

Foreword

The British performing arts sector has a great history of disabled and non-disabled artists working collaboratively. The London 2012 Paralympic Games opening ceremony epitomised the progressive attitude of the British arts scene and its past achievements in inclusivity. It brought together the country's true pioneers to create a hugely ambitious spectacle, leaving strong impressions on artists all over the world.

After the successes of 2012, the interest in collaboration between disabled and non-disabled artists is flourishing, and Stopgap Dance Company wanted to support this growing interest with *First Light*. This publication gives an insight into our practice of integration, which we hope will be a useful example of how the company enables collaboration between disabled and non-disabled dancers.

The year of London 2012 also coincided with a major organisational change within Stopgap Dance Company as Lucy Bennett became the new artistic director. Lucy had been dancing with the company since 2003 and had created a number of pieces with fellow long-serving dancers Laura Jones and Chris Pavia, along with other collaborating dancers: Sophie Stanley, David Toole, Dan Watson and David Willdridge. Under Lucy's leadership, Stopgap will break away from the model of a repertoire company and become an ensemble of artists who create and present their own work.

The compiling of *First Light* is part of this step-change: the integrated practice the company has established over its fifteen-year history is substantial, and we wanted to record it in 2012 before we began to make new discoveries of dance-making in an integrated context. To give the readers an idea of our future, *First Light* concludes with a short outlook of where the company might be heading next.

Stopgap Dance Company commissioned one of our former dancers, Sophie Stanley, to write this publication because we wanted to ensure the writer had an in-depth understanding of our practice. Sophie joined the company in 2007 as the support worker to Laura Jones and began working as a full-time dancer in 2009. She moved to California with her husband in September 2012 after completing Stopgap's Cultural Olympiad Tour. During her six years with the company, Sophie contributed to developing our integrated practice and gave training and lectures on many of the subjects in this publication.

First Light is very much told through Sophie's voice, which lends this publication a personable impression. Her training and lectures had the same combination of technicality and friendliness, which put many of her listeners at ease. We therefore hope that this publication while of interest to practitioners, students and educators of dance, is also approachable for readers with less expertise in the subject.

Stopgap Dance Company would like to thank Sophie for her hard work and dedication. We would also like to thank all our past collaborators, dancers and members of staff, without whom the current practice would not have developed. Our special gratitude is reserved for the company's previous artistic director Vicki Balaam, whose determination and pioneering spirit is the foundation of Stopgap. Her strong philosophy will always run through this company.

On behalf of Stopgap Dance Company,

Sho Shibata
Company Producer

In addition to *First Light*, Stopgap Dance Company has released two further publications, including one on inclusive dance practice, for teachers, and another on a previous repertoire, *Within*, by Thomas Noone. For more information please visit our website www.stopgapdance.com