

Project 30
30 Years Of Salamanda Tandem 1989 – 2019:
Special projects: White Cane & Soundwalk Into Wellbeing



WHITE CANE
SALAMANDA TANDEM

Summer Programme



WHITE CANE
SALAMANDA TANDEM

Winter Programme

Salamanda Tandem

was co-founded in 1989, on the principle's of equal exchange. Key to the company's development was the collaboration between father and daughter Isabel Jones, & Lewis Jones whose experience as deafblind person & artist, laid down the foundations for ST's ethos & work over more than 3 decades. Holding considerable international



influence by the time Lewis health began to fail in 2009, we led 'Project 20" a very successful 3yr period of writing, debate, touring & dissemination of key projects supported by 96K G4A funds, & a further 10K G4A to lead an international symposium in Estonia. After Lewis's death in 2012, his 'long cane', or magic stick as he fondly described it came to rest, folded on ST's office printer. Then out of

Isabel's new role as research fellow at Leeds University & 3 key collaborations with VI & blind artists, Lewis' long cane came to light, & a series of new works were made to celebrate Salamanda Tandem's 25 years 1989 – 2014, then the beginning of a new landmark project celebrating 30 years of ST 'White Cane" commissioned by Ludus Festival, PCI Leeds University in June 2014, completed in 2019

" A State Of The Art Performance! It's a sad fact of the world that you cannot be cloned, to further enrich the lives of other visually impaired dancers"

Professor Mick Wallis, PCI Leeds University 2014



"Sound and Music is committed to supporting – White Cane through the 2015/16 Composer-Curator programme, and has contributed £4,000 toward the project. Sound and Music has watched the work of these artists for a number of years. They are talented, hardworking and authentic artists for whom I have the greatest respect and thoroughly recommend support from other organisations."

**Richard Whitelaw
Director of Programmes**

Firstsite's work with Salamanda Tandem: White Cane was a ground breaking new initiative for us. As we worked with this superb team of visually impaired and sighted sound / movement artists the work enabled us to bring a diverse and alternative programme to Firstsite, including hosting Salamanda Tandem in residence for our large scale young people's festival in October 2016 and the launch of a new sound commission.



The collaboration between White Cane and Firstsite helps us to invest in our ethos for engaging diverse audiences in shared cultural learning practice. In turn we are delighted to be involved in supporting research and artists' response addressing issues around blind and visually impaired participation. The

programme and organisation have a strong specialist interest in creative participation opportunities, offering more inclusive access to the arts whilst inspiring talent and engagement across the region. We are keen to promote a wider participation through diverse programming.

Laura Davison, Education & Learning Manager



In May 2016 and Nov 2016 we hosted White Cane for several events on Huddersfield Station, which produced innovative, & creative work, while providing a platform for blind and visually impaired artists and participants. We are very pleased to be associated with a project supporting equality and diversity, showcasing work by members of society who form a vital part of our community and artist network but whom are often overlooked".

Sarah McWatt Learning & Participation Officer hcmf//



“Thank you for bringing White Cane to the 2016 summer festival, it made us challenge our working practice and think more about accessibility – not just for this event but across the festival.” We’d love to work with you further on this and develop other ways in which we can make our events, and all the information we put out about the festivals, more

accessible. The work resonates strongly with Spitalfields Music’s ethos of challenging the audience’s perception of sound and the way in which we respond to music, alongside deepening the connection to our environment and community. We are keen to support White Cane, which explores perceptions of the world through touch, sound and presence in a long-term dialogue between visually impaired, blind and sighted people”

Kate Kelly, Spitalfields Music. Programme Director: Festivals



“An exemplary project in the way it engages with diversity, Art and audiences.” Kealy Cozens (Creative Project Leader (Data): Sound and Music)



**The Co-production Mental Health Project,
Beeston Youth & Community Centre
West End, Beeston, Nottinghamshire,**

My name is Biant Singh and I am a registered social work practitioner specialising in the field of wellbeing and mental health. I’ve been working closely with Isabel Jones director of Salamanda Tandem over the last year, to develop relationships & local partnerships to communicate the connection between art & wellbeing. We are working within a context of serious cuts to public services in mental health, and my team ‘Co-Production Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services’ have been commissioned

to develop ways and means to listen and utilise the skills and talents of families and people with lived experience in developing their own wellbeing. The work involves collaborative practice, mutual aid, peer support and the development of social capital. Moving away from “Mass Production to Coproduction” in our service delivery. Using the creative arts it’s a ground upwards intelligence approach incorporating people’s skills, previous experiences, ideas as well as awareness raising. Salamanda Tandem are experts in this work and has a strategic alignment within the current work undertaken by Nottinghamshire County Council’s Community Empowerment and Resilience Programme and White Cane pioneers this approach. I would like to offer my support for Salamanda tandem in presenting White Cane as a socially engaged performance project with people with lived experience of mental health in West Bridgford, Rushcliffe. Isolation is a big factor here, mental ill health is higher than the national average and people who experience such problems are among the most excluded in society. (Framework Housing Report 2015)

Salamanda Tandem’s work is of great interest to us, as it puts inclusivity, wellbeing and art at the centre. Led from the perception of visually impaired, blind and sighted artists, local people will be invited to get involved in a process of developing resilience and wellbeing through the experience of very high quality music, and dance. I’ll be working with local partners; West Bridgford library, West Bridgford Carers Group, Rushcliffe Community Voluntary Services Council, Rushcliffe Community Mental Health Team and local faith groups to support the project, which will be part of a series of Rushcliffe wellbeing hub wellbeing projects we are developing with Co-Production and NHS Rushcliffe Healthy lifestyle fund support over the coming year. The Co-Production team, are able to put in professional time into the project, as well as further voluntary time, space and resources from local agencies. Arts council funding would be vital in helping support Salamanda Tandem to bring a team of exceptional artists into the HUB to inspire & help support the wellbeing of families and people with lived experience of mental health building stronger community by bringing about visible change through raising aspirations, opportunities and skills





“It was truly inspiring to meet you both and I feel so relieved to have finally met an arts group on exactly the same page. Very exciting! I think it would be very important work to bring life, energy and creativity into the centre”.

Stephanie Tyrrell
SENSE Deafblind People

“White Cane represents for me the culmination of more than 20 years close collaboration with Isabel Jones and Salamanda Tandem. It is the perfect combination of high quality performance experience, social engagement and innovative sonic art that manages to maintain it’s artistic integrity whilst being immediately accessible to a huge range of people. On my travels in the last few years this project has been the one that people have been asking the most about and wanting to know when they can experience it. I’ve recently been working on projects at Casa da Música in Porto, St Andrews Voices Festival in Scotland and with the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and have been using White Cane as my prime example of long term artistic collaboration, integrated performance, accessibility and innovative performance. We have only just begun to take the project from its initial phase into a much wider arena and I’m excited about the enormous possibilities that lie ahead”.

Duncan Chapman



“The world, and that includes ‘the dance world’, isn’t built for VI people like me, but I believe in equality, disabled people ‘out there’. In White Cane audio description & the fact I’m using my long cane for choreography enables me to take a lead in the world & be a dance maker. It shows

how VIP’s can educate others & how we can make art. It isn’t just a special thing for VIP’s, it is for everyone”

Mickel Smithen



“Working with ST feels like I have arrived home. I never thought possible to be met with such a deep, insightful & perception & understanding. In my experience, visual impairment isn't always a very visible disability & can have major impact on trying to become an independent successful dance artist/movement practitioner. The work I'm

doing with ST has had a really profound impact on my personal practice, collaborations /concepts, engagement & ideology, it is incredibly authentic, insightful work”

Indra Slavena



“I haven't seen anything through my eyes since birth, but I can feel things through my hands and feet & my white cane & can hear the sounds through my ears. I'm relying on this feeling and hearing & this is what I can share in my artistic involvement in White Cane. I think in addition to sharing these fantastic moments with people it becomes a good opportunity to let them realise our existence & how we live. I realised that I can feel the space, I can learn a lot through the body contact with others & I can feel the music, & I would like to share this kind of feeling by all means with other colleagues and audiences through this project. The most exciting moment is when some

audience come out and join with us & do the movement with us”

Takashi Kikuchi



Visually Impaired Audiences, participants and delegates

Photo: Team of 8 VI artists & collaborators; Estonia, UK, Portugal & Norway for Salamanda Tandem's Ad Astra in Tallinn, Estonia

Dear Isabel, Thank you for organising and visioning such a triumphant event! I can't thank you enough for all the sensitive thought process and intelligence you brought to creating such an engaging few days. I didn't want it to end, and I certainly hope this is just another beginning from where new ideas and collaborations can emerge. I had had a testing few weeks, I received further very tricky news regarding my eye sight a couple of weeks ago at Moorfields, but how wonderful I could further address issues to do with visual impairment within your work in such a creative way, the best medicine any doctor could prescribe. I am in huge awe of the wonderful work you do and what a joy to see your work recognised last week in the Independent too, that was so fantastic. That there is still so much to do to ensure that visually impaired individuals have the opportunity to engage fully with the creative process at every level, but also being able to witness the magic that can occur when creative engagement is possible was exhilarating. It has been an utter pleasure meeting, engaging and collaborating with you. Thank you for your encouragement and support, it was such a great privilege to be part of this."

