

# Twitter and Choreography - A Successful Combination?

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# Twitter and choreography – *a successful combination?*

## Abstract

One of the most common social media platforms of today is Twitter, an open community where content easily could be spread by sharing so called tweets and where the relationship between users is not constrained by accepting the other user. This report discusses the complexity in merging social media and dance by studying a project which used crowdsourcing through Twitter to collect choreographic ideas for a new ballet piece.

In order to examine Twitter as a tool in a creative process, a questionnaire was sent to Twitter users and email interviews were held with those responsible for the project of study. The questionnaire showed that most of the Twitter users enjoyed creating and being part of a creative process. However, some of those with an occupation within the dance world voiced concerns about untrained people creating choreography. From the interviews it was found that a lot of thought had to be put into the structure of the project and that the project's main motivator was to inspire and create with the help of people around the world.

It was found in the research that Twitter is a suiting platform for a crowdsourced project since a large and varying group of participants is reached. Twitter allows for the Twitter users to participate regardless of location or occupation as well as bringing good publicity to the dance world.

# Twitter och koreografi – *en lyckad kombination?*

## Sammanfattning

Twitter är idag en av de största plattformarna inom sociala medier. Plattformen är ett öppet forum där användare enkelt kan sprida material genom så kallade tweets och där användarnas relationer inte kräver att den ena parten accepterar den andre. Denna rapport behandlar komplexiteten i att kombinera sociala medier och dans, genom studien av ett projekt som använde sig av crowdsourcing via Twitter för att samla idéer till ett nytt balettverk.

För att kunna utvärdera Twitter som ett verktyg i en kreativ process skickades ett frågeformulär ut till twitteranvändare. Dessutom hölls e-mailintervjuer med dem som var ansvariga för projektet. Formuläret visade att de flesta twitteranvändarna uppskattade att få skapa och ta del av en kreativ process. Dock fanns det negativa åsikter bland användare inom dansvärlden, att otränade personer inte bör koreografera. E-mailintervjuerna visade att mycket tanke hade lagts på strukturen av projektet och att drivkrafterna för att driva ett sådant projekt var att inspirera och skapa tillsammans med hela världen.

Genom undersökningen visade det sig att Twitter är en passande plattform för ett crowdsourcat projekt eftersom ett stort antal deltagare kan nå oberoende av var de befinner sig samtidigt som det medför bra publicitet för dansvärlden.

# Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Diablo Ballet for their willingness to collaborate with us and giving us the opportunity to study The Web Ballet for our degree project. It was very helpful.

We also appreciated the article which David Callahan wrote about our degree project. It managed to grasp our intentions very well. The article “Students see promise in technology’s convergence with performing arts” can be found in Appendix 5.

Our hopes are that you, the reader of this report, will find this subject as interesting as we do.

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Caroline Arkenson and Anna Maria Stipic



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# 1. Introduction

*The introductory section of the report will describe the purpose of the degree project and the area and project which will be studied. Firstly, a short background will be given, and the purpose and main research question will be introduced. Finally, delimitations will be presented.*

## 1.1 Background

Diablo Ballet is a California-based dance company which in January and February of 2013 was running a project with the purpose of merging dance and technology through social media. With the use of Twitter and the hashtag #DiabloWebBallet, Diablo Ballet collected suggestions on what choreography to use in the following performance, which was scheduled for March 2013. Twitter users were allowed to submit suggestions on the mood of the work, certain steps to use, which emotions to display and other suggestions using the given hashtag. A few submissions were accepted through Facebook. When it came to deciding the accompanying music the users had three options, all of them uploaded on Diablo Ballet's YouTube channel. By liking their favourite classical piece the users chose what music the dance work should be choreographed to. Voting and submissions ended on February 14th. Thereafter, choreographer Robert Dekkers chose the eight best suggestions and had about two weeks to choreograph a new dance work – Flight of the Dodo (The Web Ballet) – which premiered March 1st and 2nd (Diablo Ballet, 2013).

## 1.2 Purpose

The main motivator behind this research is the desire to find out if the technology development could serve as a tool in the creation of art and increase inspiration, as well as to look at one of the possibilities of merging media technology and dance. The purpose of the degree project is to explore how social media, in this specific case Twitter, can be used as a tool to create performing arts.

