

Dance at the University of Chester

By Dina Robinson



Photo by Anya Draycott

Professional performance opportunities for students at University of Chester

As part of the dance course, University of Chester are always striving to give their students as many professional experiences as they can. Recently this has involved students showcasing a selection of work as part of events across Chester promoting themes around the city's rich history, protecting the environment, and peace through movement. Students performed at the Rowvember Heritage Festival, the Storyhouse Futures conference and the Purgatory Project exhibition at Chester Cathedral, marking an exciting start to the academic year.

Rowvember Heritage Festival

Professional Dance, Performing Arts, Acting and Drama students were delighted to be invited to take part in the Rowvember Heritage Festival and bring the history of the rows to life through an array of dance styles, poems and monologues. The annual festival curated by Heritage Chester celebrates the history of the rows and offers a fresh perspective on these extraordinary buildings.

Storyhouse Futures Conference

The Storyhouse Futures conference saw second year Dance students perform their piece 'Beyond Words', choreographed by Dance Lecturer, Nicole Wellings. The conference introduced cross-disciplinary ways of presenting ideas including talks, performances, films and activities, to look at people's influence on the world and how everyone can make a positive impact by adopting a more sustainable way of living.

Through dance and spoken word, the 'Beyond Words' piece explored how new forms of connection can emerge as we shape a sustainable future. It aimed to highlight how, through movement, pathways for listening, response and shared presence are unlocked, celebrating openness and togetherness while offering a hopeful vision of moving forward side-by-side.



Photo by Anya Draycott

Second year student Katie Dean said: "We have loved performing at Storyhouse as it provided us with an opportunity to dance in a new environment and explore different circumstances in performance and choreography."

Purgatory Project at Chester Cathedral

Students were back supporting city events with their role in the Purgatory Project in The Cloisters at Chester Cathedral, which highlighted a modern vision of purgatory in a contemporary society through various media. Purgatory was interpreted dramatically by the Italian poet Dante in the 14th century, and explores the seven deadly sins of pride, envy, wrath, sloth, greed, gluttony and lust, and the attempt to overcome them all to reach Earthly Paradise. The exhibition was jointly arranged by Emeritus Professor Maggie Jackson and Canon Anthony Lees-Smith, with invaluable support from the University's academic staff, technical staff and a Graphic Design student within the School for the Creative Industries.

As part of this, Dance Lecturer Dina Robinson was invited to collaborate with Research Assistant, Neuza Morais and Senior Researcher, Emma Arya Manesh to curate a contemporary dance performance in response to their installation 'The Peaces We Keep, Make, Transform'. The collaboration included Dance and Performing Arts students, alumni and Emeritus Professor Evelyn Jamieson working together to translate concepts around peace and transform the Cloisters of the Cathedral into kinetic sculptures of moving bodies.



Photo by Nicole Wellings

Second year student, Mali Fellows said: “The Purgatory Project was an interesting insight into the professional world.”

Reflection

Lecturer, Dina, reflected on the students' role in all the initiatives: “We are very proud of our students for their contribution to these events and the impact their performances have on the cultural life of the city. Thank you to the organisers for inviting us to be a part of such exciting projects and providing performance opportunities helping them develop their skills in a professional environment.”

You can find out more about the courses on offer at University of Chester, including the BA Honours Degree in Professional Dance [here](#).