



# The Bingo Wings Project

## EVALUATION AND REPORT APRIL 2020

The Bingo Wings Project is a collaboration between multiple partners, lead by Limerick City and County Council Culture and Arts Department, artistically produced by Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre. Limerick City and Council Council, Kerry County Council and Donegal County Council co-commissioned and co-produced the Bingo Wings Project with Fidget Feet, funded through the Arts Council's Invitation to Collaboration Scheme.



**Comhairle Contae Chiarraí**  
**Kerry County Council**



**Comhairle Contae**  
**Dhún na nGall**  
Donegal County Council

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

From the 18th of March to the 21st of November 2019, funding from the Arts Council of Ireland's Invitation to Collaboration Scheme supported and enabled Limerick Culture and Arts Office, Donegal County Council Arts Office, Kerry County Council Arts Office, and Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre to undertake The Bingo Wings Project.

The Bingo Wings Project provided a powerful intergenerational opportunity, integrating younger and older people in a programme of public engagement focusing on arts, health, and wellbeing.

### Audience for the Report

Commissioned by Local Authority Arts Offices this report's primary audience is the professional arts sector; other Local Authority Arts Offices, the Arts Council, professional arts organisations and cultural providers, and professional creative practitioners. There is also the potential for the report to be of interest to community groups.

**“It is rare that you can prepare a community for a production that is coming into them and use them to create it as well. That duality and being able to do that for the first time was quite significant. The collaboration, bringing together the resources of the three local authorities and the connections we have in those communities, that was very important”** Traolach Ó Fionnáin, Donegal County Council Arts Officer



FIDGETFEET  
WISK AERIAL DANCE FEST

## Residencies, Shows & SYMPOSIUM

Three community residencies took place in Donegal, Kerry, and Limerick, engaging 875 community members in 135 workshops and 12 open days. six aerial shows were staged by a team of 18 people in three venues, featuring seven aerialists, six young performers, and 73 choir members, performing to audiences of 1143 people. 1 symposium was held in Theatre 1 of the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick on the 21st of November 2019.

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### LIMERICK

- 7th May to the 28th June 2019 with Lisa McLoughlin
- 7 groups, 4 open days, 2 performances of Bingo Wings in The Lime Tree Theatre

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### KERRY

- 2nd September to the 10th October 2019 with Toni Gutiérrez
- 6 groups, 4 open days, 2 performances of Bingo Wings in Siamsa Tíre Theatre

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### DONEGAL

- 16th September to the 19th October 2019 with Stephanie Townsend
- 8 groups, 4 open days, 2 performances of Bingo Wings in An Grianán Theatre



## Aims and Outcomes

**AIM 1:** Create a multi-disciplinary immersive theatre performance with professional artists, youth & older groups.

This was achieved through the staging of the Bingo Wings Show in three locations throughout the Republic of Ireland.

**AIM 2:** Create a working method and structure to work with community groups to create local/regional events, which could form a model for the future.

The programme of community engagement can be replicated and developed for use in future projects.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Integrating younger people and older people through publicly engaged artistic focused programme focusing on arts and health.

Particularly through the Bingo Wings Open Days, younger and older people's interaction and integration was established.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Integrating professional artists with community groups and identifying best practice in creating work.

Due to the residency structure, each facilitator became embedded within each of the communities.

**“It was really helpful to have someone who is local in the community to be a point of contact. A local dance teacher has been incredible in assisting and I think this would have been a lot more difficult if I hadn't had her”**

**Stephanie Townsend, Facilitator, Donegal**



## Partnership

### LIMERICK CULTURE AND ARTS OFFICE (LEAD PARTNER)

- Sheila Deegan, Limerick City and County Council Arts Officer
- Dr Pippa Little, Limerick City and County Council Assistant Arts Officer
- Aoife Potter-Cogan, Limerick City and County Council Assistant Arts Officer

### KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL ARTS OFFICE

- Kate Kennelly, Kerry County Council Arts Officer
- Caroline Lynch, Kerry County Council Arts Office

### DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL ARTS OFFICE

- Traolach Ó Fionnáin, Donegal County Council Arts Officer

### ARTISTIC LEAD

- Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre

### RESEARCHER

- Dr Jennifer de Brún

## Support

The Bingo Wings Project was awarded €73,000 by the Arts Council of Ireland's Invitation to Collaboration Scheme and the Local Authorities contributed €10,000 each.

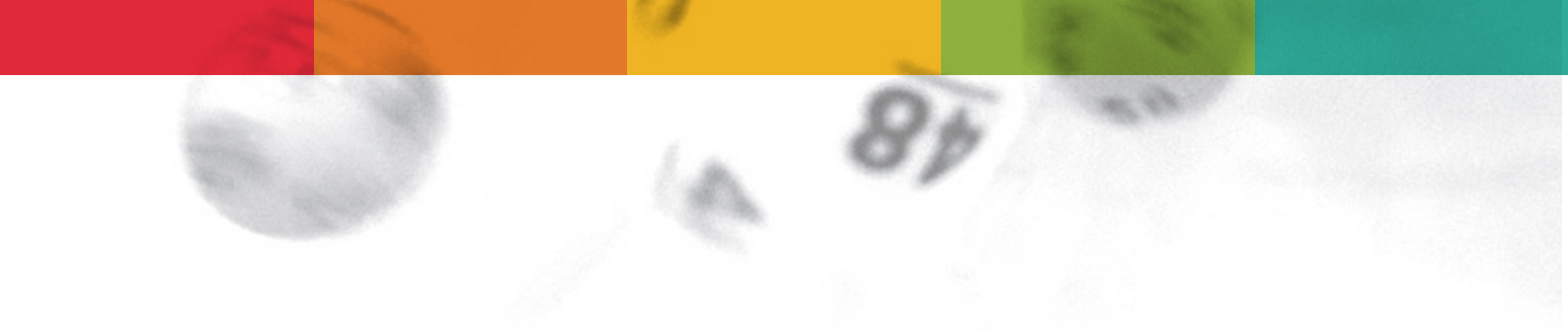
**“It is interesting to see how all the different generations struggled with how people perceive them and what assumptions people will make about them. This is the thing about aerial as physical activity, you are going to not look your best at some point, so it helps break down those boundaries”**

**Community Participant,  
Limerick, Focus Groups**

## BRIEF CONCLUSIONS

- Successful multi-disciplinary theatre performance with professionals and intergenerational community participants.
- The project integrated younger and older people in a community arts programme.
- The integration of artists within the selected communities led to positive changes in participants conception of aerial dance and circus.
- This programme formed a model that could be developed and implemented locally and regionally in the future.
- The Bingo Wings Project facilitated an experience of aerial dance and circus which encouraged participants to examine preconceived ideas regarding age and ability. The project provided participants with an embodied experience of circus and aerial dance which they otherwise may not have had, thus providing them a new reference point for circus and aerial arts.
- It demonstrates the effectiveness of working with the mind/body through artistic means, to alter preconceived notions, in this case the physical ability of people of differing ages.
- The ethos of creativity through inclusivity is intrinsic to Fidget Feet and their work. Fidget Feet is inspired by an ideology of inclusivity and connection.
- This project is of use to the local authority partners as it demonstrates the effectiveness of community engagement to assist in the development and wellbeing of their communities.
- Integration in a large professional theatre production made participants feel like part of a small community of practice.
- Engaging community members with aerial arts and circus in this experimental manner, assists with audience development for these areas in Ireland.
- The facilitators created long-lasting relationships in an Irish context.
- Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre gained experience in community arts based programming.





**“It is very difficult to put into words what it was like being part of the project. I had no idea what I was getting myself into and I am so glad I did it. It was very emotional and inspiring, it meant a lot”**

**Community Participant, Kerry**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

If an arts organisation wishes to engage in community practice, reflexive loops of feedback and a dedication to continuous improvement is necessary to increase the level and quality of the work, which will also complement the existing artistic outputs. Implementation of recommendations based on lessons learned is an important part of this endeavour.

1. A designated post of Community Engagement Manager or Arts Participation Manager should be created.
2. Further consideration be given to the difference between teaching in a community arts context, versus community arts facilitation in collaboration with an artistic output.
3. Terminology of how to describe different groups of participants should be decided at the outset of the project and communicated to all those involved.
4. Workshops of the project should be organized to ensure that these too have an intergenerational element where possible.

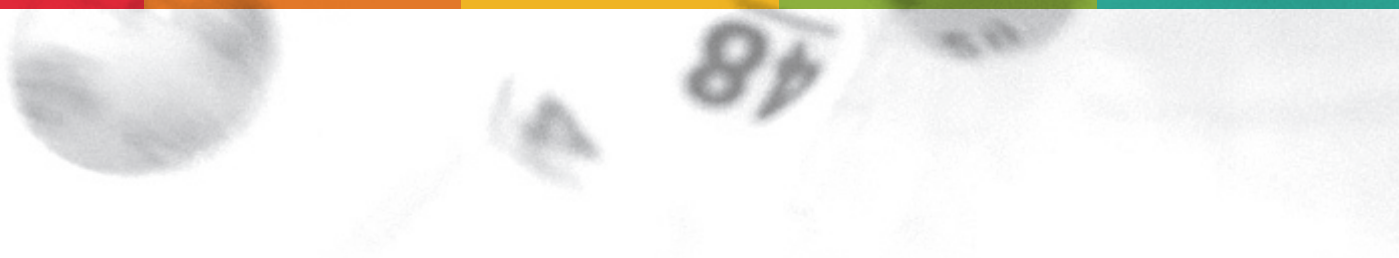


## MAIN REPORT

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## INTRODUCTION

### Bingo Wings Project Overview

In 2017, Limerick Culture and Arts Office successfully applied to the Arts Council of Ireland's Invitation to Collaboration scheme with Donegal County Council Arts Office, and Kerry County Council Arts Office in partnership with Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre.

