

CHISENHALE
DANCE
SPACE

**ARTIST
COMMUNITY**

MINIATION

Join us!



...Where artists
have the autonomy to
make things happen,
together.

CONTENTS

**A Letter from
The Community** P.04

**About The CDS
Artist Community** P.06

WHAT IS IT? P.07

OUR VALUES P.08

WHO CAN JOIN? P.09

Getting into The Details P.13

ARTIST COMMUNITY BENEFITS P.14

PUBLIC PROGRAMMES P.15

TAKE PART IN ONE OF TWO WAYS P.17

WHO ARE ACTIVATORS? P.18—19

NOTES ON LANGUAGE & ACCESS P.20—21

How You Get Involved P.23

HOW DO I APPLY? P.24

CONTACT US P.27

HEY YOU, ARTIST!

Looking for an artistic home? We hope you'll join us...

To us, community means more than the occasional meet-up at pricey shows. It's about having someone to mess around in the studio with, a space to gather & share ideas, and collective resources to draw from.

It's 2026 and we're still pissed off... and tired. Funding keeps shrinking, performance opportunities are rarer, and we're forced to compete for fewer seats at the table. But we believe in lifting each other up, creating our own opportunities, and holding onto a DIY spirit that keeps art alive—despite it all.

Over the past three years, we've been gathering, testing, and reimagining what peer-to-peer

support can look like. We've launched artist-led events like WTF Thursdays and Class Lab and created new ways of working. Performance nights are back too—'Scratch Renaissance' and 'DIY Nights' are breathing energy back into the grassroots scene. But this is just the beginning—and we need more artists to join us.

We are building a community that centres artists who are racialised, disabled, surviving precarity, left behind after uni, never went to uni, older, or working at the margins. This isn't a diversity box-tick, it's a movement for collectivity, autonomy, and real change in the dance and performance world. We're looking for artists to help us bring this vision to life.

Join us—we need you!

Love,
The CDS
Artist
Community



**Scratch Renaissance:
Mind the Gap
Image: Ross Kernahan**

**Marrianne Tuckman & Mairead Rutter O'Connor:
Where Greengrocers Sleep**

ABOUT THE GDS ARTIST COMMUNITY...

About the community

[The CDS Artist Community](#) is made up of independent artists and arts workers, and together we form the artistic leadership of Chisenhale Dance Space. We are performers, choreographers, teachers, curators, producers, facilitators and peers. We explore our artistic practices together at CDS, support and learn from each other, and activate CDS through creative interventions. We guide the organisation's direction, and understand CDS as a hub and a model to advocate for change we want to see in the sector.

About Chisenhale Dance Space

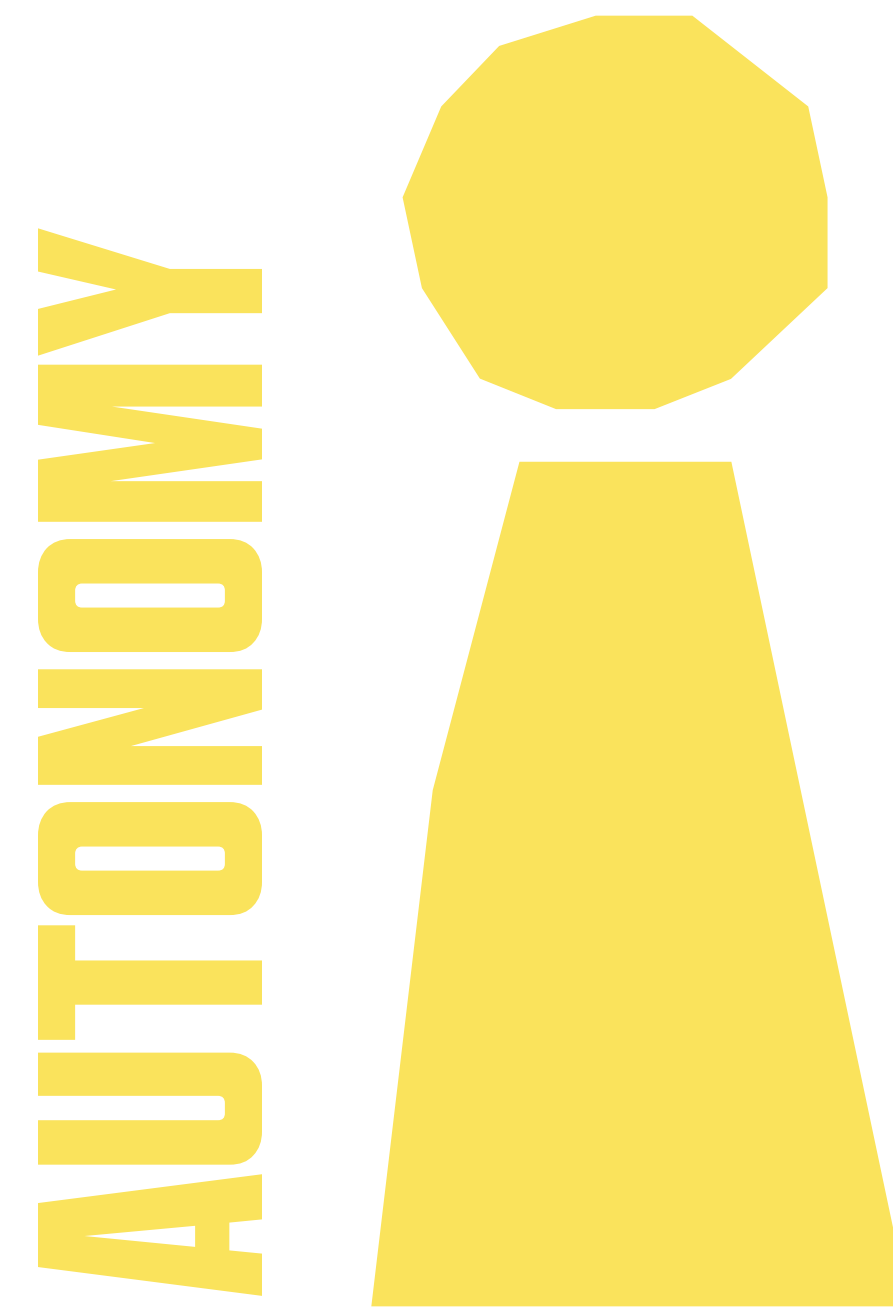
[Chisenhale Dance Space](#) is a grassroots artist-led organisation based in Bow, East London for 40+ years. We are a charity committed to four strands of work: community building, artist support, access to affordable space, and positive changemaking in the dance and performance sector. We are led by a staff team, board of trustees, and a paid committee of freelance artists, who you can learn more about on our website. We prioritise the needs of those who have been historically marginalised, including artists of Global Majority heritage and disabled/neurodivergent artists.

WHAT IS IT?

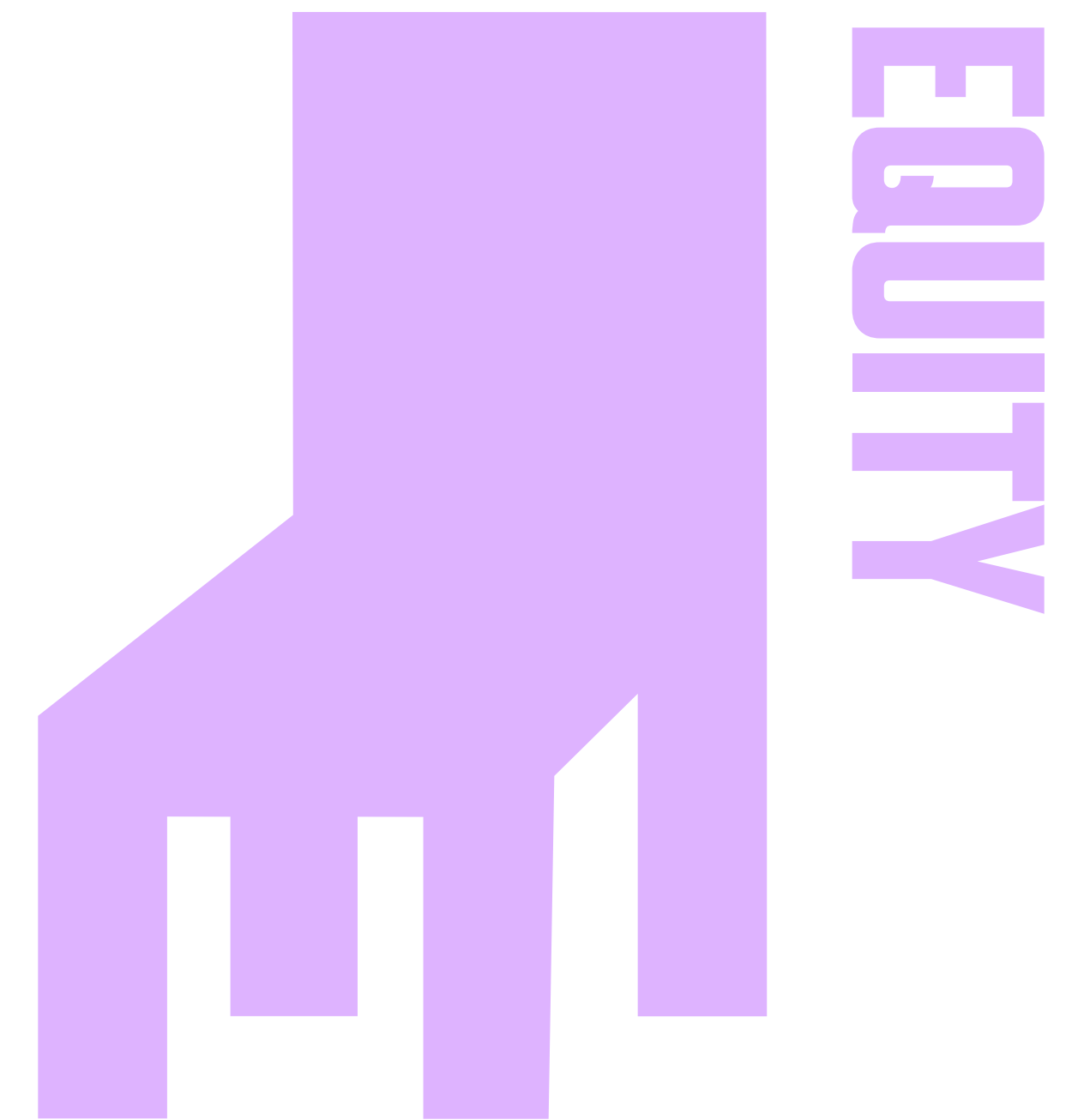
We know that artists' lives are becoming ever-more precarious, and competition over space and resources often feels impossible. This community is a creative home for artists who need one – a supportive environment to take risks and try things for the first time.



We resist the traditional model of 'artist development' – whereby people in offices build programmes for artists, rather than with them. We are a place where resources are shared as often as possible, and artists have autonomy to make things happen and lead our collective direction of travel.



We are artists united by a desire to make radical change in the sector and develop anti-ableist, antiracist, ethical and progressive practices. Our community is driven by an eagerness to decentralise power and redistribute it to those artists who have historically been excluded.



OUR VALUES

By being a part of our community, you benefit from access to support programmes, peer-to-peer learning, and space (more on [page 14](#)). For those who want to, you can also help shape the ways that CDS' resources can benefit you and your communities, and grow your leadership skills.

Artists working in dance, performance, live art, or any other related discipline. You may be a producer, curator, teacher, facilitator, writer or any other arts worker, as long as you resonate with our values.

