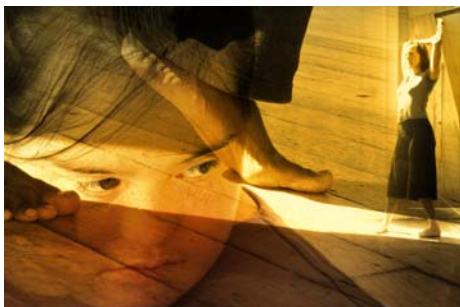


# salamanda tandem



# letters of support

**Upper image :** salamanda tandem site dances 2006 : magdelene's dance

**Middle image:** salamanda tandem site dances 2006 : faith's dance

**Lower image:** salamanda tandem site dances 2007 : mickel's dance

Site dances, is a long term salamanda tandem project, that supports disabled dancers to work professionally with the company.

**photographers:** geoffrey fielding / richard hughes

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## **Testimonials and Letters of Support Sent to Salamanda Tandem from December 2007 – January 2008**

### **Chris Fogg**

There is barely a week goes by when I don't mention Salamanda Tandem as a model of the very best practice and as a source of absolute inspiration. You are one of the key artistic people in my life, who has helped to shape and influence my own thinking and practice. When I was a New Perspectives I was involved in three collaborative projects with Salamanda Tandem, all of which were more than just successes; they were life-changing for the participants, unforgettable for audiences, and decisive in the way they formed and altered the opinions of policy makers and stakeholders. When I took up my current post as Director of the County Dance Agency for Somerset within Take Art, one of the first things I did was to invite you along to lead a key weekend training course for practitioners and care professionals working in dance in integrated settings. That course has provided us here in the south west with a set of signposts to our own strategies for working in this context. Over the past ten years Salamanda Tandem have deservedly gained an international reputation for work of the highest quality and integrity, and I urge you to reconsider your decision to cut their funding.

### **Chris Fogg**

**Director, Dance & Theatre for Take Art, Somerset**

**Judi Hughes:** Who has had the audacity to make such decisions? I have sat on Arts Council panels in previous years and cannot believe that people who care about the arts can have made such proposals. The very fragile contemporary arts infrastructure in the UK, in which Salamanda Tandem plays a major role, has been developed through the hard work and commitment of people like yourselves who have given their lives over to making the arts accessible to the widest possible range of people. Equality and diversity have been at the centre of that development and that is why I am particularly concerned to hear that instead of applauding the work that Salamanda Tandem do, a decision to cut your funding has been made.

I have followed your work through the years with admiration and respect for the innovative approach and sheer commitment to the work that you do. I really hope that the Arts Council can be persuaded to change their minds.

What may appear as being frugal in a time of need will decimate the arts infrastructure of the UK with long-lasting effect. I wish you well in your quest to get your funding reinstated.

**Judi Hughes, Arts Management Consultant, Cardiff**

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**Jean Escott:** The imaginative and creative work of Salamanda Tandem has revolutionized the way we in Telford & Wrekin work with Adults with Learning Disabilities. With their support and expertise we have created a performance company which is at the cutting edge of disability arts, developed a way of working in which Adults and young people with learning disabilities create new work of outstanding quality and transform both their lives and those of their carers and family. For the arts Council to cut this company would be a total disservice to cultural aspiration of the most vulnerable.

**Jean Escott, Arts and Culture Manager, Telford & Wrekin Council**

**Susanne Burns**

To whom it may concern

As a senior dance manager and freelance consultant who has worked in the sector for 24 years, I have carried out work with Salamanda Tandem on many occasions since 1989. My first work with the company was to assist them in creating their first business plan in order to secure a three year funding agreement with what was then EMA. After four years, I was invited to work with the company again to support them in developing the company into a new phase of growth, becoming a limited company, recruiting and inducting a board and establishing systems and procedures that would enable them to consolidate. This was followed in 1999 with further support and mentoring as the company sought yet again to develop its business model. I then worked briefly, in a voluntary capacity, with the company in 2004/5 when they were first seeking support with organisational development from ACE. It has been a long term relationship and one borne out of great mutual respect. I admire their work, their often radical and creative approaches to management and I have always enjoyed helping them to move forward.

The company is, in my view, of national importance. Their work is unique, their ethos and values of enormous integrity and their approach to management robust whilst also highly creative. In my experience, the company and its Board have always taken a forward looking approach and have sought change and development when recognising it is required. They have embraced change actively, welcoming it and seeking to find ways to consolidate, manage risk, as well as grow. I have watched with frustration over the last few years as this company have sought to maintain their current business whilst looking to develop into the future, something that is hard when you are well resourced but harder still when you are as stretched as ST have been. The conundrum of how to do this within their limited resources has not been cracked. The Company Manager was never able to free up the time required to develop the business whilst seeking to maintain the business that kept them alive. I was saddened by the failure of the funding system to recognise this and trust in the company enough to inject relatively small financial resources that would have created leverage for a more sustainable future.

I do not believe in keeping companies alive after their natural lifespan is over but I write this in the firm belief that ST still have much to offer the sector and their loss would be a sad indictment of a system seeking to reward excellence. ST have proved that small can be excellent and this appears to have worked against them in the funding cull.

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It is my view that the funding system has failed this company, may not have understood their work in recent years, and, in now threatening to remove their RFO status, may potentially jeopardize a unique and important national resource for dance.

**Susanne Burns**  
**Development Consultant. Liverpool**

**Andy Sloan:** Rosehill is a school for children with autism and complex needs ranging from 4-19 years old. Autism is a biologically based development disorder which manifests itself in:

- A communication impairment often resulting in difficulties with verbal and non-verbal communication.
- A social impairment resulting in an inability to make relationships.
- A rigidity and inflexibility which can extend to every area of a child's functioning in terms of language, thought and behaviour.

As a school we are constantly looking for ways to help our pupils access and come to terms with the confusing world around them. For the past six years we have developed the role that creativity can play in the education of pupils with autism. We have had two OFTSED inspections during this time both of which have praised our work in this area:

“Teachers and partners have shared their expertise of autism and the arts wisely and very openly, allowing staff to explore their creativity. They have been encouraged and enabled to develop personal skills, interests and autonomy to facilitate communication in ever increasing ways.” OFTSED2005 The most recent OFTSED designated the school as outstanding in all areas and noted that curriculum provision and the way that the creative approaches have been incorporated are ‘outstanding.’ “These approaches have helped to provide ‘outstanding’ achievement for pupils with autism”

The position we find ourselves in today is a result of the development work we began on some very successful projects with Salamanda Tandem back in 2001. In 2003 we embarked on a massive programme of staff training aimed at providing staff with the skills to teach creatively through movement with the emphasis on staff peer-learning projects. Salamanda worked alongside staff and their classes and these sessions were interspersed with staff twilight sessions which created dialogue and the sharing of practice. The student-centred approach of Salamanda Tandem which although begins with a defined structure encourages an open-ended, non-specific outcome which was tremendously successful with our pupils. Sessions were regularly videoed and this provided an outstanding record of pupil progress over time. Initial results indicated that this way of working can bring huge benefits to people with autism. We continued to develop this work with Salamanda over a period of three years. We now have a group of staff who can continue this exciting work but we still rely on the Salamanda Team for consultancy input to maintain the momentum of this development. Another element of the project when we began working with Salamanda was to create and launch a purpose built arts space. Over the last six years we have built upon and developed our physical resources for delivery of the arts. The arts space became a reality when we were able to convert an unused classroom. This has now become central to the creative programme and we have now completed the building of a MILE (Multi-sensory Interactive Learning Environment)

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Environment) which is having a huge impact on the creative work we will be able to undertake and is central to the developments that will take place over the next three years. Ideas for this fantastic resource were generated by staff visiting and watching Salamanda working with different groups of young people with learning difficulties.