From the 18th of March to the 21st of November 2019, funding from the Arts Council of Ireland's Invitation to Collaboration Scheme supported and enabled Limerick Culture and Arts Office, Donegal County Council Arts Office, Kerry County Council Arts Office, and Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre to undertake The Bingo Wings Project. These partners commissioned nationally and internationally recognised creative practitioners to lead an intergenerational project, focusing on bringing younger and older people's groups together, to create and deliver new narratives, through the themes of "Bingo", "Aerial" and "Circus", as well as offering them opportunities to perform in a professional circus/theatre production, Bingo Wings. The Bingo Wings Project provided a powerful intergenerational opportunity, integrating younger and older people in a programme of public engagement focusing on arts, health, and wellbeing.

The project included three community residencies which took place in Donegal, Kerry, and Limerick, engaging 875 community members in 135 workshops and 12 open days. Six aerial shows were staged by a team of 18 people in three venues, featuring seven aerialists, six young performers, and 73 choir members, performing to audiences of 1143 people.



## Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre

Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre are an aerial circus performance company from Ireland. Specialising in spectacular performances and projects, which include theatre performances, outdoor performances, crane performances, vertical dance performances on iconic Irish landmarks, shows for young audiences, community projects, and professional development for aerialists and artists. Fidget Feet have established and nurtured the aerial dance sector in Ireland for over twenty years. They operate the internationally renowned Irish Aerial Dance Festival in Letterkenny and Creative Intensive Programme at the Irish Aerial Creation Centre. Fidget Feet are artist-in-residence at the prestigious Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick. Invited to Limerick as part of the National City of Culture legacy programme in 2014, the students of the University of Limerick have the opportunity to take modules in aerial dance taught by Fidget Feet at the Irish Aerial Creation Centre.

## METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

**“In essence, the body is not simply flesh and bones; instead, it is a living enactment of culture and social beliefs”**

Cancienne and Snowber 2003, p. 243

## Introduction

Building on the learning which took place through Limerick Culture and Arts Office and Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre’s participation in the European School of Spectacle Project, Limerick Culture and Arts Office sought a new approach to project evaluation that could be utilised as a model for future data collection, analysis, and reports. It was of paramount importance, that not only the quantitative data be captured but also the qualitative data, so the experience of all those involved in The Bingo Wings Project be represented in the report.

Dr Jennifer de Brún<sup>1</sup>, an ethnochoreologist and aerialist, evaluated the project and focused on identifying a methodology that could be developed and used in the future. De Brún was engaged to monitor and document the project, evaluating its outcomes and presenting findings at a symposium and celebratory event at the University of Limerick. The Bingo Wings Project was examined ethnochoreologically.

Ethnochoreology is a scholarly discipline that examines human movement and dance within cultural contexts. The disciplines of ethnochoreology and dance anthropology established traditions of human movement research and a significant body of work has been undertaken in these areas by various scholars worldwide<sup>2</sup>, which has demonstrated the integral role studying dance plays in our understanding this phenomenon of human behaviour. These ways of researching dance are of vital global importance, with the largest forum for dance analysis, the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology being active since the 1960s (Buckland 1999, p.3). Ethnochoreology is an interdisciplinary field drawing from anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, gender studies, and dance studies etc. to create an ethnography. An ethnography is a holistic systematic study of cultural phenomena by examining the behaviour of participants within social situations and interpreting action within an academic framework. While a complete ethnographic study is beyond the scope of this report, ethnographic research methods were employed to examine the impact of the project, not only in an organizational capacity but also in the lives of the participants.

The researcher's training as an ethnochoreologist and dance scholar has provided knowledge of research methodologies and approaches to data collection and the skills necessary to employ them. It has also provided them with an awareness of how to engage with intricate and complex subject matter and determine which methods and/or theoretical approaches from the disciplines of Ethnochoreology, Anthropology, Sociology, Arts Practice and History are most effective to access, accumulate and analyse data. Historiographical research methods were employed to contextualize research historically and ethnochoreological and anthropological research methods utilized to understand the wider cultural context in which the research is located and engage with a community of practitioners.

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1 A potential issue that was identified was the multiple roles occupied by the researcher, including Chair of the Board of Directors of Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre, Performing Arts Coordinator at the Irish World Academy, University of Limerick and independent dance scholar and ethnochoreologist. To negate this issue the researcher fully discloses their positioning and locates themselves within the research. The researcher occupies an emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspective they occupy in the research, as is common in ethnochoreological and anthropological fields of study. The researcher contends that this improves the quality and depth of the research and demonstrates how methods of distanciation were utilized throughout.

2 Important works by these noted dance anthropologists, ethnologists and ethnochoreologist include, but are not limited to, Gertrude Kurath (1960), Catherine Foley (1988; 2001; 2012), Elise Dunin (1989;1998), Judith Lynne Hanna (1979, 1988), Anya Peterson Royce (1977; 1984; 2004), Allegra Snyder (1996), Cynthia Novack (1990), Joann Keali'inohomoku (1974; 1983); Egil Bakka (1970), Frank Hall (1995), Drid Williams (1994), László Felföldi (1995), Anca Giurchescu (1994; 1991), Andrée Grau (1994; 2003; 2005; 2012), Georgiana Gore (1994), Adrienne Kaeppler (1972;1991), Theresa Buckland (2006), Adrienne Kaeppler (1972; 1978; 1991), Maria Koutsouba (1997), Andry Nahachewsky (1995), and Ann David (2013; 2014).



Ethnographic research methods including conducting ethnographic interviews, focus groups, participant observation, writing field notes, coding data, video and photographic documentation will be employed in order evaluate and report on the project.



## Initial Research Question

From in depth discussions by the project partners, it was agreed that the following would be the initial area of focus and research question.

‘Using ethnographic research methods, the researcher will examine the intersection of an artistic performative practice with community based engagement in relation to the Bingo Wings Project’.

## Field Work

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the Bingo Wings Project the research methods were led by the research and selected based on the data as it emerged. An oral history framework was adopted and supported with archival work, personal memorabilia and artefacts, e.g. photographs, journals etc. For the purposes of this study, field work was engaged in from the 10th of July to the 21st of November 2019. The researcher's previous experience and standing within the artistic community, facilitated gaining access to members of the community, and understanding their embodied knowledge and experience. Conversations and in-depth interviews took place in person or online with various individuals including artists, participants, practitioners, members of local authorities, riggers, academics and others associated with the Bingo Wings Project. These were audio-visually recorded or included in field notes as appropriate. All interviews were transcribed and sections removed due to ethical considerations or at the request of participants. Informal photography of the project was undertaken by the researcher, while Jym Daly, Paul McGuckin, Michael Kelly, and Caleb Purcell were employed as professional photographers to document the project. Jym Daly and Caleb Purcell also took video footage of the project with edits for promotional use completed by Daly. Evaluation and data collection also occurred through a symposium held at the Irish World Academy, University of Limerick on the 21st of November 2019. A panel discussion was chaired by Dr Kathleen Turner<sup>3</sup>, community musician and Course Director of the MA Community Music at the University of Limerick. Panel members included participants, project partners, and facilitators. Prior to the symposium focus groups also took place. The researcher also engaged in participant observation of the workshops, open days, rehearsals, and performance. Data was also gathered from formal and informal conversations with professional aerialists and project partners.

## Quantitative Data

Baseline quantitative data on workshops and performances, number of participants/attendance, age, and location were collected and were represented in text and tables provided.

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1.6 for Dr Kathleen Turner's biography.

## Coding Data and Analysis

After gathering and collating data, the researcher began the process of open coding to identify which themes were present in the project in a codebook. Emmerson et al, state that during open coding “the ethnographer also seeks to generate as many codes as possible, at least initially, without considering the possible relevance either to established concepts in one’s discipline or to a primary theoretical focus for analysing and organizing them. In particular, code categories should not be avoided because they do not fit with the fieldworkers’ initial “focus”; this focus will change as he moves through the notes” (Emerson et al 2001, p. 182). At this stage, the researcher allowed the theory to follow the themes that emerged. Having identified principal themes, a meticulous analysis of the themes, concatenating data and specifying appropriate subthemes and fundamental areas of interest were undertaken (Emerson et al 2001, p. 182). Once sections that were an appropriate representation of the main theme to be included in the research had been identified, selected quotations and examples from interviews, workshops and performances were included. This material was then contextualised with the work of specialist scholars in the appropriate field, with emphasis on previous published research both nationally and internationally.

## Ethical Considerations

A paramount consideration of The Bingo Wings Project was the ethical treatment of participants and data. To negate this issue, the researcher and project partners adhered to established best practice principles and procedures in relation to ethical standards and treatment of participants. Each participant was fully briefed on the nature of the research and project evaluation and their rights as participants. Each participant was presented with a consent form and information sheet to sign in advance of their participation. Participants had the option of revealing their identity in this research and had the opportunity to review the transcripts of the interview and any representations of the findings that they were mentioned in, if requested. At any stage, they had the right to choose to remain anonymous, in which case a pseudonym was used.

During the research, they had the right not to answer questions and withdraw at any time from the research, without giving a reason, by contacting the researcher directly. If they choose to withdraw, all data about them would have been removed from the research. They were also made aware that they were not obligated to take part in this research. Their participation in this research was video recorded and photographed with their consent. They are entitled to copies of all recordings and photographs taken upon request and were fully informed as to what would happen to these recordings and photographs upon completion of the project. The recordings and photographs were encrypted and will be stored by the researcher for a period of 3 years in compliance with EU GDPR guidelines. Once this period has ended, the material will be destroyed. This will exclude the material that is included in the report.