The research could be of interest for future projects wishing to use crowdsourcing through Twitter – what to keep in mind while running such a project and what the Twitter users think of the concept. Furthermore, the research could be of interest for anyone intrigued by media technology and art as a combination.

## 1.3 Problem definition

With the project of study and the field of interest, the problem for the research has been defined as:

- What part does crowdsourcing through Twitter play in the future of choreography in the world of ballet?

Sub questions with the purpose of strengthening the research are:

- What encouraged the Twitter users' participation?
- What do the Twitter users think of using Twitter in a creative process, such as choreography?

## 1.4 Delimitations

Social media is a wide concept which could be used in various ways. Since Diablo Ballet mainly used Twitter and YouTube as tools in the making of The Web Ballet, the choice was made to focus on Twitter in this degree project. In The Web Ballet project, YouTube was only used as a voting element of the process – which is why it was decided to not be included in the research. The concept of open innovation is what is of interest for the purpose of the research.

Other social media platforms were in this report only used with the purpose of presenting previous research within the field social media and creative collaboration. To prevent the report and research from becoming scattered, the decision was made to do the research on a specific project – Diablo Ballet's Web Ballet.

The gender of the participants of the research was disregarded since it, by the writers of this report, was not judged to be relevant in the discussion of Twitter as a tool in a creative process.

## 2. Theory

*In the Theory section, history and background on social media and creative collaboration will be presented, as well as the different terms that will be used in the report.*

### 2.1 Diablo Ballet

Diablo Ballet is a San Francisco based ballet company founded in 1993 in order to address the absence of a professional company in the region. Their missions include making professional dance available to all local residents and to support dancers and new works in order to enrich the field of dance (Diablo Ballet, 2013).

#### 2.1.1 Flight of the Dodo (The Web Ballet)

The Web Ballet premiered in March 2013, promoted as “the world’s first web ballet”. It was the first dance work developed by Twitter users all over the world making suggestions to Diablo Ballet. The users could contribute by making suggestions in any of the following four categories: emotion of the dancers, mood of the entire work, dance moves and other ideas. The accompanying music was selected by voting between three different classical pieces – Vivaldi, Bach or Sibelius – on Diablo Ballet’s YouTube-page (Diablo Ballet, 2013).

On diabloballet.org the title of the dance work was announced on the 19th of February. The Web Ballet was titled *Flight of the Dodo (The Web Ballet)* and the winning suggestions were revealed. Diablo Ballet mentioned that they received over 130 suggestions out of which the eight below were chosen by choreographer Robert Dekkers.

*@MangoJMango* – The story of the Dodo Bird, birds who can’t fly and became extinct.

*@Gerijeter* – What kind of dance steps? Twisted! Maybe gender-bending.

*@BlondieBallet* – Feel of piece: Deliberately ironic.

*Susan Weber (through Facebook)* – Include at least one moment that you hope the audience will find hideously ugly... another evoking awesome beauty... Investigate their similarities and differences.

*Leslie Udland (through Facebook)* – Setting: Insane asylum.

*Cheyenne Rosenfeld (through Facebook)* – Initiate movement from the shoulder blades.

*@JoieArt* – Other ideas: The color turquoise.

*Mia Fuerte, a 10-year-old leaving her suggestion as a handwritten note* – I would love for the dance to be in the safari. The boys will be animals and the girls will be explorers.



*A picture of Flight of the Dodo (The Web Ballet) where the color turquoise is worn around the mens' necks, the men being dodo birds and the women being explorers.  
(Photo: courtesy of Diablo Ballet)*

The participants with the winning suggestions received tickets to the premiere, as well as a photo of the work autographed by choreographer Robert Dekkers. The classical piece with the most votes was Vivaldi, and was therefore used in The Web Ballet (Diablo Ballet, 2013).

## 2.2 High culture vs. popular culture

Classical ballet is, with its roots in the 15th century renaissance and use of classical music, often seen as part of the high culture and as something that the general public has trouble relating to (Heilbrun, 2001). While there is no common definition of what high culture really is, Arora and Vermeylen (2013, p. 195) describe it by saying that “the very definition of high culture lies in its acceptance and privileging of hierarchies”. Professional art critics, art dealers and galleries engage with each other and there is an agreement of what good art is. The general public trusts these critics to have the necessary expertise to serