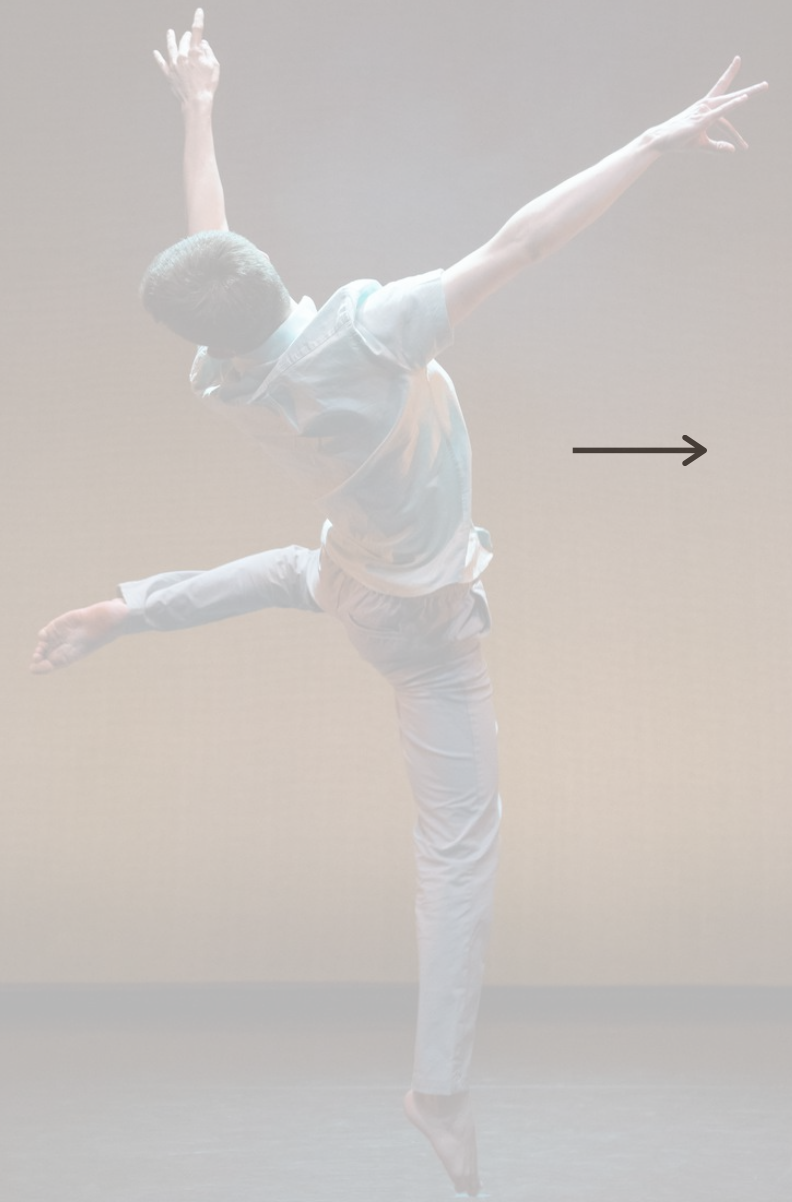

Students Stories

It all began at The Lowry CAT





KRISTIAN DARBY

How did you discover the CAT scheme?

I first discovered the CAT Scheme through a supply teacher at my high school, we initially started talking about dance and she mentioned that if I wanted to develop a professional career into the dance industry that the CAT Scheme would be a good idea. This is because she has had many students who successfully secured a place on the CAT Scheme. So I enquired about the CAT Scheme and unfortunately I had missed the audition date. Nevertheless, I re-applied for CAT in lockdown where I had seen they were holding online zoom classes and then an 'audition' at the end.

What had been your experience of dance before the CAT scheme?

I hadn't had much contemporary dance experience before joining CAT I used to train at my local dance school in a range of styles such as: tap, modern, jazz etc... I had also started to explore dance in my high school studies.

🔍 What has the CAT scheme taught you? ✕

The CAT Scheme has taught me to be a strong and technical dancer, training with a range of industry professional tutors. I had my first Cunningham based classes at CAT and this has really helped me with my technique alongside PBT and regular ballet and pilates classes. The CAT Scheme has taught me how to be collaborative with others and allowed me to become more open and willing to try out new and unusual things.

🔍 Where has the scheme led you so far? ✕

The CAT Scheme has led me to work with a range of international dance artists. As well as this, CAT has helped me successfully secure a place on the: Northern School of Contemporary Dance; Trinity Laban and London Contemporary Dance School's BA Degree Contemporary dance courses.

What advice would you give to a young person who is interested in auditioning?

I would say that just be yourself and don't be afraid to be different from everyone else. Just bring your passion for the art and a drive to succeed.



REBECCA DODD

What are any of your future aspirations?

I would love to become a choreographer!

How did you discover the CAT scheme?

I heard about the cat scheme through a workshop delivered at my secondary school by Lowry CAT Tutor Kelly McClelland and was encouraged to audition.

What had been your experience of dance before the CAT scheme?

I had only done after school classes and improvising at home in my kitchen.

What has the CAT scheme taught you?

The CAT scheme flourished my love for dance. It taught me all the fundamental skills I needed to audition for dance schools. The scheme made me become knowledgeable about so many aspects in dance. The tutor work closely to every individual to improve technique, while finding and nurturing your unique way of moving.



Where has the scheme led you so far?

I am currently training on my first year at the London Contemporary Dance School, I fully believe without the scheme, I would not have made it here.

What advice would you give to a young person who is interested in auditioning?

If you have a passion for moving and love the feeling it gives you, then you should definitely audition. It's the best decision I ever made. There's no harm in trying !

Having a grant was such a relief. It lifted a weight off my shoulders knowing money didn't influence whether I could train or not.'

Kyle Baron

How did you discover the CAT scheme?

I discovered the scheme through friends and teachers encouraging myself to audition. After attending workshops and attending the 2018 auditions I was successful and is possibly the best decision I have made.

What had been your experience of dance before the CAT scheme?

I attended my local dance club which provided Street Dance classes on a weekly basis. It wasn't until I moved to High school where I discovered Contemporary dance and started to find a love and strong connection to it. Having dedicated and supportive teachers at school which provided many dance opportunities gave me the drive to peruse dance further before joining the CAT in 2018.

What has the CAT scheme taught you?

Having the experience of CAT has allowed myself to develop as a dancer at such a young age. It has helped me to learn about the industry and gives you the knowledge and guidance of what pathways to take if considering professional training. Without CAT I wouldn't have got where I am now and will be forever grateful to the tutors who work so hard to support and encourage our dancing progressions. You get to be exposed to a wide variety of experiences which really give an insight to the dancing profession and opportunities. CAT also helped me to believe in myself more and become more confident in my own dancing and creativity.

Where has the scheme led you so far?

After graduating Lowry CAT last year, I moved to London to train in professional dance and was successful in getting into Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and dance. Having the training and guidance from CAT benefited for the auditions giving you confidence and the ability to achieve your intentions.

“

What are any of your future aspirations?

After Graduating Trinity Laban, I would love to perform around the UK even the world. I would love to join companies such as Matthew Bourne's New adventure and be a part of the new works in the future. I also want the experience of dancing in the West End and working with music artists too.

What advice would you give to a young person who is interested in auditioning?

Go for it! CAT is one massive family and if you have the passion and drive, I recommend as it could change your life. Without the Lowry CAT I wouldn't be where I am now. 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. Having the training and guidance from CAT prepared me for the auditions as CAT gives you the confidence and ability to achieve your intentions

”





How did you discover the CAT scheme?

My high school dance teacher Jenna Hughes told me she found this workshop that she thought I would be interested in. I attended the workshop at The Lowry Theatre and then attended the audition the following weekend and it wasn't until being accepted on to the scheme did, I really understand what I was getting myself into!

What had been your experience of dance before the CAT scheme?

I had a very limited experience of dance. I had normal high school curriculum classes from year 7 to year 9 and then attended an after-school dance club at high school. I joined this after school club roughly 2-3 months before attending the CAT scheme taster workshop. I also had a experience of musical theatre with Youth Perform. A musical theatre group that was based at Royal Northern College of Music but it's focused was more towards singing and acting with movement rather than dance (like classical ballet or contemporary as example)

What has the CAT scheme taught you?

This as a list is somewhat endless.

In terms of dance:

I was taught what is ballet & contemporary technique, the basics of dance technique, that I can have a career in performing arts, how to be a versatile dancer, how to look after my body, how to listen to my body, how to view stage & theatrical performances from a personal perspective (do I like or dislike this production) as well as a professional perspective (did the storytelling work? Did I understand what the choreographer was trying to say with movement? etc)

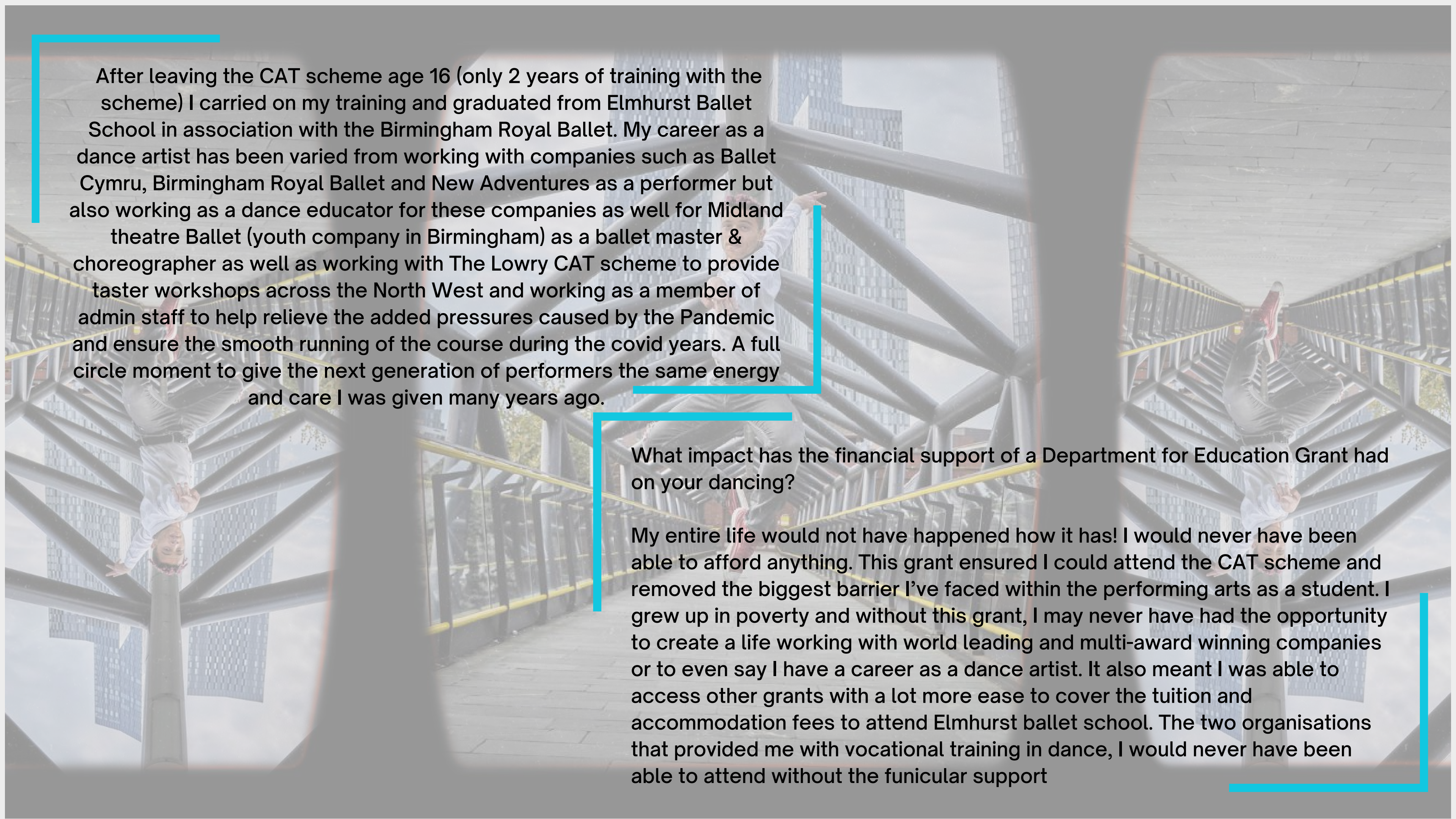
In terms of non-dance:

I was taught many life lessons that I've applied to my career, my view on life and now pass on to the next generation of dancers that I teach!

I knew I always had support from the staff at CAT scheme and this even extended out to the entire education department at the Lowry theatre and now as an adult I've always got my "CAT Family" at the Lowry Theatre.

This sense of family meant I've always been able to support and be supported by my friends, peers & colleagues. Even in an industry I am constantly in competition with them for employment.





After leaving the CAT scheme age 16 (only 2 years of training with the scheme) I carried on my training and graduated from Elmhurst Ballet School in association with the Birmingham Royal Ballet. My career as a dance artist has been varied from working with companies such as Ballet Cymru, Birmingham Royal Ballet and New Adventures as a performer but also working as a dance educator for these companies as well for Midland theatre Ballet (youth company in Birmingham) as a ballet master & choreographer as well as working with The Lowry CAT scheme to provide taster workshops across the North West and working as a member of admin staff to help relieve the added pressures caused by the Pandemic and ensure the smooth running of the course during the covid years. A full circle moment to give the next generation of performers the same energy and care I was given many years ago.

What impact has the financial support of a Department for Education Grant had on your dancing?

My entire life would not have happened how it has! I would never have been able to afford anything. This grant ensured I could attend the CAT scheme and removed the biggest barrier I've faced within the performing arts as a student. I grew up in poverty and without this grant, I may never have had the opportunity to create a life working with world leading and multi-award winning companies or to even say I have a career as a dance artist. It also meant I was able to access other grants with a lot more ease to cover the tuition and accommodation fees to attend Elmhurst ballet school. The two organisations that provided me with vocational training in dance, I would never have been able to attend without the funicular support



What are any of your future aspirations?

Currently I want to keep my main focus of performing on stage but once I can no longer perform on stage, I'll mostly be working within the realm of dance education and activism for inclusivity within the performing arts. Everything that the CAT scheme provided for me to make my dream of working in theatre a reality is what I want to provide for the next generation of performers

What advice would you give to a young person who is interested in auditioning?

Be yourself! You are interested in auditioning for a reason, let that interest shine bright in the audition. Let that passion, love and enjoyment of dance shine bright in the audition.

The audition is a chance for you to see if the CAT scheme is something you want to be apart of!

Erin Pollitt



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.