I cannot stress enough the importance that Salamanda have had in our school. They gave us ideas and impetus and showed us new ways of getting through to our pupils. We owe them a great deal and would like to work with them again in the future to continue to develop the use of creativity and the arts to provide pupils with autism a voice. It would be a huge step backwards if a company like Salamanda were to disappear due to a lack of funding. Latest figures say that up to 1 in 100 people have autism and the difficulties of finding appropriate education facilities for these incredibly gifted but complex young people is posing problems to educational authorities across the country. We need to support organisations like Salamanda who make a massive difference to the lives of many disabled children and adults.

**Andy Sloan, Deputy Headteacher, Rosehill School, Nottingham**

**Ruth Lewis-Jones:** I was very shocked to hear of the threat of closure to Salamanda Tandem. Your work is inspirational as it so effectively combines the opportunities for people (often on the margins of society) to develop ideas imaginatively and expressively through dance and movement. The East Midlands needs more innovatory and creative community-based companies such as Salamanda Tandem, not less. I strongly urge the arts council to reconsider this funding decision.

**Ruth Lewis-Jones, Creative Agent for Creative Partnerships, Nottingham**

**Peter Shelton:** My knowledge of your work pre-dates the formation of Salamanda Tandem, and because of the parallels between some of our work, I have followed the progress of Salamanda Tandem closely. We share with you the fact that we responded to the challenge placed by East Midlands Arts to establish new arts organisations in the East Midlands and build a strong caucus of artists and arts work in the region. I think we have all contributed significantly to building the artistic capacity of this region, and created a strong foundation on which much regional arts development has subsequently been built.

I believe the artistic quality of your work is unimpeachable. Three of the most stunning images I have witnessed in performance have been at Salamanda Tandem performances, and these bear testament to the quality of your cross art form work - building a bridge between the visual and performing arts. Similarly, the importance of your development of arts work with people on the autistic spectrum must be seen as a national exemplar.

I believe that Salamanda Tandem has important assets which are of great value. As is the way with the arts many of these assets are intangible, for instance the quality and depth of creative relationships that have been built up, the development that has taken some of your participants who are disabled people to become major performers with your company, the ability to "reach" people whose experience of the

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world is distinctly different to our own. I also know that many of these assets and achievements do not register a high public profile, because of the groups of people you work with. But I do believe that these assets need to be preserved. Your work has a justifiably high reputation within all of the circles best able to understand it, and I have no doubt that helping to ensure your work continues and develops will be a priority for them, as it is for us.

**Peter Shelton, Director, First Movement, Matlock**

**Chris Stenton:** I believe that Salamanda Tandem has a vital contribution to make to the cultural climate of this region and beyond. The company's work with disabled people, particularly people with Autism, is unique, highly respected and at the leading edge of developments in the field. I do not agree with the decision to cut this funding and would urge the Arts Council to reconsider its proposed decision.

**Chris Stenton, Arts Manager, Foundation for Community Dance, Leicester**

**Kathy Benfield**

I have worked with Salamanda-Tandem with people with a learning disability at various points throughout their 18 year existence. During that time they have offered support and artistic input to people of all ages and abilities who I have been working with in a variety of settings, including much needed training for staff teams.

The work they do is always of the highest possible standards, often breaking boundaries and new ideas, introducing people to new ways of working to great benefit. They are true experts in their field who are always willing to share that knowledge with others to help them move forward. Of particular relevance is the work they achieve with those with more profound and sensory disabilities.

Over the years they have probably reached around 200+ people within my own client groups in both short and longer term projects and collaborations.

For Salamanda-Tandem to lose core funding would be a loss of quality arts service to large numbers of hard to reach people who may otherwise be excluded from arts practice. Surely in a climate where all organisations are looking towards inclusion to remove funding from one of the best organisations in the field is a little short sighted. Priority to reaching hard to reach groups cannot be successful without the experts to deliver that service.

Let's hope that ACE will reverse this short sighted decision so that excellent work can be continued.

**Kathy Benfield, MENCAP, (Regional Arts Development Officer, (Midlands)**

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**Stephen Munn:** I am saddened and shocked to hear of your news and of others throughout the arts world that I have worked with throughout my career. Derby Dance has had a strong link with Salamanda Tandem over the years and excellent work has been produced; the company played a major part in establishing our disability and integrated work programmes which we continue to invest in and value.

**Stephen Munn, Director, Derby Dance, Derby**

**Tim Harris:** Salamanda fills a particular niche like no other, and would be the first company I would turn to, when I have need of a creative approach to client groups with different levels of disability. This is exactly what happened when I was involved in the NELincs CP project, funded by the Dept of Children, Schools and Families. Once we spoke to the school, and understood its particular needs, I knew your organization was the only option. From my awareness of organizations in that area, there was no alternative to bringing in your range of skills and experience. I would be very interested to know from ACE how they propose that I should encourage schools like this to engage in the arts in the future?

**Tim Harris, Arts and Culture Consultant, Nottingham**

**Laura Guthrie:** It is disheartening to hear of ACE's withdrawal of funding for Salamanda Tandem. The pilot scheme you recently completed for us in Ilkeston has been a great success. We could not have achieved the level of commitment and engagement from this group of learning disabled participants without your skills and expertise. Your approach to the scheme was, from the outset, of a highly professional standard. It was your ability to incorporate the complex needs of the group whilst also maintaining a high expectation of the individual's capacity which enabled them to engage with and create confident inspiring dance work. We spent nearly 12 months developing and researching this project and Salamanda Tandem were the only organisation in our region who could deliver this kind of quality work with a group of residents who could not access other mainstream dance opportunities in our borough. I do not believe that ACE appreciates the excellent work that Salamanda Tandem delivers. High quality innovative dance opportunities for disabled adults and children can not be achieved within this region without the existence of Salamanda Tandem.

**Laura Guthrie, Arts Development Officer Culture & Leisure Services,  
Erewash Borough Council, Derbyshire**

**Deb Ashby:** I am writing because I was dismayed to learn of the cut to funding for Salamanda Tandem. In 2001/2002 Dance Initiative Greater Manchester worked with Salamanda Tandem on a large scale participatory dance project which was the culmination of over 3 years of work by DiGM focused on work with and by disabled people. Salamanda Tandem's process led, cross arts approach inspired dance workers who undertook training led by the company and were then mentored by the company to deliver workshops to over 200 community participants. We received very good feedback on this training and the artistic ideas and inspiration passed on assisted the dancers to deliver the next stage of the project.

Community participants also took part in taster workshops, filming sessions and created music led by Salamanda Tandem, all ensuring that each individual



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participating contributed to the entire performance and resulted in a very person centred inclusive approach. The community participants taking part included many with a range of severe disabilities and as a result they were often limited in their day to day choices and semi-institutionalised. The approach by Salamanda Tandem, enabled development of self esteem and a sense of the individual for each community participant within a large scale project.

It is in this context that I believe that Salamanda Tandem has a vital contribution to make to the cultural climate of this region and beyond. I do not agree with the decision to cut this funding and would urge the Arts Council to reconsider its proposed decision.

**Deb Ashby, Director, Dance Initiative Greater Manchester**

**Stewart Collinson:** Salamanda Tandem, has over many years, fulfilled a number of important roles, contributing to the development of the cultural "well-being" of the region. The strength of the organisation is its synthesis of innovative practice and its commitment to the intrinsic value of an ongoing programme of facilitative and collaborative work. The company's underlying philosophy is one of inclusion, and this informs a long term strategy to work with both physical and learning disabled groups, both in the region and beyond. But this philosophy also informs an equally strong commitment to the training and development of regional artists.

Like many people, I am perplexed by what appears to be an almost arbitrary and sweeping decision to withdraw funding from many artistically and organisationally sound clients. Certainly, ongoing review and evaluation is intrinsically important in the development and continuance of a strong national arts and cultural sector. In this case it would appear to be a blunt instrument that's being wielded without any real understanding of what Salamanda Tandem have been working to develop over many years.

**Stewart Collinson, Artist / Film maker, Senior Lecturer, School of Art, Lincoln University**

**David Manly:** You may not remember me but I used to work for the old EMArts. I recall the quality and commitment of the work of your company and have followed its development over the years. I was very dismayed to learn (from Stella Couloutbanis) that you have been caught up in the Arts Council funding withdrawals. We all understand the need to review awards regularly to keep up innovation and standards but it is intolerable that a company like yours that continues to do just that has been dragged into a particularly inept and irrational set of actions as those proposed. You have my full support in challenging this appalling decision and I very much hope that the concerted campaign to have it reversed is successful.

**Professor David Manley, Director of Cultural Development, University of Derby**

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**Robert Ayers:** I have just learned that Arts Council East Midlands have announced a decision to cut the entire core funding from one of their region's foremost companies, Salamanda Tandem. Frankly, I am appalled.

Before I came to live in the United States, I had many, many opportunities to see Salamanda Tandem in action. They always struck me as one of the most intelligent, committed, and inspiring groups of young artists that I had ever encountered. The work that they have done has changed the arts climate across the region and the country for the better.

Whatever ACEM's reasons for withdrawing the company's funding are, I would make the strongest possible appeal that they be reconsidered. Otherwise they carry the heavy responsibility for a profound mistake.

**Robert Ayers, Senior Editor - ARTINFO.com, New York**

**Kevin Hodgetts:** Is the arts scene in this country in such a healthy state that it can afford to do without the pioneering work of Salamanda Tandem? It seems to me as someone involved in supporting grass roots activity that the case for renewing what we think the arts are has never been so urgent or necessary. Instead of supporting mainstream arts practice in such an unquestioning and uncritical way the job of the Arts Council should be about attempting to make the arts more relevant to where people are at and pushing the boundaries of new types of practice.

The decision to cut Salamanda Tandem would be a telling indication of their disinterest and discomfort in supporting work involving people of difference. As a regular collaborator with Salamanda I can testify without reservation to the quality, beauty, and most of all sheer humanity of their work. I'm guessing that the problem is that the beauty of their work challenges rather than fits within the cosy norms of mainstream practice and established aesthetics.

**Kevin Hodgetts, Project Manager, Arty Party, Telford.**

**Kate Houghton:** It is the 4th of February and it is early in the afternoon. The room is in a primary school building perhaps built somewhere around 1920. The window is tall and generous and sunlight spills in a large gridded rectangle across the carpeted floor. I've chosen to use an old pentax spotmatic, it is basic and weighs a ton by today's standards. But the shutter makes the most pleasing sound of all my cameras.

I have set my flash units to balance with the ambient light and now I wait.

The boy enters the room and he is running. It is as though he does not see me. I am still. He is running. Around the space and through the stream of sunlight, he does not stop. The woman runs along side for a while then holds out her arms to him, they spin together then move off again through the element of light and space. Running. A pattern of sound resonates across the floor.

I open the shutter to expose the film to the dancing shadows in front of the lens. This half second of movement transforms into a measure of dark and light across the film surface. Not really a picture or even only a document.

Something solid is made.

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So what you going to do? Throw this box away without understanding what it contains? Here is something which pays back more than you put in, staffed by people with a true vocation to serve the arts and bring it into the lives of the many people it works with. A company clear in it's direction and motivation, efficient and generous with it's support of other art forms. A company which brings art literacy to the lives of many people who would otherwise be without it.

Offering a true space to develop ideas and communicate concepts through direct experience. How rare is that?

Since I have known this company their ability to listen to the creative voice of people has been paramount. Not only to listen but to offer a place where this expression can be explored and shared. As I watch the photographs come to life.

I believe that Salamanda Tandem has a vital contribution to make to the cultural climate of this region and beyond. I do not agree with the decision to cut this funding and would urge the Arts Council to reconsider its proposed decision.

**Kate Houghton. M.F.A. Artist, Nottingham**

**Adele Drake:** I am extremely sorry to hear that Salamanda Tandem is under threat from East Midlands Arts with regarding to continuing support.

I know how important the work is, since we collaborated in a major tour of dance, music and film (made in Iceland by Drake Music) in 1992-3, working and performing with blind dancers and disabled musicians in a variety of venues. Isabel's direction and commitment were outstanding and unforgettable. The tour would not have taken place without funding from ACE.

I cannot believe that the work being carried out by Salamanda Tandem will not continue and wish you well in your endeavours to fight for funding. Courage!

**Adele Drake FRSA, Director , Drake Music Project, London**

**Helen Skelton:** My first contact with the company and the incredible work of Isabel and Salamanda Tandem was back in 1991 when as a student of Theatre and Design their work stood out from the crowd. I was exploring the theme of collaboration and creativity all over the UK and was delighted that this model of best practice was happening here on my doorstep. Salamanda Tandem were unique in the generous, inspiring approach to making work that resulted in fulsome, rich, creativity for all involved - practioners, participants and audience.

Years later I was in the privileged position to work with them again this time as a professional. Architects of Air collaborated with them in making a project making dance, movement, sound and film possible in a luminarium. We were only able to work with them as the core values that I found in 1991 ARE still there. We worked with members of the public and people from day centres, special schools, performance groups to create quality work that gave breadth and depth to all our lives. Salamanda Tandem makes us feel valuable.

There are still exciting projects being nurtured, artists who need training, creators that need opportunities, participants that need a voice.....should Salamanda Tandem lose

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its funding, exciting projects will be extinguished, artists will not realise the potential in others, creators will be diminished, participants will fail to thrive.....

**Helen Skelton, General Manager, Architects of Air, Nottingham**

**Caroline Robinson :** It is very disappointing to see that vital funding of key arts/health and community provision is putting Salamanda Tandem at risk of closure. As an adviser involved in training and education, I very much appreciate the contribution that this specialist group provides. In particular, students undertaking BTEC Performing Arts and Health and Social care programmes nationally (in specialist schools, FE Colleges and HE institutions) will be losing a unique and invaluable resource. At the same time, local, community and national dance and arts programmes will be deprived of the vast experience and exciting new developments Salamanda Tandem makes. I would urge that this decision is re-considered to enable this core funding can continue to ensure this contribution can continue in the future.

**Caroline Robinson, Curriculum Development Manager, Edexcel, Nottingham**

**Jean Commons:** I believe that Salamanda Tandem has a vital contribution to make to the cultural climate of this region and beyond. I do not agree with the decision to cut this funding and would urge the Arts Council to reconsider its proposed decision. Accessing the experiences and the diversity to implement independence and well being in individuals , give me the insight, information, understanding, and encouragement to provide a quality service.

**Jean Commons, Team Leader , Dallas Street Day & Community Support Service, Notts County Council, Mansfield**

**Debbie Wolfsohn:** I read with sadness of the current challenge that you face in ensuring an income to continue the valuable work that you do. I was privileged to have shared a performing space with Salamanda-tandem back in 1992 whilst working for the Drake Music Project (Isabel and Duncan were facilitators in this project). The way that your company respected, valued and incorporated the skills and talents of visually impaired dancers was an inspiring example of good practice which has influenced the values and principles by which I work with disabled people to this day.

Few courses exist to train the creative leaders of the future and those that do rely on students gaining work experience in real life community arts contexts in addition to academic learning. I learnt most by working alongside experienced practitioners/facilitators through groups such as yourselves, the Drake Music Project and Share Music in projects that directly benefited disabled people on a long term, regular basis in achieving creative goals. If groups like yourselves cease to exist this will result in our society losing all the valuable skills and knowledge that you have acquired over many years.

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Stable, reliable funding underpins the existence of inclusive creative endeavour's that serve the needs of their beneficiaries rather than those of the administrators and accountants.

I believe that Salamanda Tandem has a vital contribution to make to the cultural climate of this region and beyond. I do not agree with the decision to cut this funding and would urge the Arts Council to reconsider its proposed decision.

**Debbie Wolfsohn, Music Live, London**

**Liz Clark:** As a freelance dance artist I have been involved with the work of Salamanda Tandem through in a number of different guises - through their excellent training initiative with the Involve Programme called 'Artswork with People' and through experiencing their sessions with young adults with learning and physical disabilities. Their work is excellent, their approach is inspirational and the impact their work has on the people they work with is profound. I believe that Salamanda Tandem has made a unique and vital contribution to the arts not only in the East Midlands but all over the country. I strongly disagree with the decision to cut their funding and would urge the Arts Council to reconsider its proposed decision.

**E J Clark, Freelance Dance Artist, Nottingham**

**Andrew Williams:** I feel strongly that any decision to remove the RFO status of Salamanda Tandem would be a mistake and would significantly weaken the artistic community in the East Midlands for the following reasons.

Salamanda Tandem provide projects, ideas and performances of a high artistic value and a stable funding base has benefited this and enabled it to develop.

Salamanda Tandem is one of the few origin artistic production companies in the East Midlands - offering artists and audiences the chance to experience highly innovative performances and projects.

Salamanda Tandem has a strong philosophy which is clear and stems directly from the experiences and interests of the artistic director. Once again it is one of the few true artist led organisations in the midlands and benefits as a result of this.

Unlike some organisations Salamanda Tandem is not in receipt of a large grant from ACE and losing this amount from the RFO budget will not significantly benefit other organisations. Indeed I suspect that it will be lost within the overall budget and will no longer be made available for funding artistic projects. To go one step further - if this decision is made then ST will join many other organisations competing for GFA money and most of the production companies in the east midlands will be on project based funding. It is difficult to see any benefit of this.

There is a current lack of high quality innovative performance companies in England at the moment as much of the cultural energy is being invested in visual arts - this is only a cycle and by threatening the stability of the remaining companies who do

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produce time based work of a high standard has no long term benefit to the artistic community its infrastructure, artists and audiences.

I hope that this decision will be reviewed and Salamanda Tandem will remain a RFO and a valued client of the Arts Council.

**Andrew Williams, Development Manager, Matlock**

**Julie Hood:** I think I would like to write something about the powerhouse performance time as in my opinion new ideas in dance can come when people are given the chance to engage in a primordial pool of movement, where the essence may be perceived as chaotic/anarchic.

There are many ways to make a dance but essentially the maker is bringing a dance into form through the process of gathering and letting go and the maker must have a pool of inspirations/ideas in body, space or mind to draw from. In my opinion the powerhouse performance was such a pool and in its chaos and anarchy the individuals present (dancers musicians participants audience) had the opportunity to engage in the unrestricted process of creative making and creative perceiving. The performance was a place where our usual responses as dancers, musicians, participants and audience members were being challenged. The performance did not provide a safe place where dancers performed pre-approved steps, musicians played over edited sound, participants were told what to do and audience members expected to passively accept what was on offer. The performance was not traditional in the sense that it did not seek to imitate what has gone before and it did not seek to follow formulas often used to please an audience in the ordinary way. So as artists and critics how do we think about and describe the powerhouse performance?

For me in this performance the bones of something new in dance were beginning to form, something raw, beautifully unrefined, questioning, brave and exciting. Where the often restrictive concepts of what it is to be professional and traditional were purposely put aside to create the freedom for artists with and without disabilities to truly explore the nature of performance.

I came away feeling that the world of dance cannot hope to include the authentic artistic work of people with disabilities if it rejects and disallows the very beginnings of it.

**Julie Hood, Dance Artist, Nottingham**

**Claire Simpson:** I want to voice my alarm at the proposed cut from the Arts Council to Salamanda Tandem's core funding.

As a freelance artist, based in the East Midlands and working throughout the region and the UK, I have always had the deepest respect for the work of Salamanda Tandem and seen the company as truly innovative, diverse and exploratory. I feel your work is a rare example of supportive, pioneering and searching examination into the nature of creative participation and expression.

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I have always been inspired by the work of Salamanda Tandem; I have worked with the company on several projects and in addition have followed your work over the years by attending performances, exhibitions and training events. I have always felt the company to be an exceptional and unique example of true collaboration on so many levels.

The company has many strengths and key to these is the ability to pull together a team to work in partnership on different initiatives. I can honestly say that the projects I've worked on with the company have all had such depth of thought put into them, with deep-seated care and respect for all of the individuals involved - which is rare in participatory projects and rare in many collaborations. I work for many, many different organisations throughout the UK and Salamanda Tandem has always been unique - I would hold the company up as an example - nationally and internationally - of true, caring, innovative collaboration.

If creative exploration is to thrive then this has to come through work that is undertaken with real integrity and with a bedrock of genuine care, trust and respect. It is vital that freelance artists have a network for support, critical discourse, debate and the opportunity for true collaboration. Working as a freelance artist can be incredibly isolating and lonely at times - and the work of Salamanda Tandem provides a rare opportunity for genuine reflection and debate - and thereby genuine support, exploration and experimentation.

You've always reached out to people who often have little or no voice in society and this has always been done with respect and a genuine exchange of creative dialogue. I know you hold a steadfast belief in the potential within all people for creative investigation - and you reach out to people who find themselves placed in a context which often gives them no voice or means of exploring their creativity. You've always had genuine respect and care for the people you work with and you have provided a rare context for creative collaboration to flourish. You pay attention to detail and you listen. As a result the nature of creative participation in your projects is original, dynamic, groundbreaking, inspirational and asks questions which few others ask.

The company has always advocated for artistic expression and voice in a way that very few other companies do. Through years of developing work with others you have given a space and framework for artistic exploration which is of the highest quality - and you continue to strive for and to advocate for this. Your knowledge and experience has enabled advocacy for the highest standards in participatory arts projects - in terms of the very nature of participation, of the context, parameters and content of those projects. This in turn enables advocacy for the people involved in those projects - which includes freelance artists, care professionals and children and adults of all abilities.

I've worked on participatory arts projects for over 15 years throughout the UK and abroad and I've worked with many different organisations and seen many different approaches to "collaboration". To find genuine participation and collaboration is rare - and further, to find projects and organisations which seek to ask searching questions about the nature of participation and collaboration is even rarer. Yet it is by asking these questions and giving time and space to explore this that artistic expression can move forward and flourish.

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People have debated the nature of creativity and artistic expression for centuries and it will always be an on-going debate. Sometimes the most innovative artistic questions and experimentation can happen in very subtle ways and can go unnoticed if there are not others around who care and who really take time to observe, to listen (not just in the physical sense but in the metaphorical sense) and to engage. The ability to listen and to notice has always been at the heart of all aspects of Salamanda Tandems work - and by listening you have then been able to give voice to individuals and to groups, and to thereby make this creativity visible. Furthermore this is done with such care, respect and such attention to aesthetics that this artistic expression is put into a context that frames it with beauty, dignity, sophistication, complexity and integrity.

I've recently returned from a weeks intensive international course with the Reggio Emilia pre-schools in Italy - a place where artistic collaboration and the willingness to ask questions and to explore shines through. The course was incredibly in depth and probing - and whilst there I reflected on collaborations in the UK and discussed with other freelance artists the nature of collaboration and where were sources for debate, discourse, reflection and support in the UK. I firmly believe that Salamanda Tandem has provided for years an amazing source of support for freelance artists and a rare chance in the UK to really debate the nature of participation and collaboration. The depth of this - and the context - is vital if we are all to develop, to grow and thereby to move forward in our work. We need to have the opportunity to ask questions of ourselves in a supportive environment - nothing will move forward if we always stick with what is comfortable and with what we feel we know and feel secure with.

I believe that to lose the work of Salamanda Tandem would be a devastating blow to the East Midlands and to the UK - and would demonstrate a lack of forward thinking and a lack of understanding of the real nature of creative exploration. The company is unique in its work and for years has been a crucial and pivotal element of the arts scene in the East Midlands and nationally.

If Salamanda Tandem were lost as a company then I believe the arts world in the East Midlands and the UK would be seriously diminished and impoverished. The arts world is richer, much more innovative and diverse and the nature of creative participation is deeper through the work of Salamanda Tandem; cutting your core funding would, I believe, be a serious mistake.

"Creativity is not just the quality of thinking of each individual but is also an interactive, relational and social project. It requires a context that allows it to exist, to be expressed, to become visible." (Carlina Rinaldi, from In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia) Salamanda Tandem has proved over the last 18 years to be a company that understands this and therefore has always sought to genuinely provide a context for creativity to flourish.

**Claire Simpson, Visual Artist, Nottingham**

**Mickel Smithen:** It is at times like this when those whose work reaches out to people beyond a mainstream audience gets forgotten about and pushed a side. Salamanda-Tandem 18 years of creative, empowering and inspirational dance, art and music works goes onto change the lives of those with visual impairments and



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a wide range of learning disabilities, in ways that have not been approached before.

I have been working with Salamanda-Tandem for two years now as a dancer and community dance practitioner. I started working with Salamanda-Tandem at Bretton Hall on their Site dances project which was in collaboration with Indigo dance from Derby Dance Centre when we first started working together the two indigo members would always need assistance getting to and from Derby to Nottingham within a few months these two dancers were travelling independently.

This was a life changing experience for them both and now they can confidently as independent artists this has also meant that they now can perform confidently in public spaces. Site dances have brought communities together such as the project that took place at the newly built Hadley Community centre. Now everyone in the new complex communicates more effectively breaking down the barriers between mainstream and specialist schools.

Salamanda-Tandem dance, art and music company does not exclude anyone from taking part in any of their projects regardless of your shape, form, race or disability. Our work develops and gets stronger, providing supportive and creative, improvisational and technical dance training for a variety of artists and communities.

The Midlands does not have another company like this one offering training and performance opportunities to disabled artists from all over the UK. It is very important Salamanda-Tandem's diverse integrated work continues to receive funding so that they can go on to breaking conventions, building the confidence of others and inspiring artists nationally and internationally. Restless integrated dance company in Australia have recently been talking to dancers of Salamanda-Tandem about a dance exchange which is an amazing opportunity for the company without funding this is not possible.

I really hope you reconsider and continue to fund one of England's most Life changing Dance, Art and Music Company's.

**Mickel Smithen, Dance Artist, London**

**Duncan Chapman:** It was with great shock and disappointment that I heard of the impending decision of the withdrawal of ACE funding from Nottingham Company Salamanda Tandem.

Shock because over the last 18 years the company has managed to (almost uniquely in the UK) to establish itself as one of the leading forces for innovative practice in the arts. At a time when artists and arts organisations from across the world are looking at the integration of artwork, artistic research and participatory methodologies that have evolved in the UK it seems bizarre for the very existence of the pioneer organisation for this work to be threatened in this way.

Disappointment, because I (as a practising artist working nationally and internationally) have always had a strong belief that there was some intelligent thinking behind the ways in which the Arts Council made its decisions and allocated funds. This decision, if it is to go ahead, is a complete betrayal of the stated

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principles of why the arts council was set up in the first place. To quote Keynes when the Arts Council was established in 1946

“By provision of concert halls, modern libraries, theatres and suitable centres we desire to assure our people full access to the great heritage of culture in this nation”.....

The heritage and culture of this nation partly resides in institutions BUT more significantly in the inspiring organisations and individuals who have expressed a distinctive cultural voice. Salamanda Tandem is a prime example of this.

No one who has been involved in the culture of the UK for the last 20 years could claim that funding decisions are easy to make or that there isn't a case for shifting the funding from one place to another. However, this recent decision flies in the face of logic and the need to support artistic excellence, participation and innovation. I work for many arts organisations in the UK and Europe including the BBC, South bank Centre, Sonic Arts Network, Albert Hall, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, London Symphony Orchestra, CBSO, Philharmonia, Aldeburgh Festival, Glyndebourne Opera to name a few

Who else apart from Salamanda Tandem is.....

- Creating projects where individual artists are able to develop their own practice alongside developing the core principles of the company
- Encouraging the initial artistic research that will lead to the outstanding arts work of the future ?
- Making it possible for me as an individual to feel a long standing relationship with a body of work and group of artists who I know are the best in the world at what they do ?
- Working to create innovative and inspiring projects that challenge the false dichotomy of “artistic excellence” and “participation” ?

The work of all of the companies listed above will be greatly diminished by the loss of Salamanda Tandem. As will the cultural life of the region , country and the wider world.

Once something this precious is lost it can never be found again

And I urge you to seriously reconsider this decision

**Duncan Chapman, Composer / Sound Artist / Educator, Lincoln**

**Stephen Jon:** I am sure you are all in a state of Shock, I am. Please know that my support is whole heartedly with you. I shall do whatever I can do to support the work of Salamanda Tandem.

**Stephen Jon – Artist/Mask Maker, Nottingham**

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**Dave Sturt:** The company does fabulous, inspiring work and contribute massively to the cultural climate of the region. I do not agree with the decision to cut this funding and would urge the Arts Council to reconsider its proposed decision.

**Dave Sturt, Lecturer, Musician, Program Leader, HND in Music Performance, Castle College, Nottingham.**

**Andy Eathorne:** I had the privilege of working with ST through another artist Rosalind Stoddart. This was my first time working in a collaboration with professional artists of which I will always be grateful to them for. We gelled together really well and now work with them regularly on projects doing the technician side of things.

I have gained a lot of experience from this partnership which I can now apply in my work with other artists.

It has also given me experience in working with people with disabilities. To see peoples faces enjoying and participating in the sensory installations is one of the best things about working with ST.

The loss of this work through potential funding cuts would be devastating to me and many other artists that work in the team.

But more so for the people this work gets through too, letting them forget their disabilities and bringing out their creativity. The loss of that would be even more tragic.

**Andy Eathorne, Technician and mixed media artist, Corby**

**Chris Leeds:** I have experienced Salamanda Tandem's work in the field of access to the arts for people with a range of abilities - work which is desperately needed.

Having recently attended an RCM conference on disability and music where Sue Williams was promoting the Arts Council's own new emphasis on inclusion and disability, I cannot agree that the decision to cut this funding is reasonable, and would urge them to reconsider the decision.

**Chris Leeds, Music Leader, South East Community Music**

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**Mark Rowland:** As I have been a part of Salamanda Tandem organisation many years ago when I worked with them on music for one of their production. I had great pleasure and enjoyment working with them and they all seemed to be aware of their goal of their organisation and caring for the clients that they are involved with them.

Therefore, I believe that Salamanda Tandem has a vital contribution to make to the cultural climate of this region and beyond. I do not agree with the decision to cut this funding and would urge the Arts Council to reconsider its proposed decision.

**Mark Roland, Musician, London**

**Wendy Lawson:** I am horrified and saddened to hear you might be closing down due to lack of funding support. Having worked with you and seen first hand the connection you make to the individuals you 'minister' to I am very aware of the importance of your work.

There is no other agency like yours that does the work you do.

Please, if there is any way that I can help to make sure that the organisation can stay open, I will do my utter most to ensure it does.

**Wendy Lawson, Poet/Author, Melbourne, Australia**

**Kelly Holmes:** I think and feel very highly and passionately about Salamanda Tandem and admire all that you do. I am an art teacher in secondary education but previously studied a degree in dance at university and this is how I came to meet Isabel Jones. Isabel was an inspiration to me and I certainly use the values of art to touch the lives of children and adults with or without a disability. Salamanda Tandem is a much needed and respected organisation and it would be an absolute tragedy if it were to be taken from the lives of so many individuals that will or have already benefited from their incredible work. Please reconsider...

I believe that Salamanda Tandem has a vital contribution to make to the cultural climate of this region and beyond. I do not agree with the decision to cut this funding and would urge the Arts Council to reconsider its proposed decision.

**Kelly Holmes, Art Teacher, Winchester**

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**Joe Webster :** To all the team at Salamanda Tandem, I have had the privilege of working on past projects with your company and watching others whilst they were touring and I just want to say that I fully value the really important work that your company does and recommend that the Arts Council re-consider this recent decision. I have worked in this field for 10 years now and I know of no other company nationally which does such valuable and inspiring work throughout the community. I sincerely hope that the Arts council reconsiders their decision.

**Joe Webster, Art Teacher, ST James School, Exeter**

**Alexandra Dutton:** What a loss this would be, to take away the chance for many disabled children and adults to work on developing arts projects,

What a difference this can make to many lives, giving people confidence and expression, people of all abilities.

Therefore, I believe that Salamanda Tandem has a vital contribution to make to the cultural climate of this region and beyond. I do not agree with the decision to cut this funding and would urge the Arts Council to reconsider its proposed decision.

**Alexandra Dutton, Personnel & Training Development**

**Dinah Murray:** I was deeply shocked to hear that Salamanda Tandem is threatened with having its funding slashed. This organisation has done extraordinarily good inclusive and inspiring work over the last few years. So many people's lives have benefited from it, it is barely credible that the Arts Council would be so short-sighted as to destroy such a precious and irreplaceable resource!

**Dinah Murray PhD, Owner Posautive Youtube Group, tutor Birmingham University Autism courses, London**

**Janette Dillon:** I believe that Salamanda Tandem has a vital contribution to make to the cultural climate of this region and beyond. Their work is committed to furthering opportunities for the disabled and they have been pioneers in this field well in advance of government initiatives aimed at widening equal opportunities. I do not agree with the decision to cut this funding and would urge the Arts Council to reconsider its proposed decision.

**Janette Dillon, Professor of Drama, University of Nottingham**

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**Morrigan Mullen:** I just wanted to add my support to your objection against the Arts Council's decision to cut your funding. Although I do not know your work directly I know of you by your reputation (studying an MA in Applied Theatre) for delivering innovative work. Surely the Arts Council should also strive to represent best practice as a funder, to work with you to help you find the resources to sustain your work rather than abruptly withdrawing all core funding and causing an immediate loss to all those people you work with, undermining all the funding they have invested in you until now. I hope your appeal is a success.

**Morrigan Mullen, MA student, Central School of Speech and Drama, London**

**Jeff Higley:** In my view the work done by Salamanda-Tandem is of great worth, both in practical, hands-on contact with a wide range of people and in setting such work and the venues it takes place in within a critical context. We have recently published an article by Isabel Jones in our on-line Journal and are very much looking forward to the second stage.

I think it is unusual for a company to combine strong visual and physical disciplines with a facility for broader social and intellectual analysis. To remove the core funding and thus jeopardise the future of the work would be to devalue both the artists and the responses of the many participants in their projects. I urge that the funding continue.

**Jeff Higley, Editor, Landscape and Arts Network Journal, London**

**Anne Rowland:** My daughter had the opportunity of working with Salamanda Tandem when she was about 6 years old. She performed a dance piece with them at Southwell Minster, as part of a mixed group of performers, including the sighted and unsighted, hearing and non hearing, professional and non professional dancers of all ages.

We are not a family of dancers or performers, but I have tried to give my children the opportunity of being involved in a number of arts based projects. I have found that through this kind of activity they have had immense amounts of fun, met people and worked with people outside of their normal community and increased their levels of confidence. Working with Salamanda Tandem, my daughter was able to see for herself how non-sighted and non-hearing people can contribute and enjoy from dance and music just as well as those who can see and hear. It gave her an insight into a truly inclusive society.

It is just this kind of activity which I believe forms the character and aids the growth of a young person. In a climate where our government feels the need to teach 'citizenship' in schools, surely the work of groups like Salamanda should be recognised and supported? For the funding to be removed after so many years, seems counter productive. The experience and reputation of Salamanda could not be replicated over night by a new company and to simply pull the plug on them at such short notice would surely jeopardise their future, not to mention damage commitments they may already have made.

**Anne Rowland, Art shop manager, Nottingham Trent University**

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**John Bryden:**

Dear Isabel,

That sounds like terrible news. It seems such a shame that the Arts Council seems to be obsessed only with "aesthetic excellence" rather than developing the role art can play in society. After meeting Salamanda Tandem in connection with the spidercrab project, I found a great respect for the work you do. It is important that work which explores the role of art in the community, and develops art at the grassroots level, should continue. I wish you the best of luck in your campaign and search for funding.