- * No degree or formal training is needed, and you might not see yourself as a 'professional artist'
- * If you are studying a BA, we ask that you wait until you finish your studies to join
- * Artists who live or spend regular time in the UK.

We prioritise:

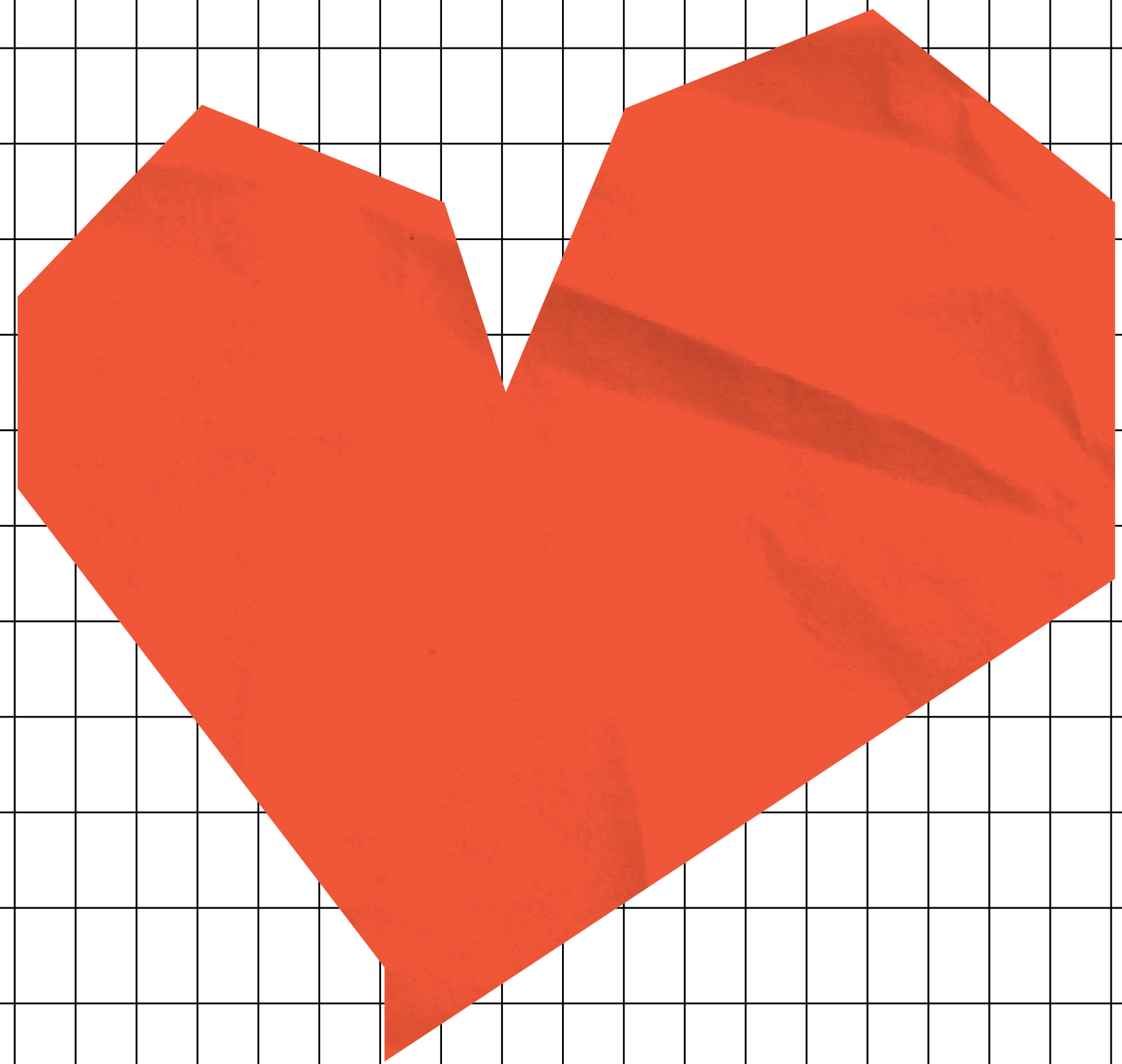
- * Artists who currently have less institutional support, including early career artists or older artists.
- * Those who have been historically under-represented in our community, including artists of Global Majority heritage, and disabled/neurodivergent artists.

WHO CAN JOIN?



**Scratch Renaissance:
Past Works Recycling Plant
Image: Ross Kernahan**

Munesu Mukombe: Seasons Change and Grief Transforms



Testimonials

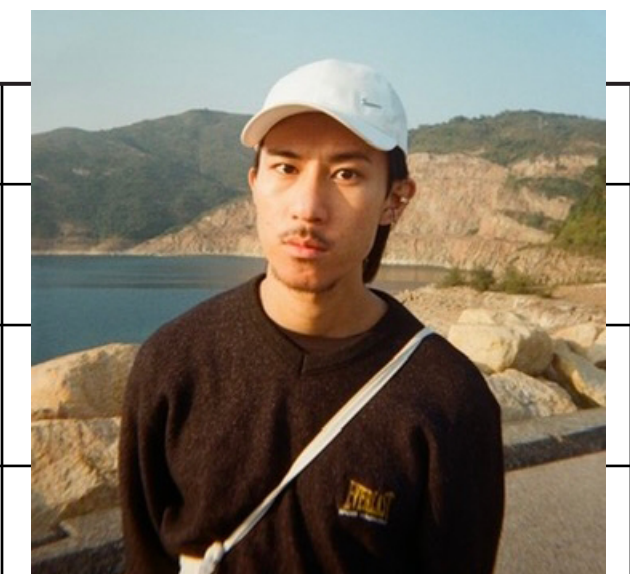


CDS is one of the highlights of my London life. It still feels like a place for possibilities because it hasn't been completely commercialized, it's got just the kind of rawness that allows things in. I don't feel like I'm just a dancer/artist using the space or attending events; engaging with CDS keeps me socially and politically engaged. A place like this is a rarity in London.

Dominique Savitri Bonarjee
Artist & Choreographer
Activator @ CDS

Being a part of CDS means seeing what the grassroots dance scene has to offer next. You are always on the edge of your seat, thrilled by everything that is happening in this historically radical space.

John Chan
Multidisciplinary storyteller
Collaborator @ CDS





The front of our building...

GETTING INTO THE DETAILS...

Community building

- * Learn from, network, and collaborate with your peers at free community gatherings
- * Stay in touch with other artists and shout about your work via our WhatsApp group
- * Stay up to date with our monthly community newsletter and Notion page

Artist Support

- * Apply for artist support opportunities, such as Class Lab & WTF Thursdays
- * Book 'Arts Counselling' advice sessions with CDS staff
- * Get support with marketing your work happening offsite
- * Join the Queen Mary University Library
- * Help shape support programmes at Community Gatherings

Advocacy & Changemaking

- * Apply to join our paid Artist Committee and develop your leadership skills
- * Access free training webinars & workshops, including antiracism & anti-ableism
- * Be part of a community of artists committed to making change in the sector

Affordable Space

- * Access our Community discount and book studio space for £15 or £25 per hour
- * Get free '48 hour' rehearsal space
- * Host your events & classes in our building and appear on our website
- * Free access to coworking space

Public Programmes

In addition to Artist Community specific programmes - CDS also runs a range of public programmes which you can help shape, curate and can benefit from. See current programmes over the page...

ARTIST COMMUNITY BENEFITS

WTF THURSDAYS



A regular, artist-hosted night where CDS hands over the keys to enable low-stakes, DIY events that spark community-building and creative exchange.

DIY NIGHTS



A self-starting, low-cost performance platform where artists can hire the space, keep 100% of their ticket sales, and take creative control to test new ideas on their own terms.

CLASS LAB



An initiative providing artists with subsidised studio time, mentoring, and marketing support to develop and deliver a class over four weeks in CDS' Performance Studio.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMES



**Scratch Renaissance:
THIS IS A THREAT!
at Piehouse Coop
Image: Ross Kernahan**

**Tamm Reynolds:
I Saw A Chair I Take A Seat I Sing A Song**

We're looking for artists to join the community as an Activator, or Collaborator.

COLLABORATORS

- * 200+ artists
- * Stay as long as you like
- * UK-wide

Collaborators make up the majority of our Artist Community. They are a supportive group of artists who feel an affinity with CDS and the grassroots performance sector. Collaborators connect with each other and feed in their ideas at four Full Community Gatherings every year (online and in person). If you are in a busy period or don't have much time to give - no sweat, this role is designed for you to engage as often or little as you want.

ACTIVATORS

- * 60+ artists
- * Selected every year
- * London or nearby

Activators are the nucleus of our Artist Community. This smaller group of artists form a core leadership group at CDS, and commit regular time to developing their practices as part of our community, in our building. They are made up of Global Majority Heritage and disabled/neurodivergent people. More about what being an Activator means over the page...

TAKE PART IN ONE OF TWO WAYS...

When we say
we're artist-led,
we mean it!

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES?

Activators make time to be creative with their peers, and are committed to making real change in their communities.

In addition to our Full Community Gatherings, Activators come together at four in-person **Activator Gatherings** per year. Here they share food, support each other's creative practices, and engage in collective decision making to shape CDS' programmes. For example, **Class Lab** and **Scratch Renaissance** were imagined and workshopped at these gatherings!



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Build connections and learn from like-minded peers in a supportive environment. The Activators group is entirely made up of artists who identify as Global Majority Heritage, and/or Disabled/ Neurodivergent.

Help shape and participate in bespoke artist support programmes—a recent example being **Creative and Heartfelt Tactics**, a workshop series for neurodivergent and disabled artists interested in developing art as activism.

Finally, Activators help co-curate **Making Sh*t Happen** weekend in Summer 2027! This is our annual public celebration of the community, with performances, workshops and more.

WHO ARE ACTIVATORS?

By being an Activator I was able to take part in Greenhouse, which helped me fund my first ever docu-fiction film that I co-directed and produced, about the emotional relevance of Bharatanayam to female Srilankan performers across time. Thank you so much for believing in my vision. Without this the film is unlikely to have been possible!

Sheyamali Sudesh
Artist & writer
Activator @ CDS



I have benefitted so much from conversations and reflections shared in our Activator Gatherings, and the generosity and openness of other members is heartening. I love the fact that I meet and work with Activators outside of CDS - it feels as though the work we do extends beyond the meeting space. As an older, recently-diagnosed Neurodivergent dance artist, being included rather than sidelined means a lot to me.

Mary Price O'Connor
Interdisciplinary artist
Activator @ CDS



I met Zoe through Activator gatherings, and we've since worked together on several applications for development of her work 'Wired' - which she first developed at Greenhouse. She will hopefully soon be a Supporting Director of 'Sensoria' as we merge into a C.I.C, and she has just also been a great friend!

Saskia Horton
Multidisciplinary artist
Activator @ CDS



HEAR FROM ACTIVATORS

COMMITTMENTS TO ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICES

CDS strives to cultivate an inclusive atmosphere, creating anti-oppressive, ethical, welcoming, and accountable settings where all artists can thrive.

We acknowledge that racism and ableism are significant barriers in the arts, and are therefore committed to prioritising specific resources for, and investing in the leadership of marginalised artists.

All staff, trustees, and artists in the CDS Artist Community are required to engage with anti-racism and anti-ableism training webinars created in partnership with Season Butler, and Disability Arts Online, as a condition of joining.

A note on language

It's impossible for language to account for the diversity of experiences by which people are racialised. For the purposes of this document we have chosen to use '**Black, Brown and Global Majority Heritage people**', and 'people who experience racism', but we also hold space for the use of many terms, including person of colour, BIPOC and beyond...

In this document we refer to '**Disabled and neurodivergent people**', to describe those who experience ableism. Within this we include anyone whose full participation in society is limited by barriers related to physical, mental, sensory, or cognitive differences, including those experiencing chronic illness, long term health conditions, and mental ill-health.

About our Building's Limitations

Our imperfect home for the past 40+ years has been on the second floor of a warehouse building, accessed by a staircase only. We regret that we cannot currently adequately support wheelchair users and those for whom stairs are a barrier. [More on building accessibility here.](#)

We are currently fighting for a redevelopment that would offer ground-level access on this site. [Learn more about our future plans here.](#)

We encourage artists who cannot access our second-floor space to join the community as a Collaborator. At least two full-community gatherings each year are accessible to all – blended online and in person. We also work to host events offsite wherever possible.

We are committed to removing other barriers to access, taking an approach that is responsive and to the needs of community artists. We commit to listening to what you need, rather than offering a one-size fits all approach.

We encourage disabled artists considering joining to get in touch to talk about your needs, email sonya@chisenhaledancespace.co.uk, or call **020 8981 6617**.

A note on
access

How we Support Disabled & Neurodivergent Artists

- * CDS staff actively make time to discuss your access needs.
- * All events have frequent breaks and consider different learning styles.
- * All video content is captioned.
- * Applications are as simple, flexible, and brief as possible.
- * Our bookable 'Work Room' is available as a quiet / prayer space.
- * We also share a bookable ground-level space with our neighbors. This can be accessed by the community for smaller gatherings.
- * Budgets include dedicated funds to contribute towards access costs.
- * We invest in leadership from disabled and neurodivergent artists through our paid [Artist Committee](#).

You can read more about our commitments to supporting disabled and neurodivergent artists [here](#).

Some of our Activators in the performance studio...



**HERE'S HOW YOU
GET INVOLVED...**

Applications to join the Artist Community will be open until **14th August**, and our welcome event will be **24th September**.

HOW DO I APPLY?

The application is simple, we only need to know a little about you and why you want to join.

* [Click here](#) to complete the online application form

* OR [Click here](#) if you would prefer to complete an audio / video application

If you need support completing your application, please email Sonya: sonya@chisenhaledancespace.co.uk or call 020 8981 6617.

HOW DO I LEARN MORE?

We will be running two free information sessions hosted by CDS staff and artists, to give you an opportunity to meet us and hear more about the community.

* Thurs 16th July, 1-2pm - Online, on Zoom

* Weds 22nd July, 6-7pm - Online, on Zoom

WHAT'S THE COST?

Regardless of whether you join as an Activator or Collaborator, there is a minimum donation of £36 per year, or £3 per month. This money is essential for us to secure funding for artist-led programmes, and we feel represents good value for what CDS offers. We offer a sliding scale based on your circumstances, please choose what feels right to you.

HOW DO I APPLY?



The audience gathers for a Scratch Renaissance performance

Photo: Ross Kernahan

The sense of community and inclusivity is really crucial. The artist community is an island of open creative possibilities amongst the often competitive, capitalistic and exclusive context that the London scene offers.



Marie Chabert
Choreographer & dancer
Collaborator @ CDS

CDS is a bastion of support for experimental dance artists across the UK. It has a tremendous history that nourishes and informs the work I can make. My time there immeasurably enriched my practice, and helped me find life-long artistic peers.



Paul Paschal
Artist & writer
Alumni @ CDS

Testimonials

CONTACT US:

On email: sonya@chisenhaledancespace.co.uk
On social media: @ChisenhaleDance
On the phone: 020 8981 6617

On our [website](#) (where you can find FAQ's)
Or sign up to our mailing list [here](#) to keep in the loop!



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