## Aims and Outcomes

In the partner's application to the Arts Council of Ireland's Invitation to Collaboration Scheme, the aims and objectives of the Bingo Wings Project were clearly outlined. The Bingo Wings Project successfully engaged intergenerational participants and incorporated community participants into a high level professional aerial dance show. It significantly contributed to developing aerial dance community engagement, thus contributing to the wider aerial dance and circus cultural landscape of Ireland. Developing new audiences for aerial dance and circus, the Bingo Wings project was a local project with global applications.

**AIM 1:** Create a multi-disciplinary immersive theatre performance with professional artists, youth & older groups.

This was achieved through the staging of the Bingo Wings Show in three locations throughout the Republic of Ireland. The show, written by Tom Swift and directed by Jo Mangan, was composed of an ensemble of professional aerialists, actors and musicians. Local community choirs and young performers performed in the shows, which contained an interactive component, in which audience members were encouraged to play bingo with the characters throughout the show.

**AIM 2:** Create a working method and structure to work with community groups to create local/regional events, which could form a model for the future.

Through the inception, organization, reflection, and development of the Bingo Wings workshops and open days, Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre and the local authority partners created a programme of community engagement that can be replicated and developed and for use in future projects and by other community practitioners regionally and nationally.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Integrating younger people and older people through publicly engaged artistic focused programme focusing on arts and health.

Particularly, through the Bingo Wings Open Days, younger and older people's interaction and integration was facilitated by professional aerialists and dancers in sessions which focused on aerial and circus skills, dance technique, artistic practice. The emphasis of the workshops was fun, creativity, connection, and wellbeing.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Integrating professional artists with community groups and identifying best practice in creating work.

Due to the residency structure, each facilitator became embedded within each of the communities of practice that were created through The Bingo Wings Project. They integrated to varying degrees based on the community groups and location. As seasoned practitioners and educators, each facilitator developed a programme for each community group and identified areas which could be developed and improved upon to ensure best practice.

## Partnership

The Bingo Wings Project partnership consisted of Limerick Culture and Arts Office (Lead Partner), Kerry County Council Arts Office, Donegal County Council Arts Office, and Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre (Artistic Lead). This partnership led to a logical division of roles within the project, according to expertise and resources of each member of the partnership. This led to an effective, inclusive, and comprehensive delivery of the project. Regular meetings were held by the project partners to ensure open communication was sustained and all information regarding the project was shared. Partners worked through phone and email closely throughout the course of the project. Fidget Feet artistically led the project and structured the content of workshops and open day, and the implementation of the project was collaboratively directed and administrated by all the partners involved.

Each partner assisted with the residencies in their region. Fidget Feet's Programme Manager, Juley-Ann Collins, oversaw all the residencies and was the point of contact for the facilitators. Juley-Ann selected and approached appropriate community groups in Limerick for the project. Fidget Feet employed local community members in Kerry (Ann Leahy O'Shea) and Donegal (Tanya Ward) to select and approach appropriate community groups for the project. The needs of each specific community group was identified by the facilitator once they had met with each group and the workshop offerings were tailored to suit each group. As Limerick was the first residency of the project to take place, the facilitators met in the Irish Aerial Creation Centre, where Fidget Feet are based to be introduced to the project and observe the structure and content of the Limerick residency. As the project continued, its delivery was greatly assisted by local community members and local arts practitioners, who in turn added significantly to the project and its legacy.

**“It's great that the council are sponsoring this, a good use of money and a lot of people involved”** Community Participant, Kerry

## Residencies

The residencies were designed to encourage the acquisition of new aerial dance, circus and dance skills in a supportive intergenerational environment. Each residency was five-weeks in duration and not wanting to provide “tokenistic” workshops, the facilitators endeavoured to provide meaningful engagement with these disciplines for the participants. They sought to promote interpersonal connection and empower the participants. Each residency was tailored to satisfy local needs. Participants were encouraged to rethink their relationships with their bodies, people of other generations, and the cultural landscape of Ireland through bingo, circus and, aerial dance. Each residency was participatory in nature. This allowed participants to embody an understanding of the artistic and social value of the project and encourage them to continue this practice following the project’s completion. The ethos of creativity through inclusivity is intrinsic to Fidget Feet and their work. Fidget Feet is inspired by an ideology of inclusivity and connection.



## Workshops

The facilitators were selected on the basis of their technical and facilitation abilities. Limerick based professional dance artist Lisa McLoughlin<sup>4</sup> was selected by Chantal McCormick<sup>5</sup> as Artistic Director of Fidget Feet to facilitate the Limerick residency. For the Donegal and Kerry residencies an open call was distributed to artistic networks. 21 applications were received and were shortlisted by a panel from The Bingo Wings Project. From this process, Stephanie Townsend<sup>6</sup> and Toni Gutiérrez<sup>7</sup> were selected. All the facilitators were high level practitioners who are adept at working with community groups of all different ages and abilities. Each facilitator taught workshops based on their own areas of expertise. While each facilitator was not involved in the designation of the community groups, once they had their initial meeting they were able to design a programme of engagement and lesson plans to suit each group.

**“To see the older people trying was incredible. There was a set of straps hanging in the space and an older fella came and up and put his two hands in them. He said that he used to do them when he was younger in the 1970’s. I wish I could have seen him because I would say he was amazing. As we kept speaking he left his hands in the straps and you could see he didn’t want to let go. It was like he was remembering what it felt like. He was so excited telling us about it, that was a really special moment”**

**Community Participant, Limerick**

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4 See Appendix 1.5 for Lisa McLoughlin’s biography.

5 See Appendix 1.1 for Chantal McCormick’s biography.

6 See Appendix 1.3 for Steph Townsend’s biography.

7 See Appendix 1.4 for Toni Gutiérrez’s biography.





## Open Days

The Open Days took place in each residency area. Those involved in the workshops and members of the public who had not taken part in the project were invited to attend. Attendance varied based on location, date, weather etc., but generally they were well attended in all locations. Participants ranged from 18 months - 88 years.

Usually two hours in duration, the format of each open day included tea/coffee and biscuits on arrival and an introduction and explanation of the project by a facilitator. This was followed by a group warm up (this sometimes took place on chairs depending on people abilities) and then an aerial/circus class depending on the venue and the equipment available. Another tea/coffee break would take place and participants were encouraged to tell stories about their lives and experiences. Then the participants would play a game of Bingo. All participants were encouraged to take part in every activity, but could also sit and watch if they chose. It should be noted as the project progressed that learnings from each residency and open day were applied to the next, thus exchanging intercultural and interdisciplinary models of practice.



## Bingo Wings Show

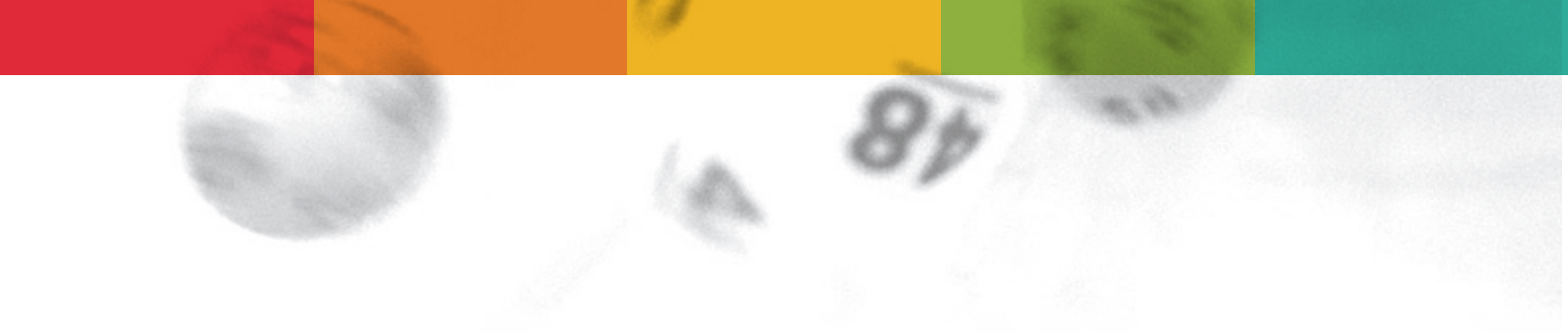
Chantal McCormick was responsible for the initial concept behind The Bingo Wings Show. The Bingo Wings Show was written by playwright Tom Swift<sup>8</sup> and directed by Jo Mangan<sup>9</sup>. The music was composed by Jym Daly<sup>10</sup> with choreography by Chantal McCormick. The cast included Fidget Feet aerial artists Aisling Ní Cheallaigh, Ronan Brady, Chantal McCormack, Maire Dee, Sianna Bruce, Kathryn Cooley, Christina Zauner and they were joined by actor Karl Quinn. The rigging for the performance was designed by Lee Harry Clayden with High Performance Rigging Company acting as rigging consultant. The head rigger for the performances was Matthew Horton. The set was designed by Sinead O’Hanlon and Sinead Lawless was the costume designer. The lighting designer was Sarah Jane Sheilds and the Chief LX was Alan Mooney. The production manager was Tomek Rola and the stage manager was Leanne Vaughey. James Corr was the assistant stage manager on the production.

**“Bingo Wings overall community participation to me was a revisit to where Fidget Feet grew from. To have a community engagement programme which integrated into the live show felt like as a company we had gone full circle. To include the people and communities that have supported Fidget Feet to arrive at a show of this scale made complete sense to me. It was a homage to their energy and support.”** Kathryn Cooley, Associate Artist, Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Company

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 1.7 for Tom Swifts’ biography.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 1.8 for Jo Mangan’s biography.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 1.2 for Jym Daly’s biography.



The Bingo Wings Show was performed in the Lime Tree Theatre in Limerick, Siamsa Tíre Theatre in Tralee, and An Grianán Theatre in Letterkenny. In total six shows were performed.

The show is set in 1974 in the small imagined Irish town of Ballydawn, where the locals vie to win the Snowball bingo jackpot. Star-crossed lovers Jimmy and Moya, try to rig the game but fate, family and a storm come between them. The show chronicles their quest to be together and features spectacular displays of aerial dance including aerial silks, aerial hoop/lyra, aerial harness, aerial rope, aerial straps, vertical dance, and cyr wheel.

At the beginning of the performance the audience were greeted by actors sitting on a vintage tractor outside each venue which was kindly donated by local tractor companies. Ushers in costume and Karl Quinn in character, provided show programmes to audience members that contained bingo cards, which they could play interactively throughout the course of the show. A local community choir would innocuously be sat in the audience and then stood and sang The Bridal Chorus by Richard Wagner, during the show's wedding scene. Two local children played the roles of young Jimmy and Moya and joined the other characters on stage at the start of the show.

**“To feel the energy of the two young adults, who played the young versions of the main characters as they came off stage reminded me of why I perform myself. I saw inspiration, motivation and pure buzz in their eyes that is something that money can't buy but something that money can certainly help to facilitate.”** Kathryn Cooley, Associate Artist, Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Company



## Programme

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### RESIDENCY: LIMERICK

Facilitator:	Lisa McLoughlin
Age Range:	2-85 years
Content:	Dance, aerial dance, improvisation, movement.
Workshops:	35 workshops took place at various locations with nine groups, which included the participation of 120 people.
Open days:	Four open days took place in the Irish Aerial Creation Centre and 121 people attended.

#### Community Participants:

- Limerick Community Groups:
- St Saviours Drama Group
- Garryowen Community Development Project
- GOSHH (Gender Orientation Sexual Health HIV)
- West End Youth Centre
- St. Munchin's Community Centre - Bingo Group
- Our Lady of Lourdes Community Centre - Tuesday Night Club
- Irish Aerial Creation Centre students
- Northside Misfits



Limerick Community Cast:

- Young Moya - Sadhbh O' Donovan
- Young Jimmy - Dylan Lyons
- Young Moya's parents on tractor - Mark Lyons and Lisa McLoughlin
- Ushers - Sara Granda Alvarado, Abbie Condon, and Lena Siew
- Choir - Zion Vocal Ensemble
- Kevin Neville supplied the tractor

**“I felt like part of it, even though I wasn't in the Bingo Wings show, I felt like part of the team”** Community Participant, Limerick, Focus Groups

**“I find the aerial community is really welcoming, when the aerialists came they were so happy to be there and to be teaching us. If we asked them about anything they were happy to tell us about their lives and how to become aerialists”**

Community Participant, Limerick, Focus Groups

**“I was sitting in the audience on the first night, and some of the kids from the workshops and open days were sitting in front of me and they were so excited. One was explaining to her friend that show was about a Bingo Hall and that she knew all who the performers were. It was lovely to see that she was so invested in the show because she knew all the people”** Community Participant, Limerick, Focus Groups

## RESIDENCY: KERRY

Facilitator:	Toni Gutiérrez
Age Range:	4-75 years
Content:	Aerial dance, movement, physical theatre, PowerPoint presentations and discussions.
Workshops:	50 workshops took place at various locations with six community groups which included 147 participants.
Open Days:	Four open days took place in Kerry in Tralee Gymnastics Club and included 100 participants.

### Community Participants:

- Kerry Community Groups:
- Tralee Gymnastics Club
- Active Clubs Knocknagoshel Community Centre
- Cassie Leen Dance School
- Irish Red Cross Youths
- St Patrick's Day Care Centre
- Baile Mhuire Day Care Centre

### Kerry Community Cast:

Young Moya - Saoirse Wenk  
Young Jimmy - Jack Timothy O'Shea  
Young Moya's parents on tractor - Shakti Ji,  
Pharaii Dambisa, David Lenihan and Juncal Nogales  
Choir - Siamsa Tíre Choir  
John Kerins supplied the tractor

**“There are community activities locally but not this kind of a project. We have our clubs but there is not that much parent involvement. I suppose this is community art, we don't have an awful lot of that.”**

**Community Participant, Kerry**

**“My granddaughter comes here to gymnastics and my daughter asked me to come along to the open days to see how we get on, just taking part together. So far it is great fun, I think this is fantastic, like this generation are getting great opportunities and it gives them the opportunity to express themselves too”**

**Community Participant, Kerry**

**“Every day I went to the care centre, I tried to have lunch with them. I would spend the hour beforehand having lunch with them, drinking tea, most of all listening to them, listening about their lives, what they had to share. They were also very interested in who I was, why did I come here, why did I decide to work with older people and what was my motivation to do this work.”**

**Toni Gutiérrez, Facilitator, Kerry**

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## **RESIDENCY: DONEGAL**

Facilitator:	Steph Townsend
Age Range:	18 months - 88 years
Workshops:	50 workshops took place at various locations with 10 groups and this included 138 approx. participants.
Open Days:	Four open days took place in An Grianan Theatre and 173 approx. participants took part.
Content:	Aerial dance, poi, hula hoop, ribbon sticks, juggling, spinning plates, movement, and dance.

### **Donegal Community Participants:**

- Cloghan Day Centre
- Loreto Secondary School (Transition Year & mixed year group)
- Carndonagh Community School
- Clonmany Day Centre
- An Grianán Youth Theatre (juniors & seniors)
- Ballybofey Senior Citizens Friday Club

- Aishlingí Academy Youth Dancers
- Aishlingí Academy Adults
- Zona Dance Company Ensemble
- Zona Dance Company Adults

Donegal Community Cast:

Young Moya - Keira Keogh

Young Jimmy - Jack Deasley

Young Moya's parents in tractor - Naimh Harkin Browne and Ciaran Browne

Ushers - Emma Chudley, Siofra Harvey, Ciara mc Devitt, Jessica Duffy, Saidbh Harte and Angelique Mourier

Choir - Joshua Duffy, Anthony Redmond, Sharon Gillespie, Shauna Scanlan, Geraldine Harkin, Heather Neilands, Marie Murphy, Rose Deery, Claire Deery and Eimear Gallen  
Gerry Crawford supplied the tractor

**“You can see that they are not used to engagement with people who aren't the same age as them and if people are coming to them, it's usually someone who will perform something for them and leave...That was interesting, when I went into those places, they were expecting me to perform for them and I was like “No it's you who are going to try”**

Steph Townsend, Facilitator, Donegal

**“We did things that we never thought we would do, and me and my Mom were roaring laughing. I suppose we are so busy, I have four kids and life is so busy, but coming into that class, we did breathing exercises at the start and it was so relaxing. My Mom is normally babysitting for me or we are just passing each other because we are so busy, so often my Mom is doing stuff for me, rather than spending time together. So it was lovely to get to spend this time together, both of us, with my kids too. Mom really enjoyed it and she was there every Friday night before me, she really loved it”**

Community Participant, Donegal





## RESIDENCY STATISTICS

### Symposium

As a platform to celebrate the project, collect data and disseminate the initial findings of the research, a symposium was held in Theatre 1 of the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick on the 21st of November 2019. The first part of the symposium was a focus group session with participants, facilitators, and project partners. The second part of the symposium consisted of a panel discussion and Q&A session chaired by Dr Kathleen Turner, community musician and Course Director of the MA Community Music at the Irish World Academy, University of Limerick. The panel members included Chantal McCormick (Artistic Director, Fidget Feet), Sheila Deegan (Arts Officer, Limerick City and County Council), Traolach Ó Fionnáin, (Donegal County Council Arts Officer, Máire Dee (Aerialist, Fidget Feet), Dr Jennifer de Brún (Ethnochoreologist, Irish World Academy), Lisa McLoughlin (Facilitator, the Bingo Wings Project). Panel members and audience were welcomed by Professor Mel Mercier, Chair of Performing Arts of the Irish World Academy, University of Limerick. Mayor of the City and County of Limerick, Councillor Michael Sheehan launched the symposium. Following the panel discussion The Bingo Wings Project video was premiered.



**“Dance is clearly an alternative mode of awareness”** Royce 2002, pxxi

## Literature Review and Discussion

Through interviews with the community participants and facilitators, a theme which emerged strongly was that The Bingo Wings Project was meaningful to them and changed their pre-conceived ideas about their physical abilities and that of others. While this in itself is valuable data, it is advantageous to comprehend how this occurs and how it could contribute to future community arts developments and applications, locally, regionally and nationally.

This section of the report pertains to the conceptual and theoretical foundations that influence this research and its ethnographic application. As Robin Nelson (2013, p.99) states, “Research does not take place in a vacuum, however idiosyncratic your particular project”, it is therefore vital that one is aware of the wider context of the research in relation to academic and practice-based work. Therefore, the following section will examine the connection of selected disciplines and concepts to central themes that emerged from an in-depth analysis of collected data from The Bingo Wings Project.

The main concepts that are discussed are as follows:

- Phenomenology - Phenomenology, expounded by Merleau Ponty, is the philosophical study of the structures of experience from a first-person perspective.
- Somaesthetics – Somaesthetics is an interdisciplinary approach, originated by Richard Shusterman, which foregrounds the role of bodily experience in aesthetic appreciation.
- Habitus – An influential concept by Pierre Bordieu which encompasses embodied dispositions, skills and habits that have been acquired through social experience.



Through critical engagement and analysis of the work of noted scholars, the presence and application of these concepts in the project will be illustrated. These topics are broad, complex and variable and it is far beyond the restrictions of this report to provide an in-depth examination of them all. Rather, from a postpositivist perspective, this report is structured around individual phenomenological experiences of those involved in a community arts project in Ireland, navigating the interactions and integration of an artistic performative practice with community based engagement. It offers the reader an insight into a process of creating, managing, and completing a community arts project in which local authorities, a leading arts organisation, and community members collaborate in a community arts project context. These embodied experiences provide community members and facilitators a sense of agency when moving and creating. It is asserted that The Bingo Wings Project facilitated an experience of aerial dance and circus which encouraged participants to examine preconceived ideas regarding age and ability. The project provided participants with an embodied experience of circus and aerial dance which they otherwise may not have had, thus providing them a new reference point for circus and aerial arts. This familiarity and appreciation may also contribute to the growth of the aerial dance and circus sector in Ireland. This project provided a template from which to develop continuing collaboration between local authorities, arts organisations, and community groups, and has demonstrated which aspects need to be supported, developed, and strengthened going forward. It is not the purpose of this report to illustrate a fixed singular truth, rather, it provides insight into The Bingo Wings Project, the experiences of participants, facilitators and partners at a particular period of time, in a specific cultural context. It is acknowledged that this report is only one of many legitimate viewpoints and aims to augment the understanding of the current artistic and professional practice of Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre. It also aims to provide insight into the meaning The Bingo Wings Project had for participants and facilitators, and yield a greater comprehension of the wider community arts landscape in Ireland, particularly in relation to aerial dance and circus arts.

Firstly, it is necessary to contextualise aerial dance and circus within the wider discipline of dance scholarship. In his work, *Writing the Aerial Dancing Body: A preliminary choreological investigation of the aesthetics and kinetics of the aerial dancing body*, Shaun Albert Acker (2010, p.43) attests that the legitimisation of aerial dance as an 'artistic' dance form, due to its "spectacular" nature, is an area that requires further examination. Acker states that the subsidiary positioning of aerial dance within wider dance scholarship, particularly contemporary dance research is because "aerial dance works tend to draw focus unintentionally to the physical virtuosity required to perform aerial movement, leaving the aerial dance as a spectacular display of skill rather than being located within the creative domain of choreography" (Acker 2010, p. 7). Rachel Howard (2004, p.2) in her article, *Aerial Dance Rising*, states that this is due to the "tension between the outward visually striking,

and physically virtuosic nature of the form vs. the inward nature of serious art”. Throughout history aerial bodies have been synonymous with and symbolic of superior kinetic skill and “superhuman” abilities and this is because “kinetic virtuosity in aerial dance is gauged by kinetic effortlessness” (Acker 2010, p. 30). It is perhaps the perception of the requirement of “superior kinetic” skill, which leads many people to believe that attempting aerial dance or circus is not possible for them. This combined with perceived risks, particularly in relation to aerial dance, gives cause to many individuals to discount the very idea of attempting movement related to these disciplines. Steph Townsend, aerial dance and circus facilitator, has observed this when trying to recruit people with no prior experience to take part in aerial dance and circus projects. She stated, *“If you put aerial or circus in front of something, people just think, “I am not flexible”, “I am not strong enough”, and “I am terrified”* (Steph Townsend, Facilitator, Donegal). While this is an existing obstacle with people of all ages and abilities, it can be particularly challenging with older individuals, but there are strategies and approaches that can assist. She stated, *“I have noticed that as people get older, they need more convincing to give it a go, so I really focused on the element of play in circus. Through creating an atmosphere of play that has definitely softened that apprehension for people who are a little bit older”* (Steph Townsend, Facilitator, Donegal). Once the initial trepidations and concerns have been allayed, participating in aerial dance and circus, can prove to be a positive and meaningful experience.



## MEANING

Alan Merriam (1974, p.17) stated definitively, in *Anthropology and the Dance*, that “dance is culture and culture is dance” and it is contended that through using dance and movement as a lens through which we view culture, we gain access to understanding to how humans make meaning in their life. The pursuit to comprehend our experiences, evaluate their meaningfulness and significance has been an integral part of reflective thinking and philosophy for centuries. Meaning itself, is a convoluted, elaborate and multidimensional concept that is utilised to articulate sentiments from, “to give life meaning”, all the way through to, describing the significance of a gesture or word (Johnson 2007, p. ix). Human meaning-making is derived from visceral and intuitive connections to our world and how we perceive, interpret, and identify them. In *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, Mark Johnson (2007, p.ix) argues that meaning<sup>11</sup>, in its broadest sense, is not exclusively propositional or conceptual, but rather that “meaning grows from our visceral connections to life and the bodily conditions of life”, He proposes that cognition and meaning are deeply rooted in our bodies, our brains and our environment, and that the “arts<sup>12</sup> are exemplary cases of consummated meaning” (Johnson 2007, p. xi, p.31). He affirms that various arts make use of the very same structures and processes that operate in ordinary, everyday meaning-making, including images, image schemas, metaphors, qualities, feelings and emotions. Johnson vehemently opposes the common Western misconception of a disembodied mind and emphasises that the perception that feelings are not part of meaning, is a result of mind body dualism and has been a contributing factor to the reduction of the arts and creative practices as extraneous endeavours. This indicates why The Bingo Wings Project is important, as it demonstrates the effectiveness of working with the mind/body through artistic means, to alter preconceived notions, in this case the physical ability of people of differing ages. Juley-Ann Collins, Programme Manager with Fidget Feet remarked on the shift in perception that she observed. She stated, “*I suppose you get to an age and you think you can’t do things anymore and then it’s lovely when you see them surprise themselves*” (Juley-Ann Collins, Programme Manager, Fidget Feet).

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11 Johnson states, “Meaning is relations. It is about how one thing relates or connects to other things” (Johnson 2007, p.10)

12 Aesthetics are not exclusively isolated to the arts (Johnson 2007, p. x)

John Dewey (1934, p.309), a noted American pragmatist philosopher, in his work *Art as Experience*, proposes that if one views “art as experience”, one gains insight into human meaning construction and experience. The arts have enormous importance for philosophical thought as art is an unequivocal manifestation of “experience as experience” and utilising the imaginative mind as a vehicle, art can act a benchmark for philosophical endeavours (Dewey 1934, p.309). Johnson argues, as Dewey did, that “arts matters because it provides heightened, intensified, and highly integrated experiences of meaning, using all our ordinary resources for meaning making” (Johnson 2007, p. xiii). Johnson’s theory is now being supported by advances in cognitive neuroscience, which demonstrate that human experience and thought is shaped by the nature of our bodies interacting in physical, social and cultural environments. Therefore, attention to sensorimotor activity and bodily movement provides perceptual knowledge which can yield understanding of the meaningfulness of experiences and interactions with others.

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## PHENOMENOLOGY

Anne Cooper Albright (2013, p.2), a proponent of Phenomenology, in her book, *Engaging bodies: The Politics and Poetics of Corporeality*, explains that, “Paying attention to how our corporeal engagement with the world creates meaning in our lives, phenomenology revises classical notions of the self as subject and the world as object of our reflections” (Albright 2013, p.2). Maxine Sheets Johnstone (1966, p.12) in her work *The Phenomenology of Dance*, illustrates the “phenomenal presence” of dance and pronounces that phenomenology is not a theoretical system but rather a method of description of the “conscious-body” in relation to the surrounding milieu. She delineates how a description of dance requires acknowledgment of a phenomenon which is kinetic, yet endures in its totality in connection with wider contextual structures. Johnson contends that, “Phenomenology *leads* us to the primacy of movement, but it alone is not enough to prove the case. What is required additionally is empirical research from the cognitive sciences of the embodied mind” (Johnson 2007, p.27). Shaun Gallagher (2005) building on the work of Merleau-Ponty<sup>13</sup>, in *How the Body Shapes the Mind*, analyses embodied cognition and demonstrates how the body, through its motor system, abilities and action influences cognition, and shapes the mind. Situating himself within the fields of phenomenology, psychology, and cognitive neuroscience<sup>14</sup>, Gallagher demonstrates “how bodily movement and the motor system influence cognitive performance - how the body shapes the mind. It may even be possible to say that bodily movement, transformed onto the level; of action, is the very thing that constitutes the self” (Gallagher 2005, p.9-17).

An evident utility of a movement based project like this, is that it assists individuals to change their perception of the world through their bodies. Participants articulated that their perception of aerial dance and circus differed significantly prior to and after The Bingo Wings Project. One participant stated, *“Beforehand, I think I thought of it on a much more professional level, like Cirque du Soleil, but when you brought in the social groups, it was interesting to see it come together and you are able to see that everyone can do this and be a part of it in some way”* (Community Participant, Limerick). These sentiments were echoed by another participant, she stated, *“I thought aerial was always only for professional acrobats. When you watch videos online, no one seemed to be beginner.*

*Then we got to try all these workshops, and did things I never would have believed possible. We got to see the aerialists make parts of the show and it was amazing to see that not everything they do is perfect straight away. They have to try it a couple of times too. It made me feel like they are the same as us”* (Community Participant, Limerick).

One participant described how engaging in a project highlights our conceptualisations. She stated, *“It is interesting to see how all the different generations struggled with how people perceive them and what assumptions people will make about them. This is the thing about aerial as physical activity, you are going to not look your best at some point, so it helps break down those boundaries”* (Community Participant, Limerick, Focus Groups). Another participant noted the disparity that can exist between the image one perceives of their own body and its physicality and the physical activity that they are actually capable of. She stated, *“I love the warm up, I think the warm-up is fabulous, now unfortunately I am gone too old for swinging, although I did sit on the silks last week and I did get on the trapeze this week. I think all of this is brilliant because the children realise that you can actually run around with them”* (Community Participant, Kerry). Now it is important to note, that these shifts in perception do not require large virtuosic feats and achievements, but as Chantal McCormick describes, they can occur with subtle changes in movement. She stated, *“It’s a natural human need to feel connected to other human beings, to connect with touch. Some people are faced with severe discomforts in their body, not being able to move, dance or be active. By being with them, dancing, holding their hands, even if they can’t move off a chair, that is fine you can still dance, it’s just finding alternative ways”* (Chantal McCormick, Artistic Director, Fidget Feet)

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13 Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945) in his pivotal work *Phenomenology of Perception*, strongly challenges René Descartes mind-body dualism and instead proposes corporeal phenomenology and that the experiential aspects of embodied existence must be accounted for (Merleau-Ponty 2012, p.42-44).

14 Gallagher is careful to forewarn, “Although my intention is to construct a strong argument for the role of embodiment in the development and proper functioning of various aspects of cognition, my idea is not that one theory fits all or that every aspect of cognition is directly tied to embodiment (Gallagher 2005, p. 4).



There are multitudinous ways of conceptualizing, examining and experiencing a body<sup>15</sup>. When speaking about the body, there lies a danger of rationalizing the body to make it more manageable and pliant and Johnson cautions against this when he states, “However, *the reduction of the body to the mere physical organism is just as misguided as the opposite error of claiming that the body is nothing more than a cultural construction*” (Johnson 2007, p. 277-278). Describing “the recessive body”, Johnson reveals that even though the body’s organic operative systems are fundamental to our deepest experiences, the body has an ability to hide, concealing these from one’s conscious attention and focusing awareness on external elements (Johnson 2007, p.6).

The Bingo Wings Project facilitated the increased attention of the participants’ bodies. This increased awareness allowed participants to focus the engagement of intergenerational connections through their bodies. This was not limited to their own body, as the elevated consciousness in relation to their own bodies, enabled a greater attentiveness in relation to the activities of others. One participant spoke of her surprise when she witnessed older people taking part in the aerial dance class. She stated, “*I was so surprised, I was like “they can do this?!” That sounds horrible but I even found it very difficult. I thought even my parents could never do this. So when I saw some of the older people do it, I was like fair play for doing that, having the courage to do it no matter what the outcome is. It made me want to try harder to do it myself*” (Community Participant, Limerick, Focus Group). Over the course of the project, participants reported an increased level of comfort and confidence when presented with new physical challenges. They cited that a relaxed environment, fun and enjoyable sessions, and sense of play contributed to this growth in their perception of physical self-assurance and security. One participant stated, “*It has been amazing to see the difference that it has made. We have senior citizen groups in with us, as well as younger people, and over the weeks they talked about how they were going back doing games, that they would have done as a child. They say that they find it good exercise, but it’s the play, they get to go back to the play and you can almost see their inner little child, and that is beautiful to watch*” (Community Participant, Donegal).

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15 For the purposes of this work, the author acknowledge that they are speaking mainly to a specific body with particular abilities.

## SOMAESTHETICS AND HABITUS

Richard Shusterman (2012, p.3), in his work *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* asserts the centrality of the body in artistic experience and practice and foregrounds the soma, “the living sentient, purposive body and the indispensable medium for all perception”. He states that he chose the term “‘soma<sup>16</sup>’, as opposed to ‘body’, as the term body is often utilized for its disassociation with the mind and also to describe inanimate insensate objects without agency or authority (Shusterman 2012, p.47).

Instead, his concept of somaesthetic<sup>17</sup> advocates the integration of theory and practice, and emphasises “the body’s role in immediate, nondiscursive understanding and pleasures in order to challenge the hermeneutic hegemony that confined legitimate aesthetic appreciation to intellectual interpretation” (Shusterman 2012, p. 14, p.67). Shusterman contends that habits and feelings are conditioned by physical and social environments, so it is through the foregrounding of the somatic background that we also foreground and illuminate the “experience-structuring environmental background” (Shusterman 2012, p. 65).



16 “Soma”, a Greek word, was utilised by Thomas Hanna to describe the “living body” in his practice of Somatics (Hanna 1988, p.20)

17 It is important to note that the notion of somaesthetics is as intricate and complex as the soma itself, as it encompasses a plethora of motor schemata, habits, sense, means of experience, consciousness, and knowledge produced by varying natural and cultural modifiers (Shusterman 2012).

If physical and social environments, have the capability to affect habits and qualitative feelings, alterations to these in environments can result in profound changes. The Bingo Wings Project provided a new physical and social environment that many of the participants would not have had the opportunity to interact with previously. Through utilizing their bodies in new ways, and observing others do so also, participants were given the latitude for changes in the mind/body in a non-dualistic manner. Collins states, *“Some of the exercise that took place during the workshops, triggered happiness for them. That really struck me because I never expected it to go that deep and connect with people that well”* (Juley-Ann Collins, Programme Manager, Fidget Feet). Changes in expectations and perceptions pervaded multiple facets of The Bingo Wings Project.

Pierre Bourdieu (1977) proposes that each individual has a habitus<sup>18</sup>, that is, a system of dispositions that are not consciously absorbed from an early age but affect how an individual perceives the world. He states that the habitus<sup>19</sup> is a “system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to act as structuring structures” that influence our actions and perceptions (Bourdieu 1977, p. 53). Bourdieu emphasizes the bodily aspects of habitus and reveals that social norms, categories, values and beliefs are assimilated somatically and dictate the “background of perception, action, and thought” (Shusterman 2012, p. 54). Dispositions regarding age, physicality, and ability are absorbed from our wider cultural surround. One of the difficulties experienced by those organising the project, was that some community members did not have a comprehensive reference point for aerial dance or circus prior to this project. This proved challenging when trying to recruit participants and describe what the project was about. When explaining this, Toni Gutiérrez stated, *“Firstly, it is because they don’t have many circus references. They don’t have an example to draw from in life, such as having a granddaughter in circus, a nephew working in circus, or going to the circus very often.*

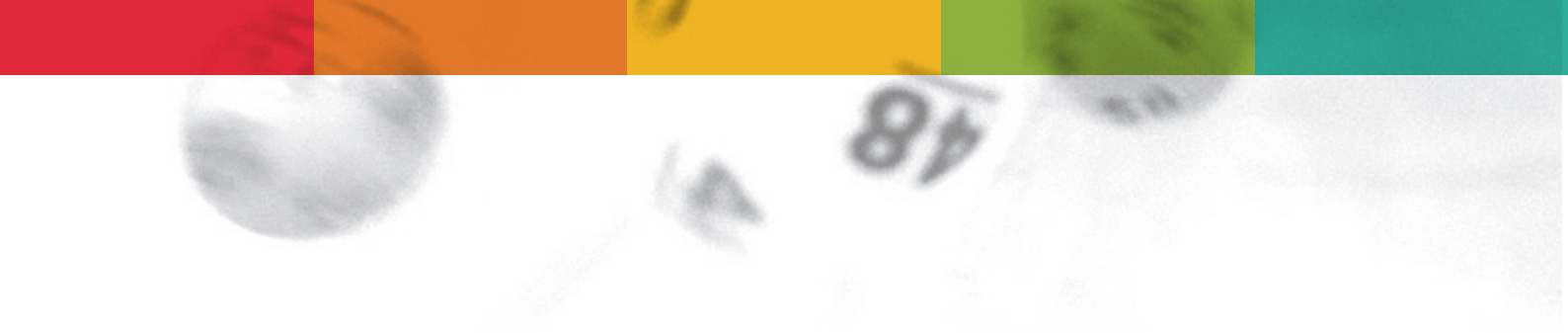
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18 Bourdieu acknowledges that his theory of habitus has consonance with John Dewey’s pragmatist notion of habit, which was substantially influenced by American Philosopher William James (Shusterman 2012, p. 54) (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.122). For further information on the interrelation between Bourdieu and Anglo-American Philosophy see Shusterman (1999).

19 Marcel Mauss (1992) using the term ‘habitus’ – prior to Bourdieu – in his work Techniques of the Body, states, “Hence, I have had this notion of the social nature of the habitus for many years...In them, we should see the techniques and work of the collective and individual practical reason rather than, in the ordinary way, merely the soul and its repetitive faculties” (Mauss 1992, p.458).

So when you say circus, it is still something unknown, very unknown. That really surprised me, most people were completely uninformed about the circus world, which makes it very hard to start with, because you are starting with nothing” (Toni Gutiérrez, Facilitator, Donegal). This is perhaps a glimpse into the wider cultural landscape of Ireland in relation to aerial dance and circus. In Anya Peterson-Royce’s seminal work *The Anthropology of Dance* (2002, p.32), she states, “The new studies scrutinize dance as a phenomenon in its own right. Because dance is inseparable from the people who do it, ultimately, we must return the phenomenon to its context. When we do return it, however, it will be with a much better understanding of its complex properties”. Heewon Chang (2008, p.16-17) in her work, *Autoethnography as Method*, concurs with Royce by stating, “First, I need to establish a non-negotiable premise: the concept of culture is inherently group-orientated, because culture results from human interactions with each other”. Therefore, by examining the experiences of the individuals involved in The Bingo Wings Project, we can gain a better understanding of the wider cultural surround that it takes place in.





It is now acknowledged that the body is multiple and is informed politically, culturally and socially and this affects how we conceptualize and experience our own body and that of others (Cancienne and Snowber 2003). It is important to note, recognizing the authority of the body in relation to knowledge, that there is a differentiation between conceptualizing the body intellectually as opposed to a somatic lived and internal perspective. It is through this somatic experience that The Bingo Wings Project engaged participants. The project, through a physical experience with the body, interrogated the notions of age and physical ability with individuals of diverse ages and experience. The added awareness to bodily experience within a social context of the disciplines of circus and aerial dance provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on how they conceptualize themselves and overtime perhaps alter this conceptualization. These subtle shifts in perception and experience are significant and meaningful to individuals. As individuals exist as part of a larger whole, examining this significance to its constituents provides insight into a wider cultural framework. The Bingo Wings Project has offered an insight into the wider cultural landscape of aerial dance and circus in Ireland.

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## CONCLUSIONS

Through the Arts Council of Ireland's Invitation to Collaboration Scheme, the Bingo Wings Project was successful in its intensions of creating multi-disciplinary theatre performance with professional aerialist and intergenerational community participants. The project integrated younger and older people in a community arts programme that incorporated aerial dance, circus, storytelling, and bingo. In this programme the emphasis on play and wellbeing allowed participants to interrogate preconceived ideas of physical ability associated with age. The integration of artists within the selected communities led to positive changes in participants conception of aerial dance and circus. This programme formed a model that could be developed and implemented locally and regionally in the future. This project is of use to the local authority partners as it demonstrates the effectiveness body based community engagement to assist in the development and wellbeing of their communities. Integration in a large professional theatre production made participants feel like parts of a small community of practice. While all may not have had the opportunity to participate in the performance itself, the ideas, connections and relationships created through the community arts programme were then also represented in the show as narrative. Exposing community members to aerial arts and circus in this experimental manner, assists with audience development for these areas in Ireland. The facilitators created long-lasting relationships in an Irish context, while Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre gained experience in community arts based programming.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

If an arts organisation wishes to engage in community practice, reflexive loops of feedback and a dedication to continuous improvement is necessary to increase the level and quality of the work, which will also complement the existing artistic outputs. Implementation of recommendations based on lessons learned is an important part of this endeavour.

5. For future projects of this nature it is recommended that a designated post of Community Engagement Manager or Arts Participation Manager be created. This would ensure an individual is designated to maintain an overview of the many differing aspects of the project and ensure their coherence. This individual should have prior experience in managing arts based community projects and their inclusion at the planning stages would allow for this expertise to be utilised, particularly in developing a methodology for participant selection, a schedule of engagement, and performance planning. The goal of community engagement is to enhance peoples creative energies, build confidence and facilitate empowerment. It is therefore vital that the project is led by the community and this consideration should be taken into project planning. This will also assist in accommodating the balance between artistic direction, community engagement, and audience development.
6. It is recommended that further consideration be given to the difference between teaching in a community arts context, versus community arts facilitation in collaboration with an artistic output. While both approaches are recognized for their use, their application differs based on project objective, participant need, arts context. It is important that this is clear from the outset and all parties involved are briefed on this. This creates a safe, creative, and open space for all involved where participants, facilitators, and partners are active empowered agents in community arts based learning and participation.
7. To ensure the above, consideration of the language utilised by all involved is a crucial component of community arts participatory work which aspires to the creation of a shared empowered space. Terminology of how to describe different groups of participants should be decided at the outset of the project and communicated to all those involved.
8. It is recommended that the workshops of the project be organized to ensure that these too have an intergenerational element where possible. While this may not always be feasible, it is essential that this aspect is maintained throughout the project. Interaction with the aerial artists and community participants in the workshops from the outset, will also ensure coherence and continuity for both the community engagement and professional performance sections of the project.



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## MOVING FORWARD

It is important to note that some of these recommendations had already begun to be implemented in the next phase of the project that was due to take place in 2020. A four week residency was organised in Dublin for March/April 2020 with The Bingo Wings Show taking place in the Civic Theatre, Tallaght, Dublin on the 16th and 17th of April. Another four week residency was for Galway in April 2020 with performances taking place in the Blackbox Theatre Galway on the 29th and 30th of April and 1st of May.

A performance of The Bingo Wings Show had been scheduled to take place at Fidget Feet's annual Irish Aerial Dance Festival in July 2020. The above events have been postponed and cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but some of the workshops will take place online.

Through the data collection process a high level of interest in continuing the workshops and open days was expressed by the community participants. This demonstrates the value they placed on their endeavours and the enjoyment they have received from participating in the project. In many of the locations there is no regular aerial dance or circus training or classes available.

**“There has been quite a few of them who have grabbed me at the end of a session and said “Where can I buy these? I want to keep practicing”, so that is really nice”** Steph Townsend, Facilitator, Donegal

**“At least a handful of people from every different group have asked where are the regular classes that I can go to and I had to tell them that unfortunately they don’t exist. There are people who really want to do it and it would be a shame if that was lost after this project”**

**Steph Townsend, Facilitator, Donegal**

**“Now there are a lot of people asking me, “Would you stay here? Would you give more workshops? Why aren’t you opening a school? Why isn’t Fidget Feet coming here to do more things?”**

**Toni Gutiérrez, Facilitator, Kerry**

**“The project in general, I have loved having it here. We will miss it and it has done a lot of good, especially for the older people, without a doubt”** Community Participant Donegal





# Information Sheet

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## THE BINGO WINGS PROJECT

This is an information sheet designed in keeping with international best practice for community arts. Its purpose is to assist developing community arts services regionally and aid in developing models of practice to inform, or shape future regional policy development. Community arts projects are varied in terms of scale, artistic discipline, context, and time. Community art was born from the notion of cultural democracy<sup>20</sup> which endeavours to bring the awareness and accessibility of art to a wider audience (Tate 2020). It aims to facilitate the generation of artistic and creative expression from communities rather than organisations or institutions. Community arts projects are generated by, created with, and organised for a community.

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## WHAT ARE COMMUNITY ARTS?

Community art is artistic activity that is based in a community setting, characterised by interaction or dialogue with the community and often involving a professional artist collaborating with people who may not otherwise engage in the arts (Tate 2020).

As each community arts project is distinctive, there are no definitive directives for the creation and management of a community arts project (Creative New Zealand 2020). Instead eminent international community practitioners, artists, academics, and facilitators have identified suggestions for best practice. These have been combined with the learnings from The Bingo Wings Project and have been included below.

- **Ensure that the community is at the centre of the project.**

This ensures that the community feels empowered and the values and principles of the project have been established and agreed with the community. Though consultation and discussion this establishes a clear, open, and communicative relationship with the community.

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<sup>20</sup> “Cultural democracy emerged after the Second World War and describes practices in which culture and artistic expression are generated by individuals and communities rather than by institutions of central power” (Tate 2020)

- **Ensure strong artistic leadership in the community.**

Assure that the artist or artistic organisation leading the project is highly skilled and experienced in their artistic discipline and will have experience working in the community in question. It is important that they have experience negotiating their artistic aspirations with the requirements of the community.

- **Establish partnerships within the community.**

Creating and maintaining partnership relationships within the community is vital for the success and legacy of a project. This could include local school, organisations, local authorities, community members, venues, and support services. If carefully nurtured, through clear communication, trust, and expectation management, these relationships can ensure the success and constancy of the project long after its completion.

- **Create an efficient and effective project plan and communications structure.**

Having a clear, flexible, and well-researched plan is imperative for the success of a community arts project. It is crucial that the selection of the art form is the most appropriate in enabling the intentions and desire of the community, to be realised. It is of paramount importance that all logistics have been thoroughly organised and checked. Communication with all stakeholders in the project should be clear, timely, regular, and honest.

- **Ensure ethical treatment and safety of stakeholders.**

Before the commencement of a project the safety and needs of all participants should be considered and provided for. This includes physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. In reference to vulnerable communities or those that require additional care, special considerations and provisions should be made prior to the commencement of the project and during its implementation. All stakeholders should understand their responsibilities within the project and the supports available. The ethical underpinnings and procedures of the project should be communicated to all involved in the project. Privacy, management of personal data, and GDPR compliance should be considered and adhered to.

- **Organize effective documentation and evaluation of the project.**

Documentation and evaluation should occur from the beginning of a project and reputable methods of qualitative and quantitative evaluation employed. It is vital that this information is disseminated to add to the existing body of knowledge and contribute to the furtherance and advancement of community arts.

Overall, clear effective communication, strong artistic leadership, incorporating a sense of play and space, ensuring the centrality of the community can result in a fulfilling, meaningful and life changing experience for all those involved.

For further information on community arts and resources for community arts projects:

- [Creative People and Places \(UK\)](#)
- [Creative New Zealand \(NZ\)](#)
- [Youth Arts Toolkit \(IE\)](#)
- [Creative Scotland \(UK\)](#)
- [ArtWorks Cymru/ Wales \(UK\)](#)
- [Creative Victoria \(AU\)](#)



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## Appendix

### 1. BIOGRAPHIES

#### 1.1 Chantal McCormick, Executive Creative Director & CEO

Chantal McCormick trained as a dancer and choreographer at the London School of Contemporary Dance. After graduation she became interested in aerial circus and trained at Circus Space, London. Chantal toured with established dance and circus companies in the UK from 1999-2008. Fidget Feet was founded in 2004 by Chantal (Donegal) and her husband Jym Daly (Cork). Chantal has directed, choreographed, and performed shows with Fidget Feet including; Wired and Free, Fairies Tail, Remember Her, Madam Silk, Raw, Hang On, Catch Me, Fire Birds and Elves and the Shoemaker. Chantal is also the Festival Director of the Irish Aerial Dance Fest (Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre 2020).

#### 1.2 Jym Daly

Jym began his artistic journey at the Crawford Municipal (Cork Arts School). He came to the attention of London's Avant-garde scene by playing kitchen sinks along with Chinese violins in nightclubs like the Camden Palace etc. Never feeling any one art form to be fully satisfactory, Jym later found himself involved in the development of a new sound which combined spiritual music from around the world with the emerging world of dance beats. Loop Guru toured the world for many years leaving a rich legacy of albums. During that time Jym also created videos for the band and created a cartoon which ran in a national music magazine. His eclectic artistic past has now culminated in Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre, co-founded with wife Chantal McCormick, where music, film, dance, acting and swinging boats off cranes co-exist peacefully in the one expression (Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre 2020)

### 1.3 Steph Townsend

Steph Townsend graduated from Coventry University in 2012, gaining a First Class Honours degree in Dance Making and Performance. She began working professionally in 2012 and has worked internationally with companies such as KeiraDance, The Hut Project, Nocturn, Theo Clinkard, Lizzy Le Quesne, GlassHouse, Flux Dance Theatre & Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre. Steph is also a trained Yoga Instructor and Aerialist who enjoys experimenting with how these disciplines can interact with physical theatre & voice. Steph launched her own company, Yodanga Arts, in 2016 where she creates opportunities for people of all ages to experience various forms of Dance, Aerial Arts & Yoga.

### 1.4 Toni Gutiérrez

Toni Gutiérrez is a professional circus artist, specializing in duo trapeze and rope. He has been trained at Rogelio Rivel Circus School (Barcelona, Spain) and with the recognised teacher Yuri Sakalov (ESAC, Brussels, Belgium). He has trained rope for two intensive years (2010/11) with Emiliano Ron (Barcelona, Argentina) and after that with Helene Embling (NICA, Melbourne, Australia). He has been working with his former duo trapeze company Amnoticos (2011-2013) around Spain and Australia. Toni has also performed with the companies Silosenomecuelgo (Catalonia), Cirque Dreams (USA), Circ Cric (Barcelona), Cia. Ciclicus (Brasil-Spain), Duo Toni & Mila (France-Spain), Overhead Project (Germany) and the physical theatre company LosCorderos (Spain). He has worked together with other independent dancers and musicians in various experimental projects, specially mixing rope and dance. Since 2014 he has been mainly performing and directing with Asvin López, in their own company La Fem Fatal, - specialising in acrobatic duo trapeze. They have been performing their two short pieces Anton i Polina and EJE36 consistently and have been integrated as part of bigger shows, festivals and galas all over the globe during the past six years. They can be seen nowadays and during the winter season in the German Cabaret Palazzo, with the show, Ladies First. On the pedagogical side, he has been teaching aerial circus for 10 years in many circus schools and institutions, giving workshops around Europe, India and Australia. Through his interest in social circus projects, an aspect of his practice that he finds really rewarding, Toni became involved with Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre. He was part of The Bingo Wings Project, sharing his circus knowledge with older and young generations in Kerry, Ireland.



### **1.5 Lisa McLoughlin**

Trained at the Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance, London. Lisa has performed extensively across the globe with many companies as a freelance dancer. A founder member of Rex Levitates (now the Liz Roche Company), CoisCeim, Marguerite Donlon and Dancers, IMDT, Citoig, among many others. She is an award-winning choreographer and a passionate advocate and teacher of dance. She is a tutor and researcher in dance at the Irish World Academy, University of Limerick, holds a first-class honours MA in Dance combining dance and psychology. Lisa has been awarded Irish Research council funding for her Arts Practice PhD, which explores autonomy and dependency in society. This research involved contributions from over 500 people and has been co funded by the Arts Council of Ireland. She is a board member of the Liz Roche Company and the Dublin Dance Festival (Irish World Academy 2020)

### **1.6 Dr Kathleen Turner**

Dr Kathleen Turner is a singer, songwriter, community musician and Director of the MA Community Music at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick. She is also an experienced community choral leader and has directed a number of significant performances. Kathleen holds a PhD in Arts Practice (her dissertation explored the role of the community musician in the process of social regeneration), as well as Masters Degrees in Community Music and Ritual Chant and Song. In 2008 she was invited by the Irish Chamber Orchestra to pilot Sing Out with Strings, a community music initiative in Limerick City, which now provides hundreds of children with free access to singing, songwriting and instrumental tuition. From 2008 to 2014, she continued as Community Engagement Manager for the Irish Chamber Orchestra, implementing a number of projects bringing live music into the classroom and community. Kathleen combines her educational work with a busy career as singer and songwriter, which included the release of her debut album, Like a Lion, in December 2019.

### **1.7 Tom Swift**

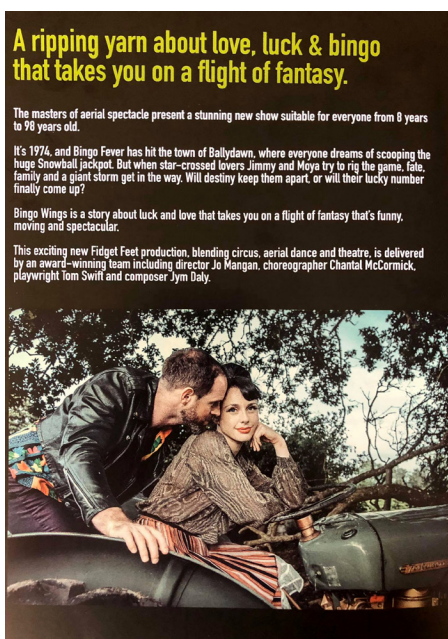
Tom Swift has been writing for theatre since 2002. He has collaborated particularly extensively with The Performance Corporation. His short site-specific piece 'The Other Woman' was performed as part of Fishamble's 2006 series 'Whereabouts', which went on to win the Judges' Special Award at the 2007 Irish Times Theatre Awards. Works not listed here include the bilingual radio play 'The Flying Dutchman of Iniskill', produced by The Performance Corporation and RTÉ Lyric FM in 2008 (Irish Theatre Institute 2020)

## 1.8 Jo Mangan

Jo Mangan is the Artistic Director of the production company she co-founded The Performance Corporation. Upcoming work with the company includes a residency in Vancouver at Performance Works, developing live/VR interactive work, and the development of new site-specific work on the west coast of Ireland. Recent work for the company includes performances presented as part of FUSE at the Vancouver Art Gallery, a national tour of *The Dead* – a New Opera based on the James Joyce short story, and with *Boca del Lupo* (Vancouver) Expedition in Dublin Theatre Festival. The company's SPACE Programme – is Ireland's longest running multi-disciplinary international artists Residency. Current additional projects include directing an upcoming theatre/aerial dance show for *Fidget Feet – Bingo Wings*, as well as being Curator of the Ireland exhibition for the Prague Quadrennial Design Exhibition through the creation of a Virtual Reality film. In 2013 Jo founded and curated the BIG House Festival – Ireland's first ever site-specific arts festival, awarded the ERIC for Best Irish Festival 2013. She was Artistic Director of 2014 *Bram Stoker Festival* Dublin also winner of the ERIC for Best Irish Festival. Other work includes Creative Consultancy for organisations including the Abbey Theatre and National Museum, curating the Theatre Forum conference in 2015 and working as International Programmer for Limerick City of Culture, where the highlights of her programme included *Royal de Luxe*. Her work has won plaudits and awards internationally and nationally including a number of Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards comprising Best Director and Best Production nominations. In 2011/12 Jo was awarded the Jerome Hynes Clore Cultural Leadership Fellowship part of which saw her working at the Barbican Arts Centre as well as the Irish Department of Arts. She has served on many boards, including from 2015-18 as Chair of the National Campaign for the Arts. Jo has been the Director and CEO of Carlow Arts Festival since 2016 (Carlow Arts Festival 2020).



## 2. THE BINGO WINGS SHOW PROGRAMME



# BINGO

1	28	32	60	75
4	21	44	55	66
2	30	★	59	61
17	23	41	47	72
10	24	40	48	90

**SPECIAL THANKS TO**

**Local Author**  
Local Young Play & Story  
Local Theatre and Dance Group (Moya's parents)  
Local Parents (Jimmy, Moya) and Sponsors who welcomed us into their communities.

**Artists in Residence**  
Liam McLaughlin - Limerick  
Lee McLaughlin - Kerry  
Stephanie Thomson - Limerick

**Local Authorities**  
Ballydawn Limerick City and County Council Arts Officer  
Fiona L. Mc... Council City and County Council Assistant Arts Officer  
Arlene O'Connell... Council City and County Council Assistant Arts Officer  
Arlene Kennedy... County Council Arts Officer  
Catherine... Kerry County Council Arts Officer  
Dorothy... Kerry County Council Arts Officer

**History of the Project**

In 2014, The Performance Corporation Director Jo Mangan, was approached by Fidget Feet to direct...

**CREDITS** Bingo Wings Show & Project

Written by Tom Swift  
Directed by Jo Mangan

Cost: Writing (Chantal), Music (Tom, Chantal, McCormick, Karl Dean, Mark Day, David Brock, Colleen Kelly, Christine Jansen & Matthew Horan).

Set Design: David Thacker  
Carpentry: David Thacker  
Lighting: David Thacker, Jack Ryan  
Rigging Design: Lee Clayton

Prop & Rigging Consultant: Mark Performance (Kerry),  
Paul Kippel - Limerick  
Assistant Stage Manager: James Carr  
Chief LK: Mark Horan

Production Manager: Sarah May  
Stage Manager: Liam Bradley  
Assistant Stage Manager: James Carr  
Chief LK: Mark Horan

Photo & Post-Production: Lisa Kelly  
Film and Sound: Jim Day  
Original Research Collaborator: Lilla John New

Financial Officer: Claire Moran

## BINGO SNOWBALL

3	29	38	58	76
11	27	33	51	66
1	24	★	59	64
6	16	42	47	61
12	18	32	54	89

## 3. THE BINGO WINGS PROJECT VIDEOS

The Bingo Wings Project Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JCHi7SuUjQ>

The Bingo Wings Show – Promotional Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCfhiofM6CU>

The Bingo Wings Show – Promotional Video (Short)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpMJTUKElec>

The Bingo Wings Project – Promotional Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uv0k1-asNtU>

The Bingo Wings Project – Open Day Video

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Mlapp\\_C7S0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Mlapp_C7S0)





**FIDGETFEET**  
AERIAL DANCE THEATRE