Rachel Gadsten Visually Impaired Artist



Seldom Heard Carers, VI and sighted artists explore our local environment

"The Railway event was a great success – I found it a really moving experience. You might not have noticed, but 8thObstruction has started posting on the Forum again after an absence – he's been feeling a bit down in recent weeks and hasn't been out since Caliban & I took him for a Dales pub lunch back in June. Anyway, I suggested the White Cane event and he came with me – and became a leitmotif in the first performance (the "man with a glass of beer, jiggling on the platform to keep warm" as Isabel called him who was mentioned twice more during the course of the performance). The whole event gave him a great emotional boost and he's not only back posting, but I think he's also started doing stuff with his pottery, too.

The sounds over the headphones was perfectly judged: we heard your Music and the sounds picked up by the white sticks, Isabel's [lovely] voice, as well as the Music of the railway station – and the different views from the platform: in one direction, the Pennines, in the other the traffic of the town centre – and to see the HCMF "regulars" all getting into the spirit of the piece (Graham McKenzie looked positively happy! He usually has an expression of vague terror that everything is going to go terribly wrong!) was brilliant – and feedback from people who went has all been very positive.

You affected people who didn't know what was going on, too – during the performance (I think Isabel didn't notice it, but it was magic) Takashi waved at a train as it left the other platform, and two of the passengers on it waved back. 8thOb & I caught the train back here that was in the station whilst you were giving your second performance, and everybody on the train was watching and talking about what was

going on (we explained what the performers were up to when they saw Mickel twirling on the platform opposite) – complete strangers chatting, saying what a good idea it was, just feeling a bit more of their humanity than their regular train commuting usually allowed them. It was brilliant – congratulations and thanks to you and everyone concerned”



Mickel Smithen free to explore on Huddersfield Platform 1

WHITE CANE was created as a series of touring site-specific performances made by blind, visually impaired (VI) and sighted musicians/dancers/choreographers who led a public of passers by and invited audiences into a fascinating world of sonic vision. As audiences witnessed blind and VI long cane performers navigate public space, a unique perception of the environment emerged through touch, sound and movement, as the sound of the long cane was transmitted live to audiences of all ages through radio headphones. Tuning in to this parallel universe, audiences heard the ground underneath their feet, sensed the shift of air between the buildings, and re-imagined the space around them. White Cane uniquely combined dance, live viola, music, location recording and through the spoken/sung audio description of our live choreographer, audiences entered into dialogue with VI performers, starting to move, get involved and to become part of the performance itself.

White Cane Project: A Diverse Fit

As part of the findings of the project we realised that the work could be developed for all weathers and a multiplicity of spaces; a city square, a railway platform, a park, art gallery, library, balcony, house, walkway, or interior, whether a quiet or busy place it

drew people in, from all walks of life, offering an intriguingly novel way to engage with audiences of all ages, who were very open to engage, and the work ignited their curiosity, raising questions about access, art and disability, raising the profile of disabled artists as the work was of such high quality.



Postcard Produced for the project. Takashi Kikuchi pictured

Art as Access Access as Art: Not limited by the need for special lighting staging, a PA, or even electricity: festival promoters, conference conveners and commissioners were able to be particularly imaginative and inclusive in how to develop the work with us.



Technical set up: Duncan, Isabel Takashi and Mickel;

Its deep winter so we are given a heated waiting room to transmit the each of the 3 performances from, and a generous gift from Huddersfield Station – their 1st class waiting room as our green room

The work sat particularly well in a busy festival context e.g. 3 bespoke White Cane performances for Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival Platform 1, and a 3 hour special performance for 265 young audience members starting in a queue outdoors as part of a multi media installation for Flipside YAK Festival @First Site. We made smaller scale White Cane performances created for the interior of First Site Gallery Colchester, and for People Dancing, where we presented a journey made by 2 blind dancers through the top foyer @Leicester Curve as part of their dance and disability showcase and road show. At Derby Quad / EMPAF digital art showcase we presented the work through radio headphones and on film, while in Rushcliffe, White Cane grew into a focus for the wellbeing of seldom heard carers in our local park which grew from 1 event to 4 events stretching over the full duration of the project. White Cane inspired People Dancing FCD to commission ST to produce 22 audio descriptions for their 11 Million Reasons to Dance international touring exhibition. In the summer of 2018, Derby Quad commissioned ST to create a 3 day Soundwalk Into Wellbeing summer event in a woodland at Darley Park Derby, for a group of children on the autistic spectrum. In February 2018 Isabel was the guest editor for 1 month for Sound and Music Sampler magazine and featured the history of White Cane and binaural work there. In our final performance of White Cane the work fitted beautifully into an enquiring experimental environment for international artists and academics where we conducted a lecture and followed with a White Cane performance as the finale of 'Bringing New Music to New Audiences' International Conference in the courtyards of Music, Technology and Innovation Research Centre, De Montfort University.



Takashi and Mickel lead the audience on a journey into their senses, on Huddersfield Station Platform 1, while a blind audience member leads off confidently with them

Salamanda Tandem's mission for the project: to demonstrate how the lived experience of blind, visually impaired people & their families could be at the centre, to engineer state of the art performance; bringing audiences and VI performers, art, aesthetics, wellbeing and ethics side by side to nurture & celebrate the deepest resources of human creativity. White Cane helped Salamanda Tandem to articulate its work directly through public art / socially engaged performance, drawing on 30 years of Salamanda Tandem's dedicated collaboration between blind, sighted and visually impaired people and artists.

The project enabled us give voice to the long cane as an instrument, yes ever present in the room or out on the street with us, but until White Cane it was never seen in live dance performance, but also to the potential of audio description as an art and to explore how singing and live choreography could work as an interactive tool to support visually impaired performers to interact with audiences. Tools, that for most sighted people are objects for identification of disability or deficit, here instead we invite audiences to hear the white cane's choreography of sound and be the catalyst for a libretto of sung audio description, where the sound of the white cane itself and the lyricism of live viola co-created by blind and sighted performers act as synergetic conductors of functional and pedestrian information, and transformers, into a poetic sonic vision full of layers of singing, poetic riffs and textural sound. White Cane enabled us to break new ground with technology, and sonify tactile sensation experienced by long cane performers. As the performances evolved and our experience grew, we found the confidence to develop the raw sound of live cane transmitted live, to preserve the individual gestural 'voice' of the performer. Building the sound with two radio microphones manipulated simultaneously. While sung audio description which is taken out from its pedestrian interpretive root became an integral part of the soundworld not a bolt on access medium. As a totally blind musician Takashi Kikuchi, connects the playing of his viola in White Cane to the long cane, which he uses like a bow to expertly play the performance site and reveal a sound world of surfaces, gaps and vibrations. As a visually impaired dancer, Mickel Smithen describes his use of the long cane as 'sensing the ground like cats whiskers'. Such things were there all along, but we never knew:



'Released from dependency, I normally have to fold my White Cane up but using it in performance made others see it as a beautiful instrument'
Mickel Smithen

How Audiences and Participants

Engaged with White Cane

One of the major successes of the project was the volume support in kind, and of particular significance to Salamanda Tandem going forward, the volume of totally new local organisations, voluntary groups and individuals who engaged with the company for the first time to develop the project. I have drawn up a list here to illustrate the enthusiasm generated and to give a flavor of the accessibility of the work itself.

