place on the programme – I was successful!

So far, the CAT Scheme has taught me that there are so many different ways to explore and create dance pieces. It has led me to become more confident in myself and appreciate and love every moment of dance.

In the future, I would love to work in the performing arts industry – or possibly conservation. What's great about CAT, is that they celebrate whatever pathway you take!

If you're interested in auditioning, my advice would be to not be afraid to stand out and enjoy every moment. The CAT Scheme is truly amazing! Dance has allowed me to feel so much happier.



Krishnapriya Natarajan – current student



I first joined the CAT Scheme through the South East Asian strand and my main style was Bharatanatyam. I was interested in what contemporary techniques might add to my practice, so auditioned for The Lowry CAT.

The CAT scheme has taught me not to be afraid to try new things that aren't within your comfort zone and to never be hesitant to explore and discover new ways of moving. It has led me to be open with myself and others and confident in the way I move.

In the future, I would love to create movement and choreograph, exploring how to fuse movement from my Bharatanatyam training with contemporary.

My advice to those interested in auditioning would be – don't be afraid of going wrong. Just be true to yourself and your movement with lots of energy and take on board anything they give you, even if you find it hard. CAT has been and is like a family where you grow as dancers together, but also overall. It has given so many opportunities and I can't wait for the next few years.

Erin Pollitt – Lowry CAT Alumni

I discovered the CAT Scheme through my dance teacher at high school. I had done private dance classes at a local dance school, eg. Ballet, Tap, Modern. Before that I had been a Rhythmic Gymnast, and competed at national level.

The CAT Scheme taught me a whole host of lessons, not only in dance but in life too. It gave me an insight into what the world of contemporary dance is like today, and where it is heading. It taught me how to express myself creatively, and helped me grow as an artist to find my own voice. The CAT Scheme has given me a fantastic base in terms of physical training and looking back I am eternally grateful for the skills I learnt and have carried forward with me. Finally, the CAT Scheme taught me what friendship means. I have lifelong friends from the CAT Scheme, a sense of belonging, a sense of family even now and I know I will always be welcome at the Lowry and embraced with open arms by those who mentored and nurtured me into the person that I am today.

The CAT Scheme led to me audition for a conservatoire, and I was given a place at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds. I trained there for 3 years and graduated with a First Class Degree in Contemporary Dance. From there, I was accepted on to a postgraduate course at the London Contemporary Dance School and I became 1 of 14 members of the postgraduate performance company EDGE. During this year I got to work with 4 Choreographers to make 4 new works, Tamsin Fitzgerald (2Faced), Ben Wright (Candoco/ Skanes Dans), Athina Valha and Philippe Blanchard. We took the 4 piece show on an international tour of over 25 dates, performing in Finland, Switzerland, Portugal, Italy, Austria and across the UK. Since graduating from LCDS with a Masters Degree with Distinction in 2018, I have performed professionally with KMA, Pepa Ubera, Jonathan Poole and my own company Matter of Fact. I set up Matter of Fact in 2018 with one of my lifelong friends that I met on the CAT Scheme, Daisy Howell. Since then our debut piece, 'Era We Are', has been on a small scale national and international tour, including The Place, The Lowry, Theatre Clywd, NSCD, and The Pink House Festival, France. Alongside performing and choreographing, I also teach dance to various different ages and varying dance styles. Finally, whilst completing my Masters Degree in London, I began researching around dancers and their mental health, and I have recently found out that my research paper looking at dancers' injuries and the effect on their mental health has been accepted into The Journal of Dance Medicine and Science, to be published in the Autumn. Suffice to say, without the CAT Scheme and their guidance and encouragement to audition for a Conservatoire, my life would not have taken this path. **Continued overleaf...**



Erin Pollitt continued...

I would love to carrying on performing professionally for as long as physically possible! I would also love to carry on the work I have been doing with Matter of Fact, we are currently working on a multi-disciplinary collaboration with some artists, musicians and poets, and so I would hope to see that work continue after we get through this tough time at the moment (Covid-19 pandemic). In the long term, my ideal future would look something like taking a counselling qualification, continuing my academic research into dancers' mental health, and trying to make a difference to those dancers who find themselves struggling.

If you're wondering about whether or not to audition, I cannot implore you ENOUGH to do it! Being accepted onto the CAT Scheme has honestly changed my life, there are so many parts of where I am now that I can trace back to the CAT Scheme. If nothing else, you will find joy and laughter in abundance and meet some amazingly like-minded people and great role models.

I love The CAT Scheme, The Lowry and everyone who's involved in such a brilliant organisation.

Kyle Baron – current student

The CAT scheme has made me stronger as a dancer. It has taught me new skills to improve my technique and creativity and made me more confident. The scheme has led me further along my path to becoming a professional dancer/performer.

My dream is to be in a touring company and perform to huge audiences. I am considering maybe taking a musical theatre route, as I love to perform in shows and share stories with an audience.

If you're thinking of auditioning, my advice would be to just go for it. Don't be scared, just act as if it's a normal dance class. When I auditioned in summer 2018, I didn't have the best technique, flexibility, or confidence, however, you just need to be yourself and show what you are capable of. If you show determination, they will notice you and if you get onto the scheme, the tutors are there to help and guide you to improve your technique. CAT has certainly improved the way I dance. Don't look at others and think they are better, everyone dances differently and has their own way to shine, so don't be worried or downhearted. Enjoy every moment!



This is my second year now on the CAT scheme and it's possibly the best choice I've ever made, as it has allowed me to grow as a dancer. I am so grateful for all the support from all the CAT tutors and Jade, Jenni and Sally this year and last. They are such wonderful and talented people who are helping all of us to pursue a career in dance. So to people thinking about auditioning to join CAT this year or in the future, I thoroughly encourage you to do so as you will gain so much experience and enjoyment making new friends for life.