

# APPENDIX 2

## DANCE TOUR CASE STUDY

DANCE THEATRE OF  
IRELAND

TOUR OF 'SLOW DOWN'  
NOVEMBER 2007

REPORT FOR *THE TOURING EXPERIMENT*  
**BY DEIRDRE MULROONEY**

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## 1. Who is the producer Why are they touring?

Dance Theatre of Ireland, founded by Robert Connor and Loretta Yurick in 1989, grew out of the embers of Dublin Contemporary Dance Theatre, which Connor and Yurick joined as performers in 1980, the year after Joan Davis founded the company.

1980 was also the year Connor and Yurick arrived in Ireland from America, where they originate<sup>1</sup>. Their dance training began in Minneapolis where they studied contemporary dance with Nancy Hauser and Hanya Holm, descendants of Mary Wigman, and the school of abstract expressionism in dance. Connor holds a BA in psychology, and Yurick in Urban Studies.

In 1989, after the withdrawal of Arts Council funding from dance companies, Connor and Yurick were among the founders the Association of Professional Dancers of Ireland (APDI - now trading as 'Dance Ireland'), as well as Dance Theatre of Ireland. So not only are they an integral part of the history of contemporary dance in Ireland, but their advocacy for the art form, also helped in no small way to make it happen, and to shape it. They have been key campaigners and activists for contemporary dance in Ireland. President Mary McAleese opened their purpose-built studio in Dun Laoghaire where the company moved in 2000, and where they now rehearse and teach. Today, Dance Theatre of Ireland is the longest established, and one of the best-known and best-respected contemporary dance companies in Ireland. A well-known brand, DTI boast an excellent national and international reputation. Their style of contemporary dance has been consistently highly physical and virtuosic, and more recently has been known to use complex digital technologies in performance. In this context a high concept, but low-tech and physically pedestrian choreography like *'Slow Down'*, is a radical departure for the company.

*'Slow Down'*, DTI's November 2007 touring production, which is the subject of this case study for *The Touring Experiment*, exists against the background of DTI's vast experience of not only touring contemporary dance in Ireland and abroad, but also part of their desire *'to bring quality dance experiences, that move the heart & mind, to as many people as possible, keeping dance on the map, and making that map a little bigger'*, according to Yurick. *'Now the issues are more to keep its manifestations truly high/invigorating, questioning, while still reaching out to audiences ... and ever new and broader and bigger audiences'*.

*'Slow Down'*, is a 65-minute pre-existing commissioned choreography by renowned and edgy French choreographer Martine Pisani. This was the first time Pisani ever 'franchised' out a choreography in this way, outside of her own company and her own regular collaborators. According to the producers

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1 They are dual Nationals.

Loretta Yurick and Robert Connor, (Robert also danced in the work), *'Slow Down'* is unusual in DTI's canon of work in that (among other things), there is no music. However, it is also unusual in its deliberate lack of the virtuosic (i.e. the presentation and the movement is understated and subtle, as opposed to employing or being focussed on a polished technical movement vocabulary or physical athleticism). Instead, it presents everyday gestures, breath, and gentle Charlie Chaplinesque humour.

While Yurick and Connor (the producers, founders, and Artistic Directors), initially counted the lack of music as the main challenge *'Slow Down'* presented to audiences, it is in fact all of the above. While to challenge their audiences, according to the producers, is something that Dance Theatre of Ireland are fond of doing, they have not challenged them in such an uncompromising and extreme way since their early more experimental days with Dublin Contemporary Dance Theatre in the 1980's.

*'Slow Down'* is a very thoughtful and sophisticated piece of choreography, which probably goes down best with Dance cogniscenti and very open-minded and artistically sensitive spectators, as opposed to those looking just to be 'entertained' and amazed by the dancers' virtuosity. It is more like Marcel Duchamp than Auguste Renoir, and perhaps requires that level of artistic sophistication and lack of cynicism to be appreciated. Like Duchamp's epic urinal, *'Slow Down'* is an artwork about which it is very easy to be cynical. So you could say that it is an extremely vulnerable piece of choreography to send out on the road across Ireland. The distinction here is between the popular audience and the avant-garde dance audience - it's very tricky to please both in one go, but DTI often succeed in doing just that. Would it work with *'Slow Down'*?

Having seen Pisani's choreography at the International Lausanne Festival in 2004, Yurick and Connor were keen to have Pisani re-set<sup>2</sup> *'Slow Down'* on their company, in order to showcase what they consider to be this very important and wonderful work in Ireland. It took them 2 years to realise their plan to do this. In the meantime, in 2005, the Dublin Fringe Festival presented Martine Pisani's Irish premiere with *'Sans'*, another choreography by her, performed by her own company.

Dance Theatre of Ireland normally tour a production around Ireland once a year, usually in November, and have a satisfactory ongoing relationship ( as evidenced in the fact that they get repeat business), with many key venues around the country. For 2007, they decided they would like to tour this unusual and challenging piece, *'because the simplicity of its message - the underlying revelations about human beings in it - is humorous, enlightening, and positive. We knew it would stretch an audience's idea of what contemporary dance and performance is, but hoped that the audience would*

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2 A choreographic term describing when a choreographer transfers an already existing choreography onto a new set of dancers, or more specifically in this case, onto a new company of dancers.

see (within the new form), a similarly transporting message about the nature of being human - all of which other works of DTI touch on. In the process we hoped to expand the audience's idea of what contemporary dance can be. In undertaking this work, we were also stretching ourselves as artists', says Yurick. The highly conceptual 'Slow Down', with its stubborn refusal to 'entertain', and 'impress' in a conventional showy way constituted a radical departure from the well-established 'brand' Dance Theatre of Ireland have built up over nearly twenty years now, which leans towards the popular, very physical (built on dance vocabulary), style of dance - usually incorporating multi-media and music. The kind of avant-garde audience that a work like 'Slow Down' delights, are among, but not in the majority in the audience that DTI have built up over the years.

Loretta Yurick expands on this issue further: *'the decision to commission and tour Slow Down was taken because of our sympathy with the work, a desire to share the insight in the work with our audiences, and to expose this insight (having to do with the complexity of being human and our relationships with each other). This is an objective as we see it in all our work, one way or another. However, with 'Slow Down' it would be through a different process or format, than our own. The anticipated challenge for our audience was not the raison d'être for commissioning the work, but was a consideration. Our assessment of our audience is based on a response over a number of years to a body of work - that does vary - yet has had a high degree of dance physicality, multi-media (artistic collaboration with designers), musicality and relatively sophisticated technology, lighting and sound. We knew 'Slow Down' would be a big contrast to many of these values, and therefore possibly a challenge to the expectations of an audience familiar with (and possibly loyal to?) our oeuvre. But, partially because we do have a name, we feel we can take this risk. What we have learned about our audience is more about demographics than tastes (now that would be interesting). From previous surveys, what we remember primarily is that: over half are over 30 years of age; they are well educated and 44% are women. 31% find out about the show through a friend: 29% from posters, 18% from Newspaper, 56% read the Irish Times. One study said that reasons people don't go to dance performance can be summarized by: perceptions, priority, proximity and publicity. It would be very interesting to study not only the demographics next time around, but tastes'. (For more statistics on audience reaction see below, page 11).*

Due to DTI's long-standing relationships with a wide network of venues around the country, and their reputation for professionalism, they have no difficulty in lining up a tour - even, in this case for an 'experimental' piece, with a hidden challenge. Venue managers feel confident that DTI are a trustworthy brand, which they can showcase to their audiences and stand behind. Yurick states that, due to this long-established reputation 'even if it's an experiment we hope that our audience and the venue trust that it's going to be a very high manifestation of an experiment'.