Rushcliffe Community and Volunteer Service: Sue Knowles

Carers Council: venue, marketing and communications, catering

Carers Roadshow and open day: Sports Centre venue, featured in their programme

Rushcliffe Mental Health Carers: venue, marketing and comms, catering, transport

Young Arts Community YAK: management and design of Firstsite event

Huddersfield Station: 1st Class Waiting Room, as green room, Project Champion; station development team, platform waiting room

The Kings Head, Huddersfield Station: rehearsal space, power, access to platform

11 Million reasons Touring exhibition: People Dancing. Barcelona, The South Bank, and a network of other venue's and promoters where the audio description was featured

Rushcliffe Borough Parks and Community: free access to the park for our event x 4,

West Bridgford Library: foyer space, publicity, staff support and attendance at events

Treetops Garden Centre: loan of trolley for transportation of audience bags, headsets and all equipment

Darley Park Activity Centre: workshop space, power, toilets, kitchen and care facilities

Nottingham Mental Health Awareness weeks: marketing, inclusion in their programme

Environmental Agency Trent Bridge

Salamanda Tandem: studio for rehearsals, accommodation and recording equipment, Volunteer support team

Canalside Heritage Centre Beeston: Open access to the centre to develop the project



Bringing new partners on board:

A typical presentation pictured here, as Isabel and Biant give Rushcliffe Borough Council NHS Clinical Commissioning

Group the experience. Afterwards this group supported the White Cane: Soundwalk into Wellbeing project to go much further.

Other Presentations

Unwind Your Mind Presentation: West Bridgford Library

Carers Implementation Group Rushcliffe Borough Council

Rushcliffe Health Partnership Meeting / presentation at Rushcliffe Borough Council

RACA: session on wellbeing Rushcliffe Asian Community Association

Dementia Carers 1 Day Event:

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/dawn/workshops/index.aspx>

Presentation at County Hall: Social Care Commissioning Group

Review of Carers Services County Hall March 2018, Carers Council April 2018, Carers Council Soundwalk taster September 2018,

Review from DMU event from an Academic Researcher

"I thought the combination of the poetic audio descriptions, sound and following Mickel with his cane had the effect of making you very present and more aware of all your senses. It really brought me into the moment and I explored and noticed things about that area that I never have before. It also gave insights into what it must be like to have no sight and what was especially interesting was that we (the participants) were being led by a blind person thereby turning what might be seen as usual roles on their head and exploring the textures around us through touch. 'Touch is the least judgmental of the senses' – that quote from the audio description has stayed with me since as I think it's easy to habitually jump to judgements about people and spaces when just looking or glancing or listening. This work provided an opportunity to step outside of that and consider how we might view the world differently if we didn't perceive it largely through sight"



White Cane audiences learn how to touch from VI artists; feeling the heat and vibration of glass outside DMU Leicester:



Seldom heard carers, VI artists support 3 deaf participants hear the sounds of nature for the first time in years with the aid of sound technology: Nottingham



White Cane audiences wait for the vibration of a train with Takashi

Access As Art

White Cane access is central to the art and ethos of Salamanda Tandem. White Cane G4A access funds enabled us to develop this much further than we have been able to do before. One way in which we did this was by embedding audio description into the art form itself. The 2nd way in which we did this was by employing an artist advocate throughout the duration of the project. This enabled, VI performers to be closely engaged with processes and communications to support promoters to widen audiences, e.g. train platform staff meeting and greeting VI audiences, and to support access and involvement by visually impaired performers and potential audiences (VIP's). This work became embedded into White Cane.

Art as Access is a deeply creative undertaking

Touch... vibration... sound... movement... conversation... environment... meeting of minds... smell.... taste...all ages....all equal...pace of perception....time to get involved on ones own terms....accessible... fascinating art

Making the live show widely accessible, with live audio description at every event, and offering tactile maps, braille, & large print information produced by the performers for the performers and made available for audiences pre or post show.



White Cane audiences hear Mickel playing the glass wall at DMU, while Isabel audio describes what they are doing for him, making moment by moment decisions



Braille, programme, large print programme produced back at Salamanda Tandem's



Studio base by the White Cane access team

Long Cane Tactile Terpsichore produced on Lewis' Jones Vintage Perkins machine, by

VI person. Terpsichore / Tactile Map; a pioneering approach to choreography by touch created by Salamanda Tandem with G4A access funds for the project.

For our White Cane Programme, and a5 flier postcards, the company designed a unique tactile QR code, which enabled VIP's to access direct audio via live streaming. This was made accessible through braille/ and innovative tactile art map



For audio only programme information click our QR code with your mobile phone or visit our website:

Watch this; 7 minute film: _

<https://youtu.be/xYjFjrWOcp0>

Or Listen to this: 45 sec audio clip of White Cane in live Performance:

<https://soundcloud.com/salamandatandem/white-cane-salamanda-tandem-a-child-stops>



A huge issue for VI and blind performers is the isolation from the rest of the art world, and from art education. It is a tradition for disabled performers to be kept very separate from the mainstream public during the process of creation, and brought on stage and taken off stage on company buses by sighted people in charge who know where the toilets, exits, etc are. It is traditional for music or dance rehearsal to take place in closed studios, or on stage. All well and good while sighted artists get access to the rest when out of rehearsal or performance, but these environments aren't conducive to inclusion, as VI artists return to largely isolated situations. While in any sort of

visual performance the parameters are controlled by sighted people. White Cane blew all that out of the window, opening up those important moments between performances; the down time when artists make plans for future projects, attract commissioners, have crucial conversations, exchange contact details and are noticed as they interact with the general public. As our big train expenditure testifies, trains are the transport mode of choice for VI people, and the freedom enjoyed by the excellent 'assistance' system, and the location of our events enabled VI performers to build up confidence in independent navigation. By placing White Cane development and performance in public spaces, with our tailored access programme; artist advocate, audio description, site visits, tactile maps and proper time allowed for tasting and being in the environment it became possible for VI performers to lead, and explore on their own terms. Opening up opportunities to hear, taste, converse, explore, rest, reflect and expand.

The Kings Head Huddersfield Station Platform 1
an ideal location for research and development



Meet the audience: Pre show and post show Braille Games in the Kings Head



One of the big challenges for VI performers is to enter into dialogue with audiences. Post Show discussion gives VI performers to hear feedback. In the White Cane green room: 1st Class Waiting Room donated by Huddersfield Station!



Site Visits to practice navigation, and meet the festival promoters at Spitalfields Music



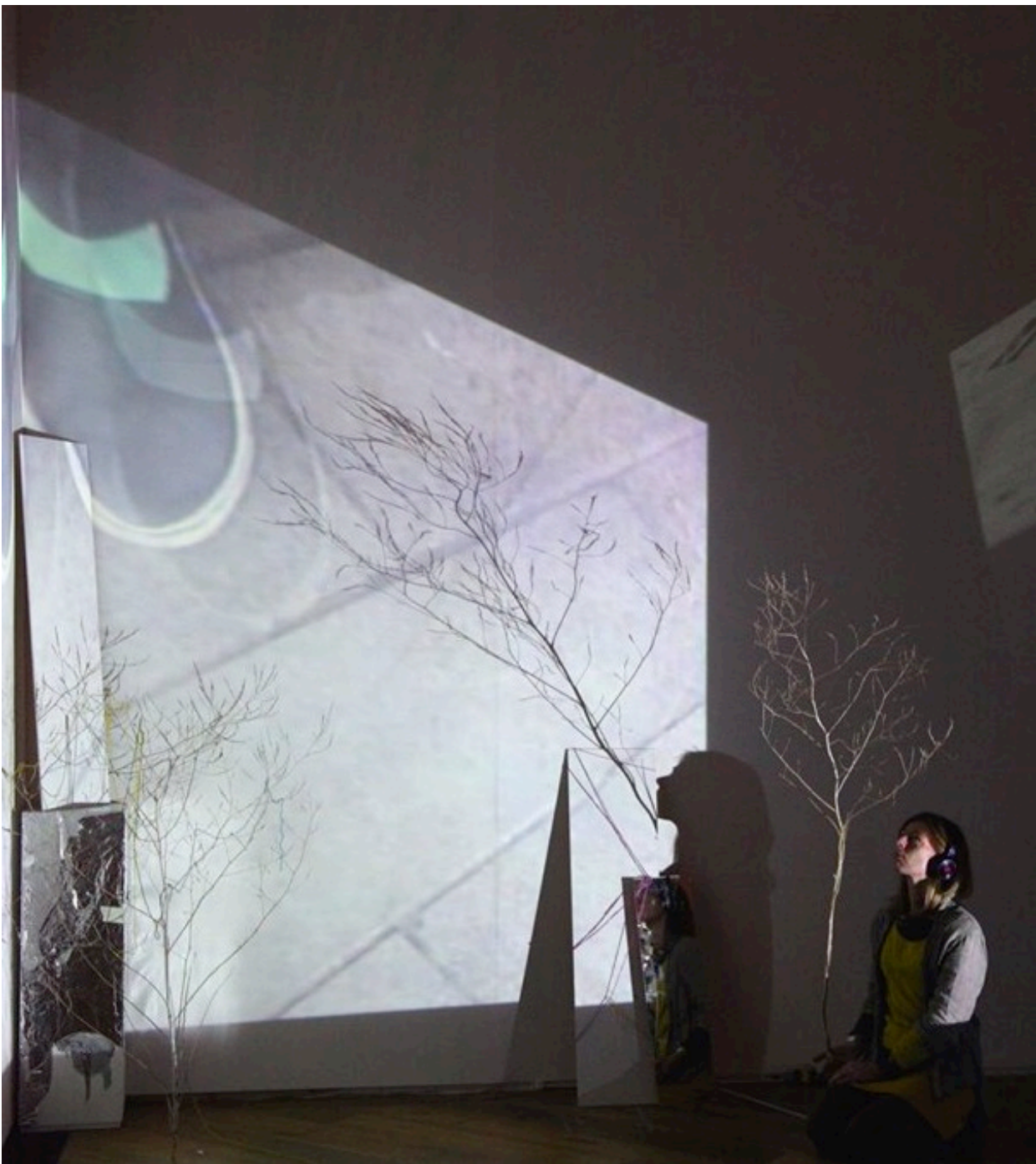
Articulate Touch is a primary sense developed in White Cane audiences, developing deep respect for this honed and practiced sense of VI and blind artists



Tactile QR Code: direct access from a mobile phone to streamed audio

Bilingual programme: braille and large print side by side

During the performances, which were always repeated several times during one day or built up in the location over a series of days, White Cane provided a moment-by-moment informal and friendly access point to the general public. An inclusive place where visually impaired, blind, and sighted people can 'meet' on equal terms as audience and performer. We offer multiple conduits of access to the work: whether as casual passer by, a local long cane sound and movement contributor. Whether as parent and child, office worker or regular visitor to the space, everyone can become a radio headset wearer for as long or short a duration as they wish.



A unique performance of White Cane for Flipside Festival First Sight Colchester where we created an installation inside the art gallery, and Visually Impaired dancer Indra pictured here, explored the tactile presence of the huge walls of the gallery with a long cane. Sound transmitted through headphones to 300 audience

members, with Takashi Viola, Duncan Live Cane mix, Isabel voice/audio description. Location recordings, of the wind whistling through these dry branches over the sea wall on the local Essex coast.

Supporting White Cane Communications with Visually Impaired People

- Non-verbal, non visual, multi sensory contributions embedded in the artwork
- Accessible technology to all
- Use of the Long Cane in the work itself builds the art of touch into the work
- VIP accessible text, braille and audio formats, braille games, tactile maps everyone gets interested not just VIP's
- Audio description as an artform not a bolt on extra
- Contacting and meeting local agencies that provide VI and other services
- Site visits/flash performance: a conversational starting point, attracting interest, changing perceptions, as our team of VIP's get to know many different spaces.
- Utilising existing UK and International networks, family, friends, company members, and VIP friendly organisations including; MySight, RNIB, Inner Vision Orchestra, ParaOrchestra, and the Pocklington VIP Community.
- Pre-performance workshops on site, post performance discussion, audio trailers and blog contributions build audio communication into the fabric of the project.

Isolation is a big factor here, mental ill health is higher than the national average and people who experience such problems are among the most excluded in society. (Framework Housing Report Nottinghamshire 2015) Putting inclusivity, wellbeing and art at the centre of this project, local people were involved in a joined up process of developing resilience and wellbeing through the experience of very high quality music, and dance delivered by a team of exceptionally talented artists”

Biant Singh Nottinghamshire County Council. Co-Production team



Model developed from Leeds Premiere: VI & sighted audiences = equal collaboration

Soundwalks Into Wellbeing: Opening for Wider Learning and Inclusion



Joy emerges in Darley Park as a result of the sounds and technology and a day free in the woods for one autistic child suffering from stress in the holidays

The Darley Park Project was an extra-ordinary opportunity that emerged after a presentation on White Cane at Derby Quad for EMPAF, where John Wyall saw the potential of a project tailored for Q Club which is a group of children on the autistic spectrum. Holidays are a very difficult time for parents, and it was agreed that we would develop a summer project based on the White Cane model using the same technology, while allowing these children to be leaders on their own adventure into nature.

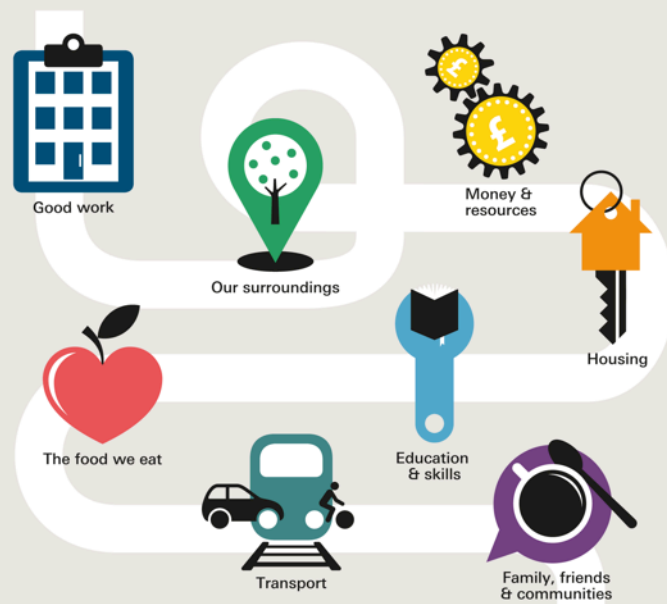
Its been clear that White Cane captured the imagination of many people, including those working at the edges of inclusion and disability. As our Nottingham project grew, we began to understand the levels of impoverishment, not only for disabled people but for their families too, and in particular for voluntary carers.

- There are approximately, 90,000 carers in Nottinghamshire, with less than 6, 000 of those accessing statutory support/provision
- Nationally, carers save the Government the same amount of money as is spent on the NHS budget in total.
- Even though there is a need to attract more carers into this network for economic reasons alone, there is also a fundamental need to address the wellbeing and self-care of carers.

What makes us healthy?

AS LITTLE AS
10% of a population's health and wellbeing
is linked to access to health care.

We need to look at the bigger picture:



But the picture isn't the same for everyone.

The healthy life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived areas in the UK is: **19** YEARS



References available at www.health.org.uk/healthy-lives-infographics
© 2017 The Health Foundation.

Published in 2017: The Health Foundation

Given austerity and the open climate for alternatives in social care, we were able to attract support to develop the project focussing on:

- The role of Nature and the Environment
- Sense of control in our lives
- Self realisation and empowerment
- Culture and the place of music, movement, and arts in the wellbeing process. (We were most concerned that art seemed to be missing from the Health Foundation grid pictured above)

As part of the project we offered a number of conduits and ways in to demonstrate how anyone can take the journey from listener, watcher, to embodied physical explorer, and creative 'interactor'.

- We offered pre-performance workshops on site, in site specific soundart practice, location recording, access as art, group music/composition.
- Post performance discussions, Academic seminars, lectures and training courses
- Local artists, musicians, dancers, and students became part of the performances,
- Local Visually impaired people got involved, supported through access to the company and the use of live audio description.
- Young artists, carers and others interested in knowing more about access

Exhibition, Documentation and Evaluation

Crucial to Salamanda Tandem's White Cane is the engagement with all the senses: a visual/sound/movement/tactile art. In White Cane we used GoPro cameras, and contact microphones attached to the long cane, recording a sound and image bank to map the different surfaces and locations we encounter. The sound and vibration of the Long Cane in busy or open spaces, on cobbles, brick, stone, marble, and grass were fascinating. We've also created a substantial exhibition of photography, film, text and music that documents 2.5 decades of artistic collaboration between visually impaired, blind and sighted people through Salamanda Tandem's work. This helped underpin White Cane, and supported people to understand where it had come from.

"As a person who is simultaneously a composer, musician, carer, the parent of a disabled adult, and someone who has had a major health crisis, working on this project is a vital part of maintaining my own well being, as well as developing the work with others. 'Work' can all too often become a one-way transaction, where we loose touch with and put aside our own needs. This work is a much-needed counterpoint to that, where as artists, we are able to develop a project that enhances our own well-being at the same time as creating life enhancing experiences for others" Duncan Chapman



When we first envisaged White Cane we thought it was for fair weather summer festivals, but we learnt how it could work in all weathers: here we are in February 2018 and no lack of enthusiasm



Seldom heard carers support each other through the experience,
and Nottinghamshire Co-Production social work team too

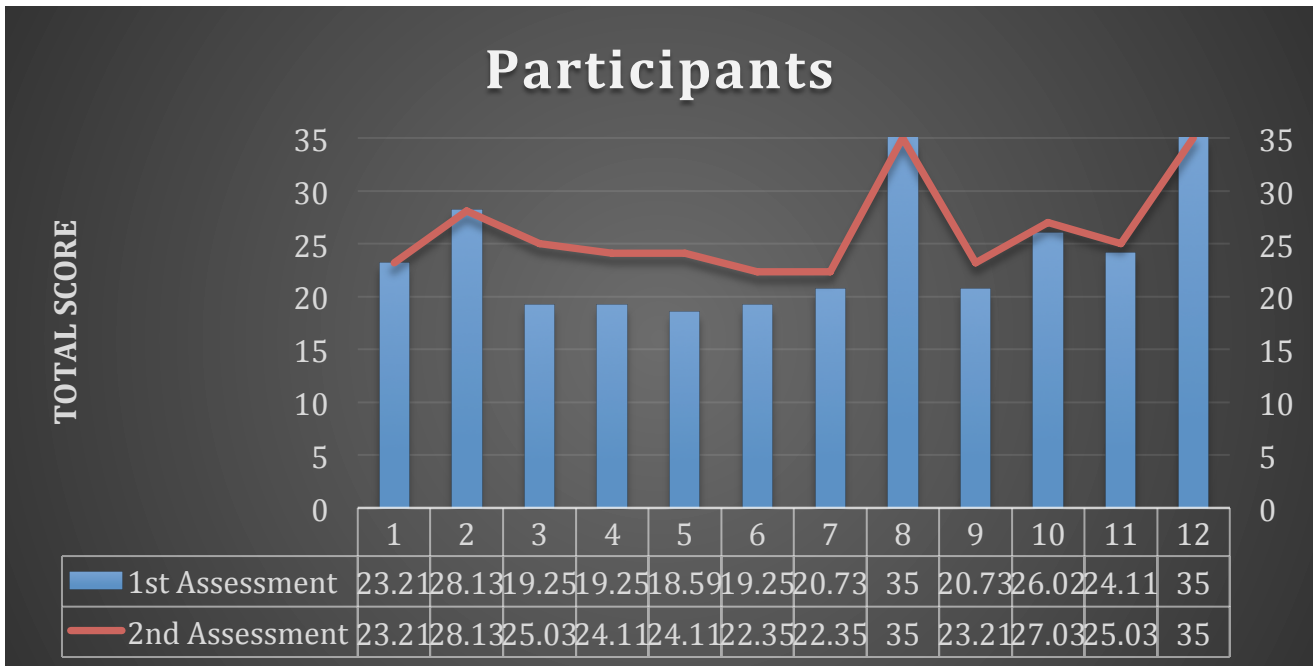
5 Ways to Wellbeing as an Evaluative Process:

BE ACTIVE, CONNECT, TAKE NOTICE, GIVE, KEEP LEARNING.

A major development for the company in gaining such substantial in kind support from Nottinghamshire Social Services, and in continuing the events beyond the 1st trial event to deliver 4 in Rushcliffe, was to articulate the benefits to seldom heard carers and disabled audiences accessing nature, sound and our work. We would like to develop this part of the project further beyond the life of this White Cane. Embedded into the project is The 5 Ways To Wellbeing as an evaluative process. Some quite startling findings proved that people's wellbeing benefited from the experience

- To measure the impact of the wellbeing of participants, we used the shorter Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale.
- 7 statements with a tick box describing experience
- Overall, 30 people joined the event
- 12 people completed the assessment, as a simple way to measure wellbeing immediately before the walk
- After this participants, took part.
- Informal feedback slips were completed immediately after the walk by participants using the 5 Ways To Wellbeing score 1 - 5.
- The same Warwick-Edinburgh wellbeing measure was conducted again 2 weeks afterwards, and 3 months after that.

What we see on the graph below, is that 2 weeks after the event, there is still an increased sense of wellbeing. However when completed 3 months after that, 6 people reported a decrease in their score.



The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS)

**Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.
Please tick the box that best describes your experience of
each over the last 2 weeks**

STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

All the original participants completed the second round of questionnaires, while 9 people did the third round

Company Of Collaborations

As a result of White Cane, a new body of work is growing, called Soundwalk into Wellbeing, and a number of commissions to make new works, as we are looking to continue developing adventurous bespoke artworks for site-specific locations in collaboration with and supported by, a strong commitment from partners to involve visually impaired artists, carers, disabled, and vulnerable people in new ways.



Total independence for VI performer, taking audiences into the moment for art and wellbeing at DMU

Its been quite an extra-ordinary process, for the company. During the lifespan of the project we opened up our new studio, the White Cane and Soundwalk Into Wellbeing projects became the means to become closely engaged in our local community, as we had a tangible and accessible project to offer. We built new partnerships and friendships with people we have never reached before that have affected and will affect the company's future very positively:

- Our local library in the park opposite
- Local Nottinghamshire County Council and Borough Officers and Commissioners who attended the events
- Invitations to NHS consultation meetings
- The Environmental Agency on Trent Bridge
- Access to a new fund: Better Carers

- Invitations to participate in Social Prescription Pilot
- Beeston Carers group, and Rushcliffe Mental Health Carers Group
- The Carers Council – gave 2 presentations at The Mechanics Institute
- Carers Roadshow
- Local Councilor's: gave 3 presentations at County Hall, all included a live demo of the radio headphones and sound
- Rushcliffe Voluntary Services: gave 2 Presentations
- Training commissioning services in Nottinghamshire in how to use the technology to support activity co-ordinators



Seldom heard mental health carers, VI and Sighted artists experience Autumn 2016

“ When I first came to the RC Group I felt a little unwell in myself, low spirit , no confidence , but since coming to the group feel a lot better, a lot of that is I made some friends who understand what I am going through, we all in the same boat. It is really good doing the Sound Walk and talking to people who have been in the same place I have been in. Not Feeling that I am different to anyone else, not feeling we are special in anyway, we are all similar. We are experts by experience and have the intelligence to know we are HERE”

“ lovely experience....experiencing the time for myself wanted to be still, felt energised at the end of the walk

“ I didn't want it to end. This experience has been so powerful for my mental health and wellbeing. A special time with your own thoughts to focus. You are with others but you are alone, protected by the headphones, so it's a quiet time for reflection but

surrounded by caring others, shared experiences not communicated, yet understood”

“loved it, mesmerized by the effect and was surprised by the fact that it was a ‘live’ performance and therefore fascinated by the running commentary on what people were doing; a bi-fold people watching experience. Seeing with greater clarity, being in the moment, a process of slowing down. Not taking nature for granted”



All weather project!: VI dancer Indra leads carers into a mindfulness walk



Site Visit Live Experiment at First Sight Colchester



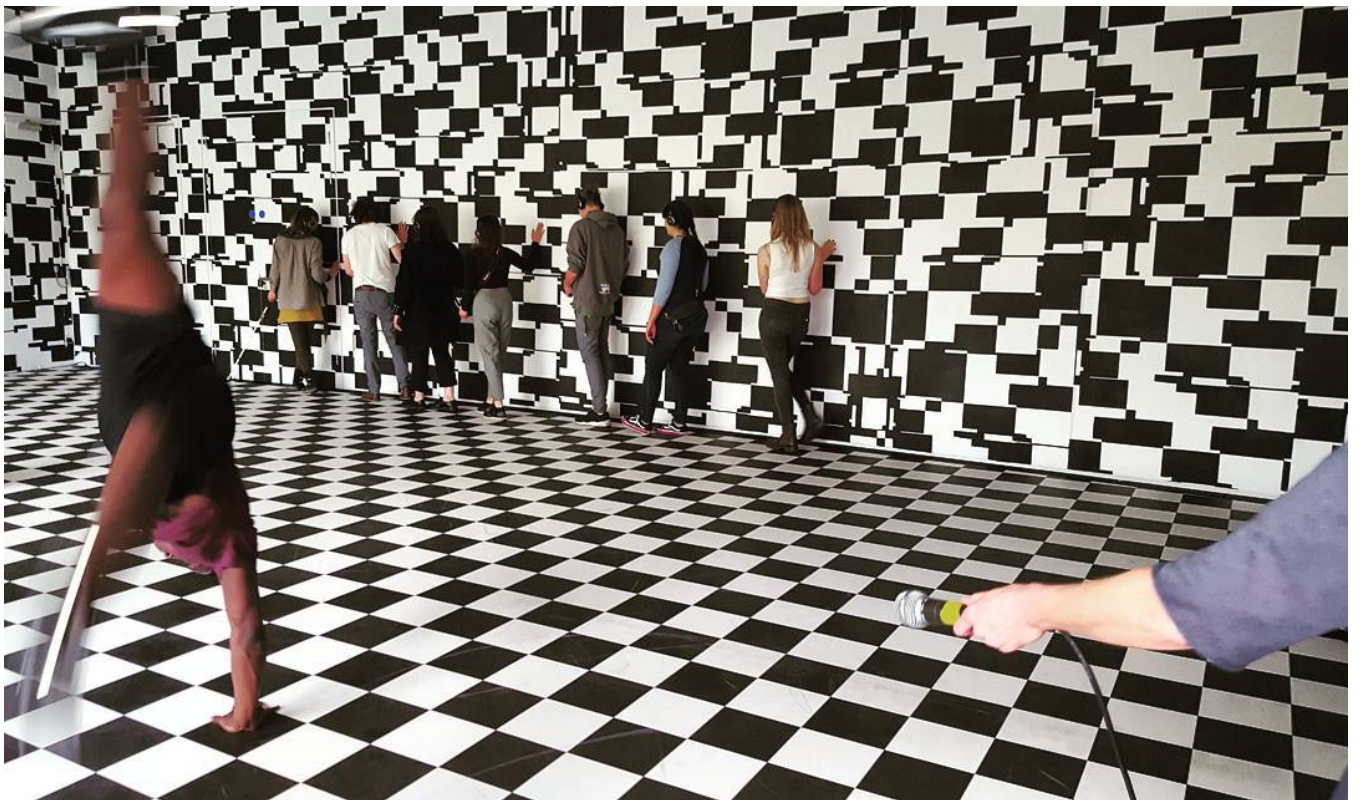
Research and recording with 4 VI people in discussion about sound



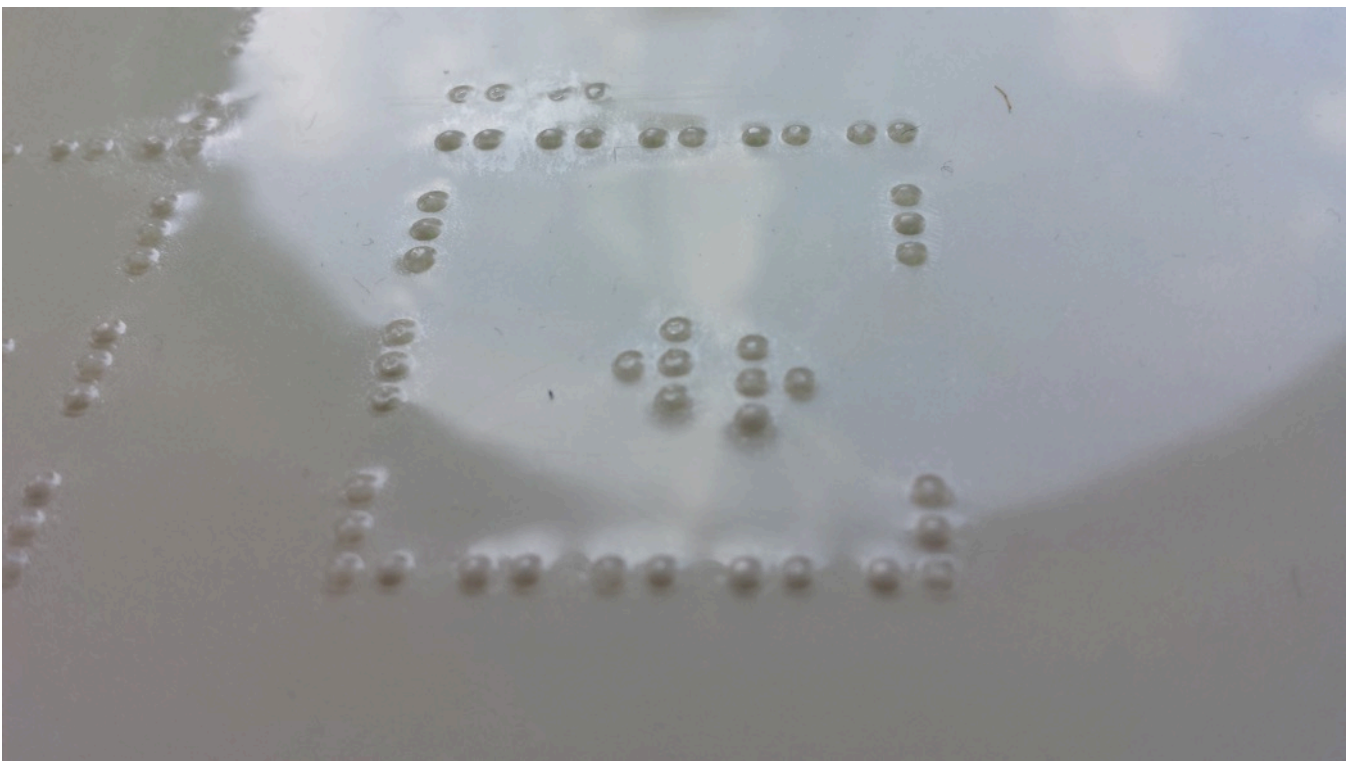
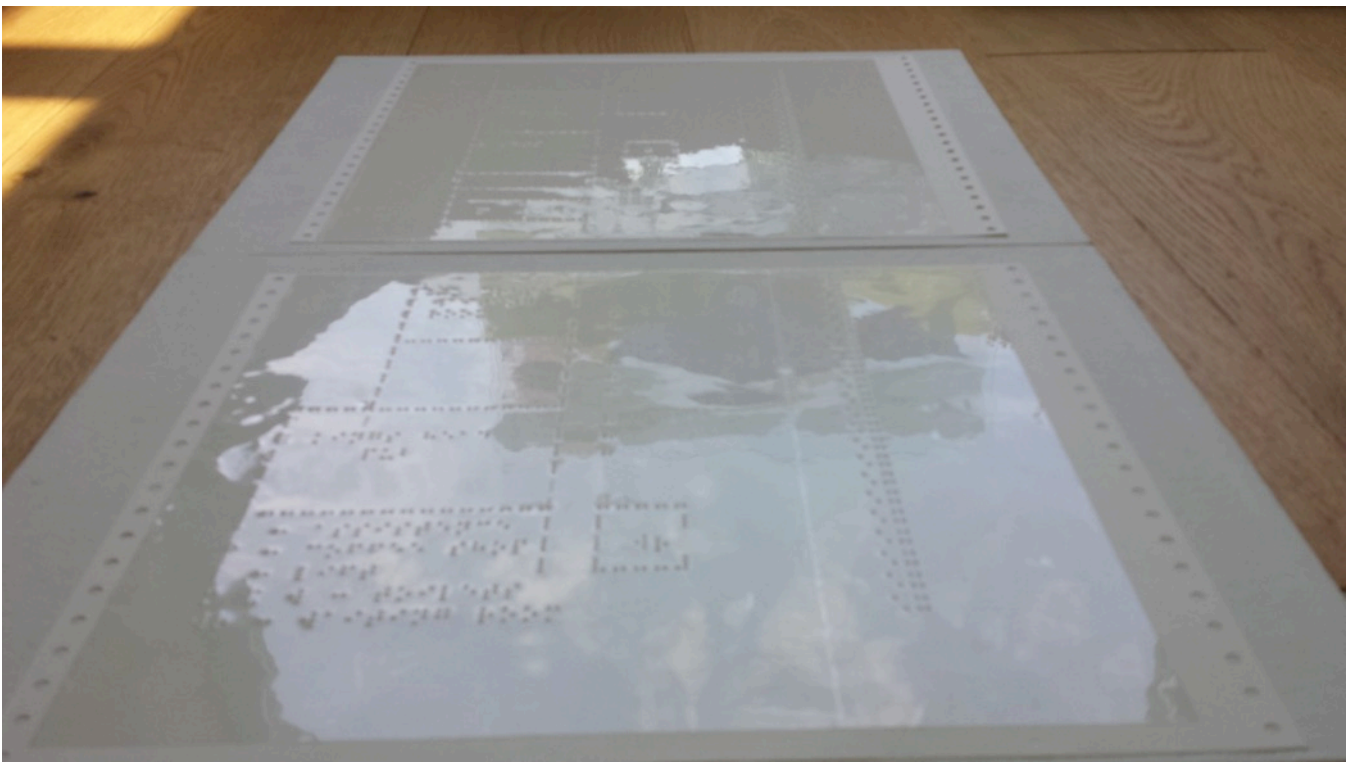
“A container that always leaks, on the edges of things, I liked the different layers, really interesting, like Mickel picking up the sound with his long cane grid sound of the central heating system underneath the floor, the way the children in learning room came into the space, through audio description, it blurred the layers making it more emotional. I enjoyed meeting the team and talking about how we use the cane in different ways” VI participant describes how she experiences White Cane