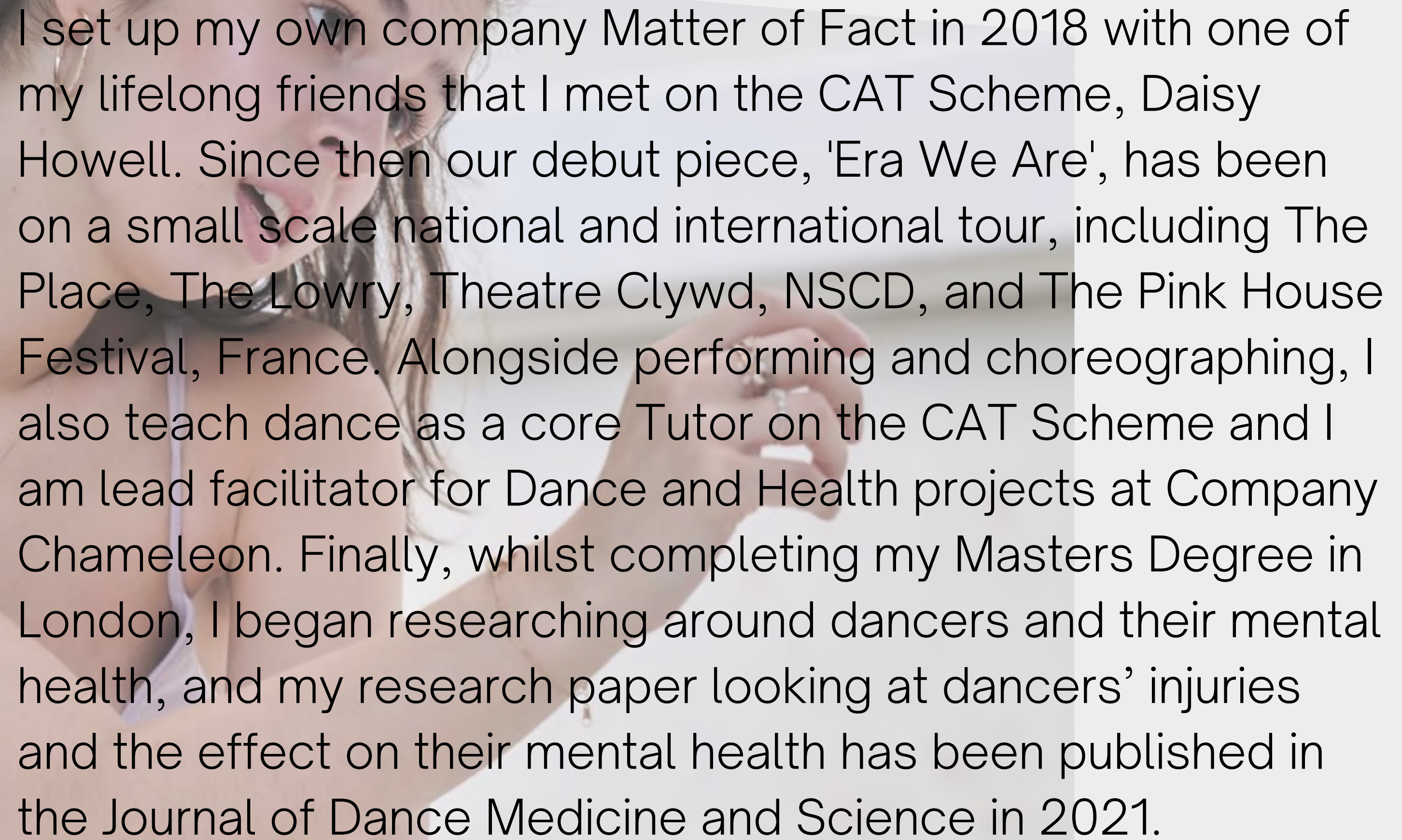
The CAT Scheme has given me a fantastic base in terms of physical training and looking back I am eternally grateful for the skills I learnt and have carried forward with me. Finally, the CAT Scheme taught me what friendship means. I have lifelong friends from the CAT Scheme, a sense of belonging, a sense 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 About Time Dance Company, Ocean All Over, Night People, Pepa Ubera, Jonathan Poole and have appeared in commercials and TV shows such as 'Everything I know about love' by Dolly Alderton, choreographed by Anthony Missen.



I set up my own company 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 as a core Tutor on the CAT Scheme and I am lead facilitator for Dance and Health projects at Company Chameleon. Finally, whilst completing my Masters Degree in London, I began researching around dancers and their mental health, and my research paper looking at dancers' injuries and the effect on their mental health has been published in the Journal of Dance Medicine and Science in 2021.