As with all their shows, Dance Theatre of Ireland held auditions for 'Slow Down', and cast a very high caliber of dancer. Though DTI did advertise the auditions locally, of the dancers they eventually cast, 4 were from abroad and 2 Irish - Robert Connor, (producer, artistic director, and longtime key performer with DTI); and Kat Donnelly (who is Irish but recently moved to Wales). DTI had to take care to line up the dates of their dancers' contracts with those of the prospective tour. The choreographer Martine Pisani was present and contributed to the auditions, as up to this point 'Slow Down' had only been performed by her own regular collaborators in her own Paris-based company. This was an additional artistic challenge in the production of DTI's tour, and was a big personal challenge for Pisani who had never participated in such an undertaking before. DTI, on the other hand have undergone this process several times, when they have commissioned well-known choreographers from abroad to re-set an already existing choreography on their company. In this way, DTI have done reconstructions of Dominique Bagouet's work "*Deserts d'Amour*" and "*Jours Etranges*"; and Rui Horta's "*Made to Measure*" and "*Wolfgang, Bitte*"; Which they presented to Irish audiences. Both processes - original creations and commissioned reconstructions - provide a very good way for Irish audiences to get a taste of what is going on in the wider world of international dance, without having to bring the original production and company to Ireland. Working with internationally renowned choreographers in such a close way is also good for the ongoing artistic development of Dance Theatre of Ireland (dancers & artists), helping to inform and grow their own choreographic process, movement vocabulary, and thought.

## 2. What is the producer experimenting with in this tour?

**What are the producers' objectives? What work / activities (artistic / finance / audience marketing / technical etc) supported these objectives? And what assumptions and expectations supported these objectives and activities?**

Yurick stated her artistic aims in this tour as 'to bring a work that is quite innovative, that we really believe in, and would like to share with more people on tour. The experiment is how that affects the audience and the perception of the company. Some of the challenge is to successfully produce and market a work that could be seen to challenge the conventional values associated with dance theatre. Yet another challenge was to present the new work in such a way as to help the audience see the connection between the message of this work, and other works by DTI. In other words, to not lose audience, and (on the contrary), to win them to other formats, dimensions'.

Well-seasoned in touring their own work, and before that (in the 1980's), in touring as performers in Dublin Contemporary Dance Theatre, Connor and Yurick do seem to have the contractual, logistic, technical, marketing and publicity, and management end of touring down to quite a fine art. They could certainly be said to run a relatively tight operation. Their aims are 'to create an environment in which they can produce the best show possible with the resources they have; to get the best performance that the dancers can give; and to deliver an audience for all of that'. However, of course this does not mean that there isn't room for improvement.

By operating on the basis of a guaranteed fee, they help lessen financial uncertainty. This '*helps the company to be able to plan*', and when monitoring costs and expenses, '*you are assured of a certain level of income*'. The problem, Loretta feels, with doing a box-office split, that '*you have no idea what you are going to get. In terms of audience size, financial remuneration or numbers, maybe you would get more income, or maybe you would lose income*'. Experience has taught them not to take that risk.

Financially, the costs of touring far outweigh the earnings. '*We normally get (total) €10,000 - €14,000 in guaranteed fees for an entire week's run plus a 6-7 venue tour. That would be 5 nights in Dublin plus 4 - 8 venues throughout the country. Costs generally outweigh that by €8,000 - €20,000*'. So why don't they do more than one night on their tours? '*Because, generally, we are trying to fill that one show*'.

Yurick would only do more than one night '*if I was assured that there would be an audience for both nights. I have had shows where I have thought that if we had 2 or 3 nights in a place we would do really well because the word is so good. But more often than not, one night is plenty. If you can't sell one show, then how are you going to sell 2 or 3?*'

Yurick would like to think that dance could be sold like theatre, *'and you could do a week, or 3 or 4 days on a weekend. If it was sold like that you just might get more people treating it with the kind of esteem that you want generated. But there is the other side of the coin that if you have one good house, and leave them talking, that maybe next time you will have more. The trouble is we do one, or at most 2 tours a year. Maybe only 2 of those venues would take you twice in a year. So you can't come back quickly to capitalise on a big hit'*. Yurick elaborates: *'there are three points. One: to make the tour more "financially certain" we seek guarantees rather than splits; two: most regional venues are judicious about programming dance, so it can be difficult to be programmed more than once a year in a given venue; three: the venues are more confident marketing one night rather than risk spreading the same number over two or more nights. Having said that, there is an "itch" to enlarge the audiences for contemporary dance'*.

*'It would be hard to make it work – you are relying that you might do a great night, it will go well, and can come back and do 2 nights. But you are involved in another cycle, where there are a lot more dance companies now, so they can't really do more than one night per year, or two nights per year'*.

Their management goal is to be on top of the management diary: *'to know all these things in advance, and to have them planned for, so there are no surprises. To try to keep all the dots connected, follow up and follow through; people talk to each other; are paid on time, with an invoice; the B&B knows when you are coming; the theatre knows when you are coming; they have everything ready for you; the technical director has given all the LX plans, and staging plans, and has negotiated a pre-rig, if that will be helpful - all the details are looked after'*.

Their staff requirements are very specific, demanding, and they seek high-end, experienced production crew. According to Yurick, it's difficult to get good production people. She sees a need for 'more production personnel of a higher caliber circulating in all areas – stage management; production management; lighting operators; etc to boost venue help, and what is available at peak times in Dublin. *'When the Theatre Festival or Fringe is on, it's very difficult to get experienced Production Managers & Lighting operators'*. Yurick believes, that *'often they either burn out, or go into a better paying job'*.

*'People who are experienced tend to know how to cut corners, what corners, how to not panic, how to get a lot done in a short period of time. They have got high standards, They know the show must go on, and there is no failing'*. DTI want to keep technical and production risks to the show to a minimum. They want to keep the main focus and logistic on the dance itself, so it all runs smoothly: *'Stress free productivity'*. They do take technical and production risks with their shows, but to minimise the risk element (when they go to any particular venue), we do the homework and planning to

*anticipate exactly what the technical parameters are for each venue and how the show's technical requirements, (executed by the technical team), are going to work at that venue. That is how we have it "running smoothly" once we get into theatre and on the road'.*

In Yurick's experience, the calibre of technical director, and the level of expertise 'can vary a lot from venue to venue'. It's important that 'you know that in advance, and supplement, either with extra people or extra equipment'.

With 'Slow Down', because they are only touring with 2 technical people (the PM & SM), 'we will probably end up supplementing locally, and there you need to work with the technical director of each venue, and get them to line up locals in one or two days of the get-in. So we will be supplementing it with local people to help rig, or hang lights - which is the most time-consuming part'.

The cost of supplementary equipment is at DTI's own expense. 'They [the venue], just pay your fee'. Loretta has noticed a cut-back in the level of assistance offered by venues to touring companies (since the 80s). 'For example, we like to have at least 2 technical people present from the Theatre when we do a get in - the Technical Director of the Theatre and their assistant - someone who knows all lighting instruments and sound. Now, most venues contractually provide, generally, only one person, and not necessarily to help "hands on", but just to be present - to show where things are. It hasn't always been thus 'in some venues they might help you lift the stuff in; in others they might lift the stuff in and then they are gone. In other venues they don't do any lifting.

Now, it seems there is an "unspoken" thing in the trade where a theatre or dance company's technical crew generally know - in that venue, they can expect "hands-on help" or not. Our technical crews tell us that. It's no longer part of the Theatre producing you, to provide hands on help. I feel bad but it just means that the Theatres have costs of their own that they can't meet without you paying for them. But I would like to think that if a theatre buys your show they have the personnel to produce you. To me that has an honest ring to it'.

Why do they like to have the Theatre's technical people present when we do a get-in? Well, for example, when you do a sound check for the music, we go through each piece to make sure that you can get the best sound out of that sound-system. Our technical people may work for 2 hours, adjusting the sound-system from the front of the stage, the middle of the stage, to the back of the theatre, to get surround sound - which we like. Most of the theatres are built with this facility. But we could spend 2 hours just balancing the speakers, the levels, how much bass for every piece that you are going to play. Then the theatre's technical director turns up (might have been absent through all this) and he/she says 'What? You didn't use these speakers?' Then flips a switch, and your people go 'doh! Didn't even know about it!'.

*When you are racing against a clock, this kind of thing is a big set back that can impinge on how long the dancers have on stage (something we are always trying to protect). So if you don't have that technical director there, you are in trouble. That's why we like if they have those people present, throughout a get-in'.*

*'Just because you are being produced by a theatre doesn't mean that you get a lot of technical assistance. If I could ask one thing of The Touring Experiment, it would be to examine contracts that the venues give to theatre and dance companies'. The contracts are beginning to limit more and more what a theatre offers if they are producing your work. Perhaps The Touring Experiment or another body could be a mediator between encouraging venues to have contracts, which are a little more generous of time / technical support. Theoretically, it is what they offer when they produce you. What is a little "murky" or what you try to find out is what constitutes "hand's on help" - how much, when, where, and from whom. How long will the Technical Director be present, and can you calculate when it is the most important and get that? All this is hard to know, venue to venue. The bottom line is your own technical staff have to be asking these questions, and ultimately be prepared to do it all, if they are not there'.*

One of their main challenges in this tour was to find a way to market such an off-beat show, to draw an audience in. DTI faced a dilemma - do you tell the audience there is no music, or not? (*'Because of course there is an expectation that there will be music'*).

DTI make tailor-made marketing approaches for each show & for different sectors of their audience. They work up a pitch for the show, to try to reach people who would not usually come to a dance show. For example with *'Slow Down'*, in targeting their outreach audience, which is teenagers, they did a mailshot to 350 schools. *'We try to find something in the show they will connect with, to publicise in the press release (which Yurick usually writes herself), to venues, the dance community, dance animateurs, and people who are in the dance database'*. Yurick finds that sending personal invitations to these people yields a great return in terms of audience.

With regard to marketing it to the 350 secondary schools on their mailing list, Yurick said: *'We definitely don't want to blow up or be dishonest about what a show is or isn't. I think that is tantamount. We don't want them to be angry or disappointed for buying into something that they didn't expect, but nor do we want to give away the show. That was the hard thing. We found a way to deliver that in a way that was positive, I think. We did let them know that there was no music, but we also let them know what it was something about our self consciousness, the way we meet with each other, and that is very much the fabric of a teenager's life'. Plus we let them know that there were 5 men dancing too - a simple thing, but makes a difference to schools. When you're trying to break down barriers: men dancing might seem simple to us in the Arts, but not necessarily in the wider public, still!'*

They got around the 'no music' challenge with the general audience by describing the effect and the meaning of the work as opposed to how it got there. They employed known references like Charlie Chaplin and Jacques Tati, to appeal, and to get the texture of the show across to potential punters without misleading them. Yurick, who came up with the marketing strategy herself attests that there was *'loads of effort put into how to market this show... taking a very radical work, and trying to make it utterly palpable - not just familiar, but amazing'*. In *'Slow Down'*, unusually for DTI, they were going for the zone in which the audience felt most uncomfortable: *"We have done a lot of surveys, and the amount of people who wrote 'I found the silence awkward', or 'it's awkward when there is no music' is astounding"*<sup>3</sup>.

This was also a case of Dance Theatre of Ireland putting themselves out of their own artistic comfort zone, in a major way. This normally highly virtuosic, and crowd-pleasing company were certainly going into this experiment (this 'touring experiment') with their eyes wide open. As Yurick put it herself a week before the show went into rehearsal:

*'It's an experiment. I have no idea whether it will work or not. The real test will be the talk that comes back afterwards - what will they think? Unless they get it, they could just think 'that's rubbish'.*

Yurick elaborates: *'as a frequently touring company with a name that is well known, DTI are well poised to take on this challenge. We have a large body of work we have already brought to the audience and the hope is - some will like some shows better than others - but they know what they will see will be good (quality), new or different'.*

Finding a language to market the show was crucial. Marketing dance is a hard thing to crack according to Yurick. *'I don't know if it has been fully cracked. Not just 'how do you make dance palatable'? But, it's more like what's sexy? How do you make it hip? In an honest way, you have to make people really want to see it out there to compete'*. But the most important thing is: What is the show, really? What in it can really connect to an audience - (What about it is of interest) and then - to whom? These are three questions you have to really think about and be honest about.

Yurick believes that touring today faces different obstacles than it did 10 years ago, with the advent of the Internet, Bebo, Facebook, etc. *'You are vying for attention of an increasingly distracted population who are in front of their computer screen, or their youtube. How do you get them outside? We're all connected by our screens, but the actual communal method of connection is changing.'*

DTI aim to get in the local media, and to make sure that the venue has taken out some ads. They try to have a display in the foyer of the theatre

3 From surveys DTI did in conjunction with 'Tombs', in 1998, and 'Only Human' in 2000, asking 'what did you like, and not like about the show?'. Also through response and questions they received in post-show discussions. Refer to Loretta Yurick for further information, and the actual surveys.

(Sometimes they arrive and find their material – which they posted ahead – still in the box in which it arrived, in which case they have a display they bring with them which can be put up on the night of the show).

They try to connect with local dance teachers, if there are any. Through their outreach programme, DTI offer workshops to the venue – which can be combined with a reduced ticket price to the show. In this way, *'people who want a more engaged experience of the performance get it, because usually in the workshop they go into movement, or premises that we have used in the piece they are going to see'*. Thus they get more access and background to the show.

Yurick invites the general audience in to experiencing the work by introducing it beforehand on the night, speaking about it in a simple way, and thanking them for coming. She also invites the audience to discuss the choreography with the company after the show. *'The dancers and musicians will be around at the theatre having a drink or across the road in the local pub, and we will invite them to join us - in a very informal way so there is an open door to asking an artist about what they do'*. This interaction with the company seems to work in terms of demystifying the work, but in Yurick's experience *'they will generally engage if you tell them that it is ok to talk to us'*.

DTI do expect that the venue will contact people in their database who they think might be interested in the show. To facilitate this, DTI send an advance emailer about the show, *'so all they have to do is put in their dates, and they can email their database about the show'*.

Additionally, Yurick shares, *'you are ringing them constantly – 2 weeks before, 1 week before, 2 days before, the day of – to see how the booking is going'*.

Yurick would like to see more support from venues, in terms of stagehands, help with the get-in etc. *'They are a venue and they can provide this - in a European sense you can expect a lot of help at a venue when you tour abroad. But I think venues are stretched here, financially & technically. They may programme more than they can sell. Is the amount of product that they are trying to push in a venue, more than they had the resources to do?'* She believes venues should take more responsibility for products that they tour – bring in the products that they can sell, get good houses for, and sustain (as well as the challenging). She sometimes wonders are they trying to fulfill a quota. *'Don't double programme 4 companies at the same time, and wonder why you didn't get enough people'*. Yes, so there is room for improvement in *'venue responsibility'*, in her eyes.

She has noticed prices escalating – *'we apply for a tour, and we think we have got enough money, but by the end of the tour, everyone asks for way more money than last year, and then we are over budget'*. Yurick elaborates: *'the timing of preparing budgets and funding decisions can be 12-18 months*

*in advance of the actual tour. Fee expectations, cost of things and services can increase at rates greater than the percentage of anticipated increase that you factored in'.*

To know the tour venues and their audience better, Yurick would like to see more audience surveys done in the touring venues - and information circulated to touring companies: *'there are various questions like how often do they go? Why do they go? I would like to know that. And if they go, why or why not don't they go more often? How come companies that are touring don't know more about the venues that they are going to?'. This kind of information should be circulated to all funded companies for touring 'as part of your touring grant, you should get that document that tells you 'this is where we are going, this is the type of audience''.* Yurick would wish for *'a kind of profile of each venue's audiences - in their own words - despite it constantly changing. The venue's artistic director, in Yurick's opinion, should know (and often does) what is out there (both what kinds of art, and who their potential audiences are - who comes, and who could come) and how to develop their audience's appetite for a broad range of art. Venues need constant support and circulation of ideas (plus time), to try new ideas in terms of how to reach audiences; a close relationship between the producer / product and the venue helps each production - and the one after that.'*

### 3. What happened?

**Where did the producers tour to and what happened in all or some of the locations (venue relationships / audience / technical / money / organisation / events etc)?**

#### *Audience Reaction (according to Loretta Yurick)*

The Co-Artistic Directors of DTI knew this project had the potential to be challenging to regular DTI (and dance) audiences. Those who have previously viewed DTI's work would have expectations of accessible dance with music, visuals and 'movement'.

'*Slow Down*' is staged very simply; the stage is "nude", i.e., completely without masking and there is no set, except for a white floor, a black flat, two PA speakers and microphones. With very open bright lighting, every detail of the performers is visible. The sound of the piece is only that generated by the performers. There is no music. The house lights are on slightly, so that the performers and audience, in fact, fully see one another. This "shared" presence is a feature of the work, as is the choreographer's intention that the audience members' response, association or interpretation is an ingredient in the performance.

The movement is "task-derived" rather than being a fixed score of memorised movement. The movement vocabulary itself is based on a principle of "deconstruction", involving interruption & non-premeditation (i.e. spontaneity), and a "pedestrian" energy dynamic, resulting in a "look" that may be perceived to be simplistic, awkward and not virtuosic (or even dancer-ly!) in the usual sense. The performers follow a fixed structure of seemingly 'meaningless' tasks while making present-moment decisions and choices about timing, rhythm spacing and movement. The performers' attention to the present moment, in relation to each other and the audience is paramount, as they go through the series of the tasks.

Hence the audience were presented with a work that may have questioned their conception of what constitutes dance theatre. The response to the piece was various; some audiences were very quiet, others filled with open laughter. There were those for whom the piece was touching, as they enjoyed the wit and subversion of expectation - in essence they got it. Others realised soon that it was not what they expected, and in that realisation became open to what the piece presented. Others, for whom dance is equated with physical virtuosity and musical interpretation, found the work not to their liking. Contrary to all our expectations, young audiences and even active-age retirement groups seemed to engage very enthusiastically with the work (evidenced, according to Yurick, by questions afterwards, post-show discussions, formal and informal).

Mindful of the challenges that *'Slow Down'* presents to new (and even regular) audiences, on tour Loretta (co-Artistic Director) gave a pre-show introduction to each performance that helped create a bridge or framework for viewing the work. She described the titles of the various sections ("Birth of a smile", "The Noise Orchestra" and "Making the Bed") as insight into the starting points for the sections of the work and a way to view it. We felt this help put the audience at ease and gave them an opening through which to enter into and engage with the work.

DTI also provided a series of workshops based on the piece. These ranged from open public workshops to student groups. As would be expected there was greater insight and much more engagement in the work from those who were involved in the workshop, either before or after the performance.

In Sligo a cross-border youth arts group, Arts Yard, from Derry and Ballyshannon attended the performance and workshop following. A Q&A post-show discussion following the performance had the enhanced affect of also including the general public, who were intrigued by the discussion. Also, the level of questioning benefited from a "mixed" public, versus only young people.

### ***Critical Response***

Reviews were very positive, the Irish Times review was exceptionally good, and the Daily Mail review also good, but there were only 2 reviews and we were not reviewed by television (THE VIEW) or radio. We notice less coverage in print media of the arts, and reviews in particular.

### ***Marketing according to Yurick***

Marketing included press releases & photos sent to media, printed posters and flyers (distributed to all venues and in the areas around the Pavilion—by the Pavilion and DTI). We also did 2 postal mail-outs: 1) to our Classes and Production lists, and 2) to Schools (our Dance POP Outreach Lists). We targeted schools in our own area, but also Nationwide in areas where we were touring. We did 2 email shots to our database (national & international, 9000+). Reaching audiences in regional cities is co-ordinated through the local venues and their networks with local press and radio media, supported by our office and Gerry Lundberg P.R. We also tried a few new things (see below Outdoor, Print & electronic Media).

As already alluded to, they chose not to publicize (on the flyer or press release), that the piece was performed without music. *'Except, ethically, we felt that Schools booking for the matinee had a right to know, so we did tell them'*. In addition to the description of the show (see flyer attached) the marketing material to schools also said:

*“Young people will identify hugely with this light-hearted work that exposes our many moments of self-consciousness. Performed without music, this work is a tour de force which is mesmerizing and deliciously fun, performed by 5 men and one woman. Who says men can’t dance!”* Ironically, while it was feared the show might not book because of no music, in fact the matinee was booked within 2 weeks after the letters went out.

The focus of the marketing campaign described the piece as reminiscent of the world of “silent movies”, such as the comedic actors Jaques Tati, Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. This approach was also taken in the pre-show introductions and we felt this worked very successfully. Without music, there is a different kind of deeply intent “watching” and listening.

As stated above pre-show introductions helped create a bridge or framework for viewing the work - this we did for every performance. On tour we eventually evolved a more detailed description, going into the titles of the various sections as insight into the starting points for the sections of the work.

We also gave post show discussions at two of the performances (Dublin and Sligo). These were also very effective in terms of feedback to performers and from artists to audience adding additional perspectives on what they’ve seen.

### ***Outdoor, print and electronic media (according to Yurick)***

A new initiative, a [street lamp] banner campaign, was undertaken in Dun Laoghaire, Blackrock and Monkstown. It is difficult to ascertain the real effect on ticket sales, however we do believe it had a positive impact on DTI’s profile and presence as a local based company. Our large 60x40 poster campaign was concentrated to selected quality sites at stations along the DART Line - (9 DART sites) rather than random hoarding sites throughout the city - targeting those who work and live in the surrounding areas.

We did find it difficult this year to get newspaper / media coverage. There was a preview article in the Irish Times and a “human interest” article in the Examiner. Some work was undertaken in the regions by DTI, and Gerry Lundberg P.R. but we relied on the venues themselves to gain advance press coverage. (We did email to publications in the Regions ourselves however) Dissappointingly on this tour we did not get any large pictures or interviews in the Newspapers in the Regions. It is our experience that feature articles, well-placed, and well timed as well as reviews influence attendance.

Gaining coverage in the regions is hindered by competition with other productions which feature high profile actors/celebrities in close proximity to your own touring Date (and sometimes local activities).

‘*Slow Down*’ also had 44 unique listings / previews on Irish, U.K. and French websites.

### ***Technical (as experienced by Yurick)***

To re-iterate and further clarify the point already made, *'increasingly it is difficult to get the theatres to provide the technical staff required for the get-in and technical rehearsals; in this case we requested 2 people. The Theatre would send a contract stipulating 1 technical person provided by them for Get in/Get out; we would request two in a Technical Addendum to a Theatre contract—.* In reality, only 2 of the 6 tour venues provided 2 crew, as requested, and of those one charged extra. In one theatre it was arranged for casual help, but on the day they didn't show up, leaving our crew short-handed. There is a major problem also to get experienced and capable technical staff who tour (and also drive) for Theatre/Dance Companies'. Yurick elaborates *'I do not feel at all ambiguous about the roles, and I wager no theatre is, either. We just both want more. In a gross way: It's our job to do the show and to put it "into" the theatre (stage & light). It is the theatre's responsibility to simply make sure you have a clean space, with equipment working, and one technical director "on hand" (various definitions there); and to try to get people in to see the show. But in our ideal world (based on touring over the years in Ireland and abroad), the theatre would have 2 or 3 technical people to assist with hanging lights, putting up blacks, sorting sound system or lighting desk. In international theatres they often provide this'.*

### ***Venue relationships (from Yurick's point of view)***

*'We enjoy a very co-operative relationship with the venue managers, having visited most of the venues consistently for 7 or 8 years minimum, some for longer. In the main they are open to proactive input into marketing and publicity. For example we send an emailer, which can be easily used uniquely to each venue to publicise our show. We are aware that venues have many shows to promote, so "spreading" out the coverage they seek is difficult and dance does require creative efforts. These can be reduced ticket offers, more strenuous efforts on group bookings, and liaising with local community networks, papers and radio stations. We were very happy to perform for an Active Retirement group, which we assume was organized by Ger Cody (Director of the Watergate Theatre) in Kilkenny'.*

### ***Surprises***

- No one caught that the logo of *The Touring Experiment* did not make it onto the final print copy! It had been given, but not caught in proof reading, apologies! We did organize that *The Touring Experiment* logo was on the Front of House Display and there was immediately a correction inserted into programme.
- We could not get a Production Manager who could drive; at one point the entire tour had to be costed with a driver (coming from Waterford) moving our set (minimal) from venue to venue. We spent a great deal of time looking/interviewing/advertising for an experienced Production Manager who drove, but in the end did not find one, until the last minute we got a crew member who only drove.

## SLOW DOWN TOUR

Theatre	Attendance*	Fees	Prog Sales	Dates
Pavilion Theatre, 5 performances	990	€6,500	€249.20	Nov 7-10
Town Hall, Galway	102	€1,400	€38	Nov 12
The Iontas, Castleblayney	69	€1,400	€28	Nov 16
Blanchardstown, Draocht	158	€1,400	€54	Nov 20
Excel Centre, Tipperary	57	€1,400	€28	Nov 22
Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo	85	€1,400	€8	Nov 25
Watergate Theatre, Kilkenny	55	€1,400	€30	Nov 28
	1516	€14,900	€435.20	

\*Attendance includes Paid & Comp see summary below (and separate Spread Sheet attached)

**\*Total Seats - on Tour & at Pavilion (11 shows):** 1516 (average 138 per night) inc. Opening Night

**\*\*Average attendance Pavilion over 5 performances:** 198 per show (5 shows) 990 total

**\*\*Total Paid attendance Pavilion & Tour:** 1014 or average 101 per show (10 shows, excluding Opening Night)

**Total Box office fees** €14,900;

**Total programme sales** €435.20 (218 programs);

**Total Programme ad (Sponsorship):** €3,275.

The performances were accompanied on tour by DANCE POP workshops at the Town Hall Theatre in Galway (before show) and in The Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo. (2 workshops: (i) St Anne's Youth Group organised by Hawkswell Theatre; (ii) Arts Yard, a cross-border youth arts project between The Abbey Centre, Ballyshannon and The Playhouse, Derry) and a week long residency/DANCE POP workshop were organized and took place at the Excel Centre in Tipperary in July 2007.

### General Media Coverage

Press Coverage included reviews, features & photos published in:

Ballet Tanz (listing), Daily Mail (review), Dance Ireland Oct (preview), Dance Ireland Nov (cover), Dublin Event Guide (preview and add), Dance Europe (listing & add), Dun Laoghaire Express (preview, photo), Event Guide (Preview & general listing), The Examiner, (feature interview with Robert 'Object of Desire'), Galway Advertiser (preview with photo), The Guardian (The Guide preview), Irish Times: feature, (photograph and review) by Michael Seaver, *"...a dance that is light and witty in its delivery but razor-sharp in its significance."* As well as Highlight of Year commendation, Irish Times Dec 07; Irish Times Magazine (preview), Irish Times: The Ticket

(preview with photo), Irish Independent Day & Night Magazine (preview), JUICE (LONDON) (listing & photo), Sunday Business Post (listing), Sunday Independent (preview), Totally Dublin (preview with photo),

Slow Down had 44 unique listings / previews on Irish, UK & French websites.

Radio Interviews took place Anna Livia FM and MidWest Radio (Tipperary).

The Opening Night wine reception was sponsored by the Embassy of France in Ireland.

### ***Venue Manager feedback***

Even after what the venue-managers of The Watergate Theatre and Galway Town Hall Theatre have described as a somewhat disappointing tour by DTI, they would not hesitate to book them again next year. This is a good indication about the caliber, reputation, and reliability of Dance Theatre of Ireland's brand, which they have built up over nearly twenty years now.

### ***DTI's 'Slow Down' at the Watergate Theatre, Kilkenny***

I attended DTI's performance of '*Slow Down*' at Watergate Theatre on Thursday November 29th, 2007. The theatre was about one third full. Among the audience was an invited active retirement group who talked and commented throughout the whole show. DTI didn't hold a workshop in association with this performance.

I spoke with Ger Cody on the telephone on Monday December 3rd, 2007. Here are his comments:

It is part of the Watergate Theatre's remit to present dance. Cody would love to have one packed show for dance, and is willing to make extra efforts in audience development. Overall he was not happy with the sales and response to '*Slow Down*'. In his opinion DTI always do a great production, but selling dance is problematic. The Watergate have presented DTI's work since 1993, and always will.

In the wider scheme of things, there is a glut of work on at the Watergate – the audience are spoiled for choice. A popular show like Tommy Tiernan, for example, will always sell out. Dance, however, is a niche audience. (This is a term that is resurfacing a lot with regard to Contemporary Dance in my conversations with venue managers). The Watergate Theatre phoned, wrote, and phoned again to remind target audiences that '*Slow Down*' was on. However it 'didn't happen', according to Cody. They contacted 3 youth dance companies (approx. 100 potential audience members), but couldn't get them to attend the show. That would have yielded a young audience to the show.

As well as the phonecalls and emails, they also sent posters and fliers for the show to the local youth dance companies.

Cody feels it's hard on DTI, as they have what they consider to be a 'fantastic show', but the ordinary person can't see it.

The Watergate Theatre has a standard arrangement with regard to marketing a DTI show. DTI send posters and fliers to be distributed and put up, as well as a press release. Their press release is forwarded to newspapers, groups, and all relevant local media outlets. DTI's show makes for 1 of 10 shows on at the Watergate Theatre in a 3-month period, and the procedure is the same for all 10 shows. The Watergate Theatre send off all the press information for all the shows, posters, and fliers, 3-4 weeks in advance of the season. Dance Theatre of Ireland collaborate very well in this regard, and Cody finds them to be a very professional operation.

If booking is slow (as it was for *'Slow Down'*), sometimes the company can take over, and make direct contact themselves with the local newspapers and radio stations.

With regard to the guaranteed fee, Cody considers this to be modest enough, and describes it anyway as 'money we are getting from the Arts Council'. For *'Slow Down'* it is €1200-1400. It is '*never an outrageous amount*', he shares. Of course this means that the onus to sell the show is on the theatre. They market the show to the best of their ability, not only for financial reasons, but also because ultimately, it reflects on the theatre itself.

*'Slow Down'* was programmed for the Watergate Theatre on a Thursday night. In Cody's view, Thursday is the beginning of the weekend. '*Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday are prime time*', he says. However, he adds, '*the night doesn't matter if it's a niche audience*'. The Watergate Theatre send out 7,000 brochures, with information about their programme all over Kilkenny. They also email their database. There are advertisements placed in the local newspapers, and the Watergate Theatre programme is mentioned on local radio every day. Therefore people will know the show is on, after which it is then ultimately up to the punter whether they choose to attend or not.

Ger Cody framed the issue of Workshops with the fact that the Watergate Theatre run a dance workshop in conjunction with a large Welsh ballet company they present every two years. This workshop boasts a large attendance of 30 - 60 interested participants. (LY: '*indeed there are many local RAD ballet teachers/schools in the Kilkenny/Wexford/Waterford area. It would be interesting to study just why is it many ballet students don't go to contemporary dance!*'). The Watergate contacted 2 local youth dance companies several times to offer them a workshop in conjunction with DTI's performance of *'Slow Down'*, but there was no response. (The DTI producers elaborate: '*This is very much because - both youth dance companies had just been involved in a Youth Dance festival prior to our arrival, the kids*

*had been working nights and weekends for quite some time to perform for this, and understandably "on a break".* DTI did contact both Myriad Dance Company (Deidre Grant, Director) and Libby Seward's Waterford Youth Dance Company. They could not bring groups (for which they were very apologetic), but both Artistic Directors did attend the performance of *Slow Down*). From this, Cody concludes that interest was very low. He suggested that a letter from DTI themselves, as opposed to one from The Watergate Theatre might have worked better. In his experience the personal touch in these matters makes a big difference. He does feel there is potential, and room for improvement however. Interest could be stimulated with direct contact from DTI to both youth dance companies, and some of the 15 secondary schools in the Kilkenny region. For example, he suggested that an initiative involving approaching transition year students could be fruitful. (*'But do they come to evening shows?'* wonders Yurick).

As regards after-show talks, Cody is all for them, but the prerequisite is that the audience is interested. He felt that the active retirement group, who were invited to see *'Slow Down'*, and made up a large proportion of the audience (though not all), would not have filled those requirements.

Overall, Cody was not shocked that *'Slow Down'* didn't sell well. He would however like to build up the audience for such dance shows. In his opinion, along with increased *'personal touch'*, a good strategy to prepare for a November show might be if DTI offered workshops in Kilkenny in February or March of the same year. Thus, instead of relying on sending the brochure and making a few phonecalls two weeks before the show is on, they could sow the seed of interest well in advance and the groups could write the event (the show) into their diaries. Cody said there are at least 1,000 youngsters in the Kilkenny area who are involved in drama and dance groups, but that they are not coming to the shows (and didn't come to DTI's show). He was optimistic about the possibility of building an audience, and would be happy to facilitate such an action – zoning in on 4 or 5 schools for example. He suggested that a *'school liaison officer'* might be useful, but perhaps too expensive.

Cody doesn't view the issue of get-in's and get-out's as problematic where DTI are concerned. On par with most companies, he says, they do a one-day get-in, (Yurick clarifies: *'we do a 2-day get in - all of day One, and all of Day 2, plus the performance'*). Beginning in the morning, and working 4 – 5 hours to be ready for 7pm. The Watergate Theatre puts one technician at the company's disposal for the day. There is no problem with tech-spec's, DTI are very reliable, and the contract is streamlined.

Meanwhile, in Galway, the house for *'Slow Down'* seemed about two thirds full, with quite a lot of young people. There were 3 groups from UCG – MA in Drama; Arts Administration; and an Irish course. Also the 12 people who partook in the workshop DTI gave in the studio space the day before at 6.30pm (11/11/07). Other attendees from the Arts community included artist

Valerie Joyce; Dancer in Residence Tanya McRory; and Paul Fahy, director of the Galway Arts Festival. *'Slow Down'* received a very warm reception from the Galway audience. I felt that the introduction Yurick did before the show really eased people into a show without music, and prepared them for it. I didn't see any posters up for the show around Galway (there could have been, I just didn't see them), and the posters in the windows of the Town Hall were for other shows, so it wasn't easy to see that *'Slow Down'* was playing that night, to a passerby. Yurick was giving out programmes in the show. She also blu-tacked up photos, reviews, features in the foyer for the curious. The Arts Council/Touring Experiment logo & thanks was on a flier in the programme. The Arts Council logo was blu-tacked up with the *'Slow Down'*/DTI display in the foyer. DTI's show came after a run by Druid, and there was another show playing in the Studio space concurrently.

I caught up with Fergal McGrath subsequently on November 29th, to discuss *'Slow Down'* at the Town Hall Theatre, Galway. Here are his comments:

*'While it was McGrath's predecessor, Mike Diskin, who programmed DTI, McGrath would have also programmed them, had he been offered the show, as they are one of the main dance companies in Ireland.'*

As DTI was bought in on a guarantee, the main responsibility for marketing, and selling the show was on the venue. However, they could expect support from the company, and DTI *'ticked all the boxes'*. DTI supplied copy and images for the Galway Town Hall Theatre in plenty of time, as well as A3 posters, and DL fliers as needed. DTI also furnished copy and images for local press. When the show wasn't selling well in advance, DTI were in touch with the venue, concerned and interested. Some companies on a guarantee abdicate all responsibility for sales. Despite guarantees, Druid, (who McGrath was manager of) for example wanted maximum audience for the actors, for the company itself, and for the venue. If the venue was happy, you would get repeat business. In light of his past experience, McGrath can spot companies who are concerned about these issues, with a view to repeat business. With a guarantee, the venue takes the risk. They will push it, but they need back-up from the company itself.

Some of the feedback McGrath got from *'Slow Down'* was that the audience felt it was quite 'arrogant', bordering on wilfully obscure. It would make McGrath be more careful about booking DTI next time (though he says he will book them again). (Yurick responds: *'this feedback to me has to do with people feeling (that category you mention earlier—the show is rubbish! Because the show appears simple and the movement streamlined, the point of the show is lost, not just that they don't like it, i think')*).

DTI were one of six dance companies programmed by Galway Town Hall Theatre over a six month period, including Echo Echo Dance Company; Crux Dance Company; Cathy Sharpe; and Fidget Feet (a circus/dance co).

To sell 100 seats is a good house for a dance show, in McGrath's experience.

This is not great, in comparison with Galway Arts Festival, for example, who can sell 1,000's of seats for dance.

Galway Town Hall Theatre has a remit to programme across the Art forms. Dance is niche, and contemporary dance is a niche within that niche. Dance Theatre of Ireland is a well-known brand, so is one Galway Town Hall Theatre will always programme.

Niche audiences will come out on a Monday night – which is why DTI was programmed for a Monday as opposed to a prime-time weekend slot. McGrath feels the onus is on him to protect his audience. If he over-markets a show, he will get the backlash from his audience. It's important to match the product and the consumer. For example, Echo Echo Dance Company recently had an audience of 50 – who gave them a standing ovation. This is what McGrath would consider to be a *'good match'*. (Yurick's response to this is as follows: *'Slow Down, is not stand on your feet virtuosity. But yes, there is no doubt that the standing ovation is a great feedback to the popularity of a show and wonderful to get'*). He feels it is important not to misinform the audience. Market companies correctly, to attract the right audience, or you will destroy the audience and lose their trust, he feels. *'If you burn them, they won't come back'*. A small audience who gets it is better than a big one who doesn't, and resent having been lured (misled) there.

As regards workshops, pre- and post-show talks, Galway Town Hall Theatre offer minimal services. McGrath feels these are of limited value and interest. They just promote it as part of the package, and of course provide the space. He claims to be into audience development in terms of quality of the product and promotion of same, and is skeptical of putting energy into ancillary resources that are not the main product. He feels it's a quality issue. Galway Town Hall Theatre will put the extra push with these groups that need it, to make it work. They will do target marketing (for example to UCG Drama Studies, Arts Admin Courses, and so on), but they are not that interested in workshops.

Galway Town Hall Theatre are planning on updating their data capture system. When DTI's show was under pressure, due to their antiquated data capture system, they couldn't capture and follow up on who was there at the DTI show last time around to contact them.

With regard to the get-in and get-out procedure, it's standard as per contract. Galway Town Hall Theatre as receiving venue provide one technician to help, and absorb the costs for that. Anything above that the company must pay for themselves. According to McGrath, DTI are known for being extra-meticulous and fussy, and go into great detail ('tedious') in negotiating their terms and conditions in advance with the receiving venue. It was a Sunday get-in for a Monday show, in DTI's case.

After *'Slow Down'*, McGrath would certainly take DTI again, but he wouldn't enthuse about it. When a company goes on the road with something so different from their own brand (as *'Slow Down'* was for DTI), it's difficult.

McGrath would describe the feedback from '*Slow Down*', and how it appears from his point of view as just '*grand*'.

He would plan to present approximately 8 dance shows per year at Galway Town Hall Theatre. In general, dance fails to sell more than 100 seats per company. He wouldn't dream of booking a dance show for two nights. He is obliged as part of his remit to represent all the art forms and to have a balanced, varied programme. Dance is part of this.

In contrast, McGrath points out that in the Galway Arts Festival, a dance show could sell 5 shows, at 750 seats per show. The festival atmosphere and buzz provokes audiences to attend shows they wouldn't otherwise. (Yurick points out that DTI have been booked by the Town Hall Theatre/Galway Arts Festival (2000) working together to premiere work in the Festival, and indeed premiered SOUL SURVIVOR at the BLACK BOX theatre to full (450) people (400 sold seats).

## 4. What now / What was learnt?

### Recommendations for next time

#### Key Issues for future touring according to Yurick:

1. It seems to us one of the foremost issues is that people are going out less. Venue managers that we visited report that. The streets are quiet, and so is the theatre. Whether this is related to the enforced and new drink/driving regulations, (particularly in late November, as the Garda clamp down in the weeks before Christmas - they have a very heavy presence) the darkness of winter setting in or economic restraints, we do not know. But as we've been touring most years in November (since 2001), we see a distinct change, probably not attributable to Christmas.

**Two key points:** In future, the idea of a "night out" (the conviviality of pre show meetings/dinners with friends) followed by performance seems seriously on the down turn. This is particularly true of the over 30's who have more expenses to go out etc. We believe venues (particularly in the regions) are going to have to address (perhaps in tandem with pub owners) packages to drive people to and from the theatre. To create an ambience that makes it possible and enjoyable to programme a night out, to see new things and to connect with live performance again. Increasingly people are engaged with the screen: TV, Computer, Film.

Yurick elaborates: 'this comment is in relation to not just DTI, but theatre and dance in general (outside of musicals or amateur drama) Perhaps it is in relation to non-classical theatre/dance. Original and New work in particular. Are we happy with only "niche" audiences? No not particularly; would you like to have more than just a "niche" see your show? YES. Labels are sometimes not helpful in this context. I think that creative ideas providing mechanisms to make it easier for ordinary people (all ages, all walks of life) to see live theatre are necessary and not crass marketing. We will increasingly need to make people step outside of their comfort circle "the screen" to "take a chance" and commune/socialize with other people.

We suggested and discussed with Sarah Jane Leydon, Director of the Sligo Hawk's Well, that perhaps a proposal should be made to investigate or do a pilot scheme to see if this group transport pub/theatre idea/package can improve audience attendance.

2. There is a very small pool of experienced theatre technicians who are in constant demand. The lack of a sufficiently large, sustainable pool of skilled technical people to tour means that it is difficult to get people and the cost of engaging these people is escalating, if they can be found.

3. Giving a pre-show introduction definitely helped people connect with the work, and post show discussions continue their engagement and conversation with the work.

4. Don't underestimate the audience. Though it is too early to tell what effect a programme like '*Slow Down*' might have on the audiences' perception of work by Dance Theatre of Ireland, we hope if there was any negative impact (a dance show without music!), it will be mitigated by our next programme.. This will be a very different work from '*Slow Down*', in fact featuring live music from 2 countries, with a Korean/Irish cultural milieu. However, it was our feeling that, surprisingly, many people actually "got" the performances. If they didn't love it, they went away feeling that saw something of import, substance.

### **What would we do differently?**

- Perhaps think of changing the time of year touring, (after 2008 and 2009, which are already planned).
- Send out on-the-ground marketing support to the venues a few weeks in advance, for working with Media specifically to get coverage.
- More post show discussions - a simple thing that enhances impact of a work.
- Consider hiring Technical people from abroad; (we don't do this because of the additional expense, and their lack of familiarity with venues/Ireland and Technical people in the Theatre - But we may have to.)
- Research each venue's audience more, and try to respond to ways a particular show (what is it about - that show?) will reach various "markets" and go after them well before the performance.

### **Ultimate conclusion for Connor & Yurick is that (upon reflection, in addition to the above):**

1. Questioning what is Dance? Is different from what did this production say or how did it make me feel? If performance is a way of transporting people that remains the experience we want to give them.

Artists take risks and they don't remain static. As Artists we saw a connection between '*Slow Down*' and our previous work, in it's end-game, it's product, touching the roots of what we like to expose or reveal in performance anyway - which is about human beings. However, we would say for many people the format of '*Slow Down*' was probably too different for them to see the end-product (at least during the performance) that way.

2. We believe in the power of dance, contemporary dance, and we believe it should be more than a "niche" market. We have a desire to enlarge the audiences for dance, we'd like to see a lot more people (like 200 people), attend a show, not 50, or even 100. We believe it can do this with the right marketing, the right approach and timing and product.

3. '*Slow Down*' achieves an aim of broadening the boundaries of what people think contemporary dance performance is, and deepens that understanding

for many people, (for some, not at all.) It is not necessarily going to achieve an aim of getting more people to see contemporary dance.

4. There remains a balance to achieve: to stay true to our artistic impulses, to push boundaries for ourselves and the growth of the understanding of the art form, and to continue to grow audiences, enlarging the numbers of the public with whom we are able to share our work and have that work resonate with them. There are avenues of marketing and outreach to be explored, how to reach that audience before you get to the theatre. (e.g.:Youtube advertising and more). Our aim is to give them a satisfying, transporting experience, one that is engaging; with the hope that they will want to come again (and bring others ideally).

5. The Real impact of ‘Slow Down’, in a sense won’t be felt until we do our NEXT show, and we think it would be interesting to measure that.

### Further details on the Tour:

**Box Office (see also box office graph above):**

*‘We did relatively similar in Box Office attendance figures as in previous years, slightly less than last year and slightly less paying audience. A comparison of years past’:*

Total Attendance (people)	Total Paid (people)	Year	Production
1890	1546	Nov 2001	Evidence
1766	1109	April 2000	Between You & Me
1811	1326	Nov 2005	Watermark
1689	1267	Nov 2006	Exodus / Grand Junction
1516	1014	Nov 2007	Slow Down

However it is misleading to take these figures just at face value, as there are many logistics and variables at play. Yurick explains and interprets the above attendance graph as follows: ‘without the NUMBER of VENUES/performances could be the reason the overall totals are different. If we did fewer Venues/performances on a tour (in a particular year), that could explain what appears to be smaller numbers.

‘The most honest thing to say about this graph would be DTI’s current total audience for an Irish tour (these figures are only Ireland, not internationally) varies between 1500-1900 (would be more like 1500-2700+ if you include international performances, and more still for outdoor work). There is no reason to believe that for our next show (a co-production with a Korean Company with live drummers) that it wouldn’t go up again; because for example it went down in April 2005 but back up in Nov 2005. (Note re: EVIDENCE (attendance) it premiered a month after Sept 11th... in a newly opened Pavilion Theatre -

and the title and programme hit a particular chord. 'General feedback from audiences and venue managers seemed to suggest that the clampdown by police on drink driving and the cost of going out may have an impact on theatre audiences in general. Indeed the streets are very quiet, particularly in the regions. An integrated initiative between the Arts Council and venues targeting transport to and from Theatres, and making "a night out" should be investigated in conjunction with *The Touring Experiment*, particularly for non-classical forms of theatre & dance, i.e. the "new".

## **Addendum by Loretta Yurick - January 2008**

'Since this study I have attended a conference in New York, (APAP) and one of the meetings was specifically about measuring the IMPACT of performances - in the performing Arts. I would like to share with you this very interesting study, it will be launched on their website (soon). Go to: [WolfBrown.com](http://WolfBrown.com). A consortium of many presenters from all over the USA studied - and attempted to measure impact from about 20 different performances (opera, music, dance). And compare them. A very interesting study which I can only highlight for you: They speak about the "food chain" of impact. The study correlates anticipation, context, cognition and intrinsic impact. The more people know about what they are going to get, the more "it works". (So improving "readiness" to receive is often high in the area of improving impact.) It pits intellectual vs emotional stimulation, Lastly, what I remember (again, very very generally): people go out to Theatre, to get lost - captivated - and performances which do that, have high impact. Intentionality creates outcome. And more things like that'.