The Curve Leicester Disability Dance Showcase Event for People Dancing January 2017



Break Dancers @First site YAK project collaborate with White Cane artists in residence for the Flipside Festival. VI performer leads workshop group to explore the space blindfold; experiencing the dance through audio, touch and live breath, not sight



White Cane Tactile Maps laid out on the floor

Using a unique combination of abstract braille dots to indicate environment, rooms, corridors, entries, edges as well as the braille script itself to show various amenities like this coffee kiosk pictured above



VI audience and White Cane performers post show discussion



Spring, Summer, Autumn Winter Soundwalk Into Wellbeing Events In Bridgford Park

Review Leigh Landy Professor of Music DMU

“The White Cane piece simultaneously takes you out of your comfort zone and offers a different kind of comfort. By being networked via wireless headphones, one enters a community linked directly to this interdisciplinary performance. It also allows us to view and hear, at a lower level, that which surrounds us outside of the community involved thus creating a simultaneous double culture, perhaps a metaphor for the world of the visually impaired and everyone else.”



The piece had many facets of beauty and intimacy. Watching the performer move freely and guide and be guided (from the audio description which forms a key part of the piece) combined with the various forms of sound and, of course, the verbal content, offers those present the ability to enter the world of the performer without the darkness that goes with it.

The sounds generated during the performance, manipulated, sung, spoken create a musical content that allows for both referential (content-driven) and musical (sonic-driven) listening.

The combination of its closing an intensive 3-day conference, the weather making the performance so refreshing and, not least, the dramaturgy and the content led to a unique experience, as said, both challenging and comforting and providing loads of food for thought.



Mindfulness in action: VI Dance artist Indra Slavena connects through touch to nature

"I felt yesterday was a v special day and there were a lot of beautiful and unique moments during the morning exploration and both performances. Everyone of them so precious. Moments of contemplations, sensitive reflections, the recording is great, I thought the experience there was v unique for people there and the recording now up online is another wonderful piece of art in its own right. I love listening to the singing audio descriptions it connects me to the world.

After struggling to get out for the last 18 months I should say, I am lucky to be around this"

Spring, Summer, Autumn Winter Events In
Bridgford Park

White Cane & Soundwalk Into Wellbeing Artists / Performers /Producers:

Isabel Jones: Composer/Singer/Audio Describer/Choreographer

Duncan Chapman: Composer/Performer

Mickel Smithen: Long Cane Performer/Dance Artist

Takashi Kikuchi: Viola Player/Long Cane Performer/Dance Artist

Biant Singh: Tabla, Evaluation and Design of The Soundwalks Into Wellbeing

Geoffrey Fielding: Photographer

Derek Grant: Technician

Laura Mansford: Artist Advocate

Lisa Holmes: Fundraiser

Indra Slavena: Dance Artist / Long Cane Performer

Sam White: Dance Artist

Caroline Robinson: Evaluation Support team

Keith Barlow: Dance Artist (Winter Walk)

Tomomi Kosano: Japanese Dance Artist (Spring Walk)

Stella Couloubanis Financial Management

Dallas Simpson: Soundartist /Writer

Sue Ansell: Volunteer

Artists Evaluation

I've just finished listening to our Sunday performance of White Cane. It really is quite remarkable, riveting, everything seems so well placed somehow, no rush, not too much material, simple, and yet complex, multi layered, deep yet accessible, one really gets a sense of the journey people take into deeper consciousness. Very happy technically too this time as I was able to place the spoken parts from Mickel and Takashi in the right place in relation to what I was doing and to what Mickel was doing and to where the audience were at, and this liberated to work on the multi layered sound score of cane, location, grates, underpinning pizzicato gestural motifs. We work as a team to clear space, build atmosphere, in 3 dimensions, things shifted in and out of the way, build pace and phrasing to both move it on and hold it really still – very still almost silent, and the journey of the audience mirrors exactly that. A sounding art crafted live, deeply socially engaged, a choreography of sound and people, Mickel free to be himself, to wander, to lead, doors open everywhere, heat, texture, vibration, light, glass, chalk, concrete, metal, grass, leaves, wool, tweed, skin, locks, – he explores without oppression, criticism or pressure, and we craft and allow with ease without sentimentality, and in that we somehow find a perfect sense of grace to hold the people and let them be free.

Isabel Jones



VI viola player Takashi is transmitted from the waiting room out onto the platform

I love the way it flows into the performance at the start.

The way that the sound of the cane moves from being very full on at the start then clears as we hear the grate sounds works very well.

I think that the way in which the performance moves between the modes of describing, imagining and “stepping outside” (where you are sorting out the headphones at the start “hummm that’s not good” “are they working?”) which then moves into the sonic world of the piece is extraordinary.

What I love about this performance is the way it really does take time and really works with the restricted vocabulary rather than adding more and more sounds. Even though I love the melodies that Takashi usually plays this has a sense of flow and continuity without the need for melodic improvisation. The new text from Mickel is interesting as it is in a completely different acoustic space, like opening a window to another soundworld.

Just listening to the bit at 18:19 where it clears into a sense of settled togetherness, you really get the sense of us all being “alone and together” connected by the sound. And then, as Mickel comes in again we are back in his world.

The sensory journey of temperature is really effective, when we get to 23:30 (ish) I get a real sense of warmth even though there is still the rain , almost Mediterranean or the kind of humid warmth one gets in Malaysia or Japan.

The other thing that comes across so strongly is the way that the three of us seem to be in perfect synchronicity



The delicate balance between giving the information about the cane and taking us on an artistic journey is perfect. The sense of calm and balance at the brilliant, we have travelled from the outside to a deeper inner world as Takashi’s voice speaks the final phrases.

Duncan Chapman



Takashi Plays the bike racks

“ I realise that If you became blind in your later part of the life, or if you are fully sighted, you don’t use that sense as much as we do. I can explain you how I feel things, but its something we can’t perhaps teach really, to the people, we have to discover it in our own ways. “I haven't seen anything through my eyes since birth, but I can feel things through my hands and feet & my white cane & can hear the sounds through my ears. I'm relying on this feeling and hearing & this is what I can share in my artistic involvement in White Cane. I think in addition to sharing these fantastic moments with people it becomes a good opportunity to let them realise our existence



& how we live. I realised that I can feel the space, I can learn a lot through the body contact with others & I can feel the music, & I would like to share this kind of feeling by all means with other colleagues and audiences through this project. The most exciting moment is when some audience come out and join with us & do the movement with us”

Takashi Kikuchi



“The fact I’m using my long cane for choreography enables me to take a lead, not be dependant on sighted people and be a dance-maker/performer in my own right. Since White Cane, things have changed.”

Everyone is into audio description, and everyone wants me to use my long cane in performance now, its part of me and what I do. Lots of opportunities have followed this year. White Cane showed people what I can do and how interesting working with a VI person could be!

Mickel Smithen

A few Web Links

<https://www.facebook.com/FirstsiteYAK/videos/723055134518697/>

<https://thesampler.org/guest-editor/guest-editor-february/>

<https://thesampler.org/guest-editor/guest-editor-editorial-dallas-simpson-part-2/>

<https://thesampler.org/guest-editor/guest-editor-editorial-isabel-jones-part-3/>

<https://hcmf.co.uk/white-cane-salamanda-tandem-23-11-2016/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_uGOQZDkKI

<https://salamandatandem.wordpress.com> <https://youtu.be/xYjFjrWOcp0>

<http://ludusfestival.org/whats-on/past/white-cane/>

<https://www.spitalfieldsmusic.org.uk/events/white-cane/>

<https://www.instazu.com/tag/youngartkommunity>

<https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/302/case-study/dancing-long-cane>

<https://www.theskinny.co.uk/music/news/white-cane-at-hcmf> :Article

<https://soundcloud.com/whitecane/white-cane-salamanda-tandem-audio-information>

Each performance was recorded/uploaded for live streaming

<https://soundcloud.com/salamandatandem>

<https://arestlessart.com/2017/07/04/paying-attention/> :Francois Matassaro

https://issuu.com/hcmf/docs/hcmf_2016_programme/27

<http://interfaces.dmu.ac.uk/conference/conference-information/abstracts/>

<https://www.communitydance.org.uk/creative-programmes/11-million-reasons-to-dance#audio>

<http://firstsite.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Flipside-Programme.pdf>



Seldom heard carers gathering in a huddle as though penguins keeping warm in the February temperatures, with roving music and audio description

Final Event

Our Final Project 30 Event took place at Canalside Heritage Centre in Beeston. It was a departure for us, as funds were tight, and so we worked with a reduced team of artists and volunteers to make it happen. The project was created by Isabel Jones and Biant Singh, and funded entirely by Nottinghamshire County Council Better Carers





Soundwalk Into Wellbeing In Progress with Beeston Carers @Canalside



“As the afternoon progressed I could feel all the busy morning drain away, and I opened to the healing powers of nature. I felt a delicate poppy, it felt like a v thin paper, yet the poppy is also so strong to withstand the winds”



Geoff Curtis one of the key carers who developed the project and featured here did a special feature on Radio Nottingham radio, and was involved in the development

"v tranquil, takes my mind from the unnecessary clutter in my head! Every carer should have access to this, it is so important for our wellbeing" – a longer quote from his radio interview....

"Loved it! mesmerized by the weir and the calming effect of 'white noise". I was surprised by the fact that it was a live performance and therefore fascinated by the running commentary on what people were doing; a bi-fold people watching experience and loved it. I really liked the interjection of the canalboat mans experience of the river"



Carers and loved ones enjoying the water together

“a wonderful peaceful experience, I felt much calmer afterwards. I was drawn towards the water and greatly enjoyed the ambient music and singing”





Arrivals and handing out headsets



"I loved the meditative feel, seeing with greater clarity, being in the moment, a sense of slowing down, not taking nature for granted. Can I come again please!"

The water inspires movement, I'm listening here to the birds chirruping. Looking at the pylons, the birds lined up on one of the cables, its like sheet music. I feel free listening to the water, I'm alone with nature and very relaxed"



The 5 ways to Wellbeing evaluation after the event

"Thank you, this was wonderful. It really gave you a message, to find your own unique natural rhythm in life, and that everybody's journey to get there is a personal one"



I didn't want it to end. Thank you. I'm very glad that I was able to join the soundwalk, it can be difficult with disabled child to find a moment. Its so good to come to this place, and experience a special energy like this. I liked the music, what a lovely experience, soothing, interesting, the garden the water really adds to the beauty of this experience"



"it took a little while to get into the moment but the weir worked its magic, I

felt calm and peaceful, was able to concentrate first on the surroundings, on what I could see, hear, smell and feel (sensory and emotionally) Set Free!”



“ I didn’t want it to end either. This experience has been so powerful for my mental health and wellbeing. A special time with your own thoughts to focus. You are with others but you are alone, protected by the headphones, so it’s a quiet time for reflection but surrounded by caring others, shared experiences not communicated, yet understood”



"V peaceful and calming – loved the sound and sight of the weir and the birds soaring which helped take away some of the stress and worries. Time flew as I enjoyed the freedom as I hold this crab apple



Credits

Partnerships and Places

White Cane was originally commissioned and co-produced by Ludus Festival Leeds, Salamanda Tandem, and Leeds University, Department of Performance and Cultural Industries. The project was toured and developed for: Victoria Gardens Leeds, Corby Cube, The Water Tower Northants, Spitalfields Music Festival and Spitalfields Market, Colchester Firstsight Gallery for 2 events and a residency, The Curve Leicester, Huddersfield Station Platform 1 for 2 projects and 5 performances in Spring and Autumn, West Bridgford Park x 4 events: in Autumn, Spring, Summer Winter, Salamanda Tandem Artists Studio, Nottinghamshire County Council – County Hall Trent Bridge Nottingham, Rushcliffe Borough Council Offices West Bridgford International Interfaces Conference at DeMontfort University Pace / Law Building Square, Darly Park in Derby outdoor residency for Derby Quad and Q Club. Canalside Heritage Centre, Beeston.

In each and every location a multiplicity of partnerships with local Visual Impairment groups, organisations, VI individuals, arts, social care and health organisations who made it possible. While the project was featured on radio, television, in magazines, and on line, including: Skinny Magazine, Sampler Magazine, Radio Nottingham, Klrkless TV, and in a 7 minute film made by People Dancing on the company's work with Visually Impaired people, also Internationally as part of the 11 Million Reasons Exhibition, where the company created 20 audio descriptions, as well as across social media, debated in academia at Leeds University International Performance Conference at PCI, DeMontfort University Music Conference,, Fragile? International Conference in Tallinn Estonia on Visual Impairment and Performance, it was also presented as an exemplary project by Nottinghamshire County Council Better Carers commissioners, when reporting back to Clinical Commissioning and the NHS. Our Soundwalk into Wellbeing for Canalside Heritage Centre won Highly Commended at the Regional Heritage Awards for widening new audiences.

Who Funded Us

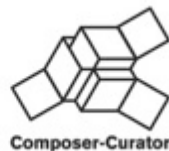
We would like to gratefully acknowledge support for the project from the following: The national tour was developed for touring with an award from Sound and Music Composer–Curator Programme, Arts Council Funding through Grants For The Arts lottery funding Rushcliffe Mental Health Carers, Better Carers NHS Funds, the Ulverscroft Foundation, Firstsite Gallery, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival ://hcmf, Corby Cube, Fermynwoods Contemporary Art, People Dancing/ Foundation For Community Dance, Nottinghamshire County Council's Co-production Project in Mental Health, DeMontfort University Music and Innovation department, The Water Tower, Rushcliffe Health Partnership, Nottinghamshire County Council Health Care Commissioning Team, Notts CC Co-Production team, West Bridgford Library, Bridgford Park / Borough Council, YAK young artists, Derby Quad, Q Club, & Salamanda Tandem.



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Ulverscroft Foundation



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the foundation for
community dance



salamanda tandem

Photographs:
Geoffrey Fielding Salamanda Tandem White Cane and Soundwalk Into Wellbeing
2014, 2016, 2017, 2018

Additional DMU Photographs: Neil Spowage

Salamanda Tandem Project 30 Report Written by Isabel Jones June 2019