**John Bryden - Computer Science Researcher Leeds University**

**Tony Baker:** When you voiced your anxieties about ACE's apparent misunderstanding of your work at our French concert, I suppose in some ways I wasn't surprised. While I've always known you as the most dedicated and scrupulous professional, I've always known too that your methods – or I should maybe call them your 'politics', as in this context I see the two as integral – were necessarily open to misunderstanding. And I mean 'necessarily'. If the politics are to have meaning, I think the risk is necessary to what you're doing, and have been doing for more than 20 years. But that can't make misunderstandings any easier to deal with.

Back in – when was it, 2003 ? – We did a week's work in Tamworth with a group of young people with Down 's syndrome. I think there were five days of workshops, using all sorts of techniques and materials – we did dance, music, made diapos... the floor sculptures using those sticks I remember particularly vividly. On the Friday afternoon we made a performance exploiting all these different elements, a sort of Cage-like happening though I know we planned pretty carefully how to prepare the space (including how to exclude, indeed vanish the proscenium arch in the hall!), and pace the event. At one point in the performance a lass of about 16 got up and danced in the light of a diapo she'd made to music that I made with another of the participants. She was typically heavy, her movements wonderfully and effortlessly ungraceful in the classical sense. It was all profoundly natural. The sort of thing actually that Régine Chopinot, whose words I've been translating recently and who's something of an enfant terrible in French dance, works hours to get from the best contemporary dancers in this country. After our performance, which was attended by, I think, 2 people other than those directly concerned with the workshops, I was talking with someone, a parent or a social assistant of some kind, and I forget now which, and this person was both bewildered and delighted. Never before had anyone known this girl to want to dance before - movement is an issue for Down 's syndrome people after all. And on this occasion the girl seemed to enter the space and dance utterly without misgivings, like she'd always been doing it.

Now I do, currently, around 50 gigs of one sort or another a year, and am lucky enough to work with a number of terrifically good musicians and artists, but I don't think any performance I've ever done has been better than that in Tamworth. Of course, every gig's different and none really comparable, but the point is that I'd have been glad to present that Tamworth performance to any public in any place for I know by any appropriate standards it was good. I'll bet Régine, who's just finished an enthusiastically reviewed show at the Beaubourg in Paris, would have been inspired and figuring there and then how to use what she'd seen.

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But this is the difficulty and why I say you're open to necessary misunderstanding. When I say that gig was good I mean it as a professional musician who struggles with his art, practices it day in day out in the hope of making something as meaningful as I can from whatever skills I have—in the hope of communicating, involving, stirring... moving anyone listening, whether it's two people or a thousand. I believe none of the very few who were there on that Friday in Tamworth weren't moved, but here is where the misunderstandings arise. Had there been anyone from the press, or a representative from any body supporting the project, I'm confident the responses would have been enthusiastic; I'm sure they'd have said how extraordinary it was to see such creativity from such a person, indeed such a group. Which would have been totally true. But it would have been only half the story. My approach is aesthetic – Down 's syndrome or no, it was a moving performance on aesthetic grounds. I suspect for anyone from outside it would have been moving because the dancer happened to have Down 's syndrome. And in that distinction – between the aesthetic concerns of the artist inside the work and the often socially-orientated concerns of those who come from outside – is built the whole arena of your methods which I called 'political'.

These are subtle distinctions. If we could have magicked that performance to the South Bank in a suitably arranged space and had an innocent public to watch, it would more likely have been seen on the right terms; the environment would have invited the public to respond aesthetically. A hall in Tamworth that will be used for badminton later in the day is bound to invite different responses even though for me, as an artist, there is absolutely no difference in my motivations and commitments. We all see what our preconceptions encourage us to see. And our politics are inextricable from our preconceptions – politics are after all in the literal sense about 'people'. If I have a prior concern that says I'm committed to working in the arts with people of limited capacity or opportunity because that is a means to the end of dismantling a little those limits – god knows a worthy aim, surely – then that's how my work will tend to be understood. Your misfortune (though I really think it's your fortune: certainly it's what makes you unique, even if it's problematic) is to be an artist whose politics are framed by art and not primarily by your art's social consequences, however vital they may be. Yet it seems your work is often understood as if the social consequences were the purpose.

Probably this doesn't matter when it concerns your own creations with professional artists – Triptych, Corrosion and on down the list over the years. These are so clearly within the domain of art pure and simple because the technical capacities of those you work with are so high, that the work, at least at that level, isn't misunderstood. No one would think to say of Corrosion that it's remarkable because dancer X is actually a mother of 4 children, two of whom don't sleep at night and whose partner's away on a 6-month contract in Bahrain, or dancer Y is currently going through a crisis of religious faith and a divorce &c., because their technique – their artistry – makes such things irrelevant. But to say of the Tamworth performance that it's remarkable because the girl had Down 's syndrome is, to me as an artist, a response of this order. She obviously had no technique to overcome the expectations of her. Corrosion is judged as dance, the Tamworth work is judged as exemplary work in a field closer to therapy. And yet, if we only knew how to apply appropriate standards I think – no, I know – that no such distinctions would be made. A good performance is a good performance (and vice versa). To be measured in terms of what it says that's not already been said, how far it moves those who witness it.



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What's really difficult for a public is to have an appropriate measure for what you do through Salamanda Tandem. The range of the company's work is so great that there can be no uniform standard by which to understand its quality. If one has certain expectations appropriate to one aspect of the work and not another and yet applies them throughout, one will misunderstand what one sees. It would like getting a plumber to repair a leaking tap and then complaining that he hasn't stopped water coming in through the roof. It's here that the issue is political, for ST's performances (and I'd regard workshops as a kind of performance) begin with the potential of those participating. It's a human choice. It's not a choreography that says "I intend to do this", who/what can I use to realise that end? The work begins with the who/what and its intention is to discover what is latent there already. In that respect Corrosion and Tamworth are all of an aesthetic piece. A sculptor or a potter does this all the time – drawing out that which is latent in a piece of wood or a lump of clay. In performance work one is confronted often by the expectation of a certain prior accomplishment that will allow you to express something but which, if lacking, means the performance doesn't work (he didn't play in tune, she didn't move in time &c); and this is simply not always your aesthetic. Your political choice is to start with what is humanly possible in any given context and create with that. You don't explain this – you have positively not to try – because you won't trespass on the human potential by defining your meanings in advance. I see this as necessary to your stance, but it's also why I said I thought you were 'necessarily open to misunderstanding'. The lass in Tamworth was plainly not a dancer. How then does an innocent public recognise her dance? My answer is that she isn't a dancer because that is not her life. But for 3 minutes in a stunningly vivid way she was permitted to become a dancer on terms that were hers and which the occasion transformed on to an aesthetic plane which couldn't be mistaken if one knew how to look. That she ceased to be a dancer the moment she ceased to move (as your collaborators in professional work do not, because it is their life and work) says nothing about the quality of what actually happened.

I think in the end an artist can only be a witness; anything else devolves sooner or later into propaganda. Post facto art becomes evidence, but that isn't actually the work itself. If what I've written here looks like an attempt to summon evidence, well, maybe it is, but primarily it's a witness to what I know of you as an artist. I hope it's of some use to you. I hope it's of some use to you to know that there are witnesses here in France who, knowing you exclusively as a performing artist and having no other preconceptions, recognised instinctively the direction of your work. After our concert in June – you spoke with her too – one woman was particularly moved by the final dance and wanted to say so. She had never seen that sort of vocabulary of movement exploited in that sort of way. She recognised a skilled artist not least because she recognised elements of the material the dance transformed. But then she would – she had a preparation few have: her day work, she explained, was the administration of a centre for people with disabilities.

**Tony Baker , Poet and Musician, France**

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**Ray Kohn:**  
QUESCO BRASIL

Dear Rt Hon James Purnell (Secretary of State for Culture, media and Sport)

The UK is fortunate in having Salamanda Tandem, a world leader in its field. From its tiny capital base, it has managed to provide training for 45,000 students and hundreds of performance artists. As its core services are to people with severe disabilities, this has attracted many product-critical business organisations that have been impressed by Salamanda Tandem's ability to continuously innovate for over two decades. Its business plan, focussed on innovation as the crucial process, has been to diversify from its in-depth experience in its own field to take new products and services into the corporate and international markets.

The Metric Matrix™ was evaluated within the UK by EDS. As a result EDS has included it as part of its offering to be contracted in. Salamanda Tandem, as part of its increasingly sophisticated business plan, has also seen the export market as a potential for these new products. Using the excellent Passport to Export scheme, the company has gained valuable support from the former DTI. I am currently in Brazil with my company seeking inroads into the growing corporate market here for the Metric Matrix. My company's support for Salamanda Tandem will extend to my agreement to remain here for some months.

The reason why I am writing to both of you is that I have just learnt that the core grant provided to Salamanda Tandem is planned to be cut out in two months time. Whilst understanding the budgetary restrictions placed upon the Arts Council, this decision if implemented would effectively cut Salamanda Tandem's international and corporate marketing efforts off at the knees. I cannot see how this makes sense to UK plc.

When I was a senior government officer, a case like this would probably have been recommended for tapered funding. Giving two months notice of a 100% cut in core funding for a highly successful organisation whose core market is people with severe disabilities would seem counter productive, both politically and in economic terms. Leaving this type of work purely to market forces to determine is an exceptionally inefficient way to judge effectiveness. The hundreds of letters of support for the charitable company would reinforce that message. However, recognising the severe budget restrictions placed on the Arts Council currently, perhaps the best alternative would be to serve notice on Salamanda Tandem that your two departments recognise the importance of the innovatory way that the company is diversifying and inform them that they have only one more year's funding (I understand that this only amounts to £50K). In that time, they should be able to establish themselves into these new markets. Without further core funding, their core staff without personal income would be forced to scatter leaving the company without the people who are driving the new initiatives.

As this is neither a party political issue, nor an issue for one department, I am asking my letter to be sent to those Members who have previously expressed an interest in this area.

Yours sincerely

Ray Kohn  
Director: Quesco Ltd

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Copies to:  
Ed Balls  
David Blunkett  
Gordon Brown  
David Cameron  
Kenneth Clarke

**Ray Kohn, Business Development consultant, Brazil**

**Eric Onillon:**

"Ce qui m' a tout de suite frappé, dès notre première rencontre, c'est la justesse de son propos artistique dans la création spontanée qu' est l' improvisation musicale. L' interaction, la perception de la durée, le sens des timbres et des contrastes, une connaissance évidente de l' environnement artistique contemporain sont autant d' éléments que j' ai apprécié avec Isabel et ont fait de ces rencontres une expérience riche et rare."

**Eric Onillon, Musician, France**

**Esther Robinson**

I believe that Salamanda Tandem has a vital contribution to make to the cultural climate of this region and beyond. I have worked with Directors Isabel Jones and Lisa Craddock on how to promote their services, reach new customers and secure future business. I have been very impressed by their passionate commitment and love for what they do, and believe they have helped hundreds of disabled people experience the exciting world of the arts. The kind of commitment and drive I have seen from the Salamanda Tandem team is rare, and I do not agree with the decision to cut this funding, and would urge the Arts Council to reconsider its proposed decision.

**Signed: Esther Robinson**

**Public Relations Consultant, Organisation: Esther Robinson Public Relations, London**

**Judith Robinson**

Dear Isabel,

Claire Simpson has sent me information about the news that East Midlands ACE are intending to cut Salamanda Tandem's funding, so I am writing with a message of support.

I have been aware of the work of Salamanda Tandem and Isabel Jones since the late 80's, when the organisation I was working with (Drake Music Project) collaborated with them. Salamanda Tandem produced work of extraordinary beauty and integrity, drawing out the talents and abilities of a diverse group of dancers and musicians, the majority of whom had disabilities. One of the strengths of the piece was not being able to tell which performers were disabled. The organisation has gone on to continually produce work of artistic and social value, often giving those with little opportunity to express themselves and achieve their potential the space

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and tools with which to do so. Salamanda Tandem has also consistently worked to disseminate good practice and encourage others to work in similar ways.

I would like to urge those with the responsibility of helping the arts flourish and be accessible for all in the East Midlands and across the UK to ensure that Salamanda Tandem continues to receive their ACE funding. To cut their funding is a blow to the whole community.

Best wishes,  
Judith

**Judith Robinson**  
**Freelance arts education consultant, Cambridge**

**E.Tamburini**

*Association pour la Promotion de la Danse Contemporaine*

*14-16 Rue des Pigeons*

*Angers*

*41000*

12.01.08

Monsieur

It is with anxiety that we have learnt of the menace of the financial support for the work of the Salamanda Tandem in its several domains. I write to ask that you have other thoughts about the meanings in consequence that could occur if the Salamanda Tandem can no longer function as it has so effectively for such a time. I know only in person of the work of Isabel Jones from the performances she has given in the Maine et Loire. These have been remarked by professionals of the contemporary dance in France as distinctive and original both, for their vocabulary and openness to large influences.

But in talking I have learnt also how Isabel Jones is a major contributor to the development of arts practice with people with handicaps. I have not been fortunate to see this practice in action but I understand the social and moral benefices some practice such like this is can carry and do not think lightly that it can be lost. I would hope deeply that you will make another decision about your funds.

Yours sincerely

**E.Tamburini** *Directrice de l'APDC, France*

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**Susan Daniels**

The School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds, has been proud to have been associated with Salamanda Tandem since 2003, soon after they were recognised by the British Council as specialists in the Performing Arts (Arts and Culture for development initiative). It has been a stimulating and significant journey for all parties which it is now suggested by the Arts Council must stop. For whose benefit? On what arguments related to excellence?

This collaboration has centred on the Arts Work for People programme, and the National Teaching Fellowship awarded to Professor Mick Wallis to develop this project. This programme aims to develop recognised awards for professional training for artists and care professionals working with people with restricted access to experience and produce arts works. Not only are Salamanda Tandem bringing real art experiences of the highest standard to those to whom it is seldom available, but through their educational philosophy and training they are working to ensure that this work becomes embedded in the practise and policies of all organisations and individuals concerned. Arts participation with major artists becomes recognised as a right not a privilege. Pilot work has been undertaken and publicly shared at Bretton Hall in 2006 and in the University Of Leeds Parkinson Court in 2007 to acclaim from all - - performers, facilitators, audience, educational professionals and a wide range of academics.

Now, as final stages are being planned, the proposal of the Arts Council to remove funding will bring this unique project, like so many others in which Salamanda are engaged, to an untimely end. There will be damage to all those currently involved. Such a waste of previous investment and future potential is irrational, and so, on behalf of the past and future beneficiaries, we ask the Council to reconsider its decision.

**Susan Daniels**

**Head of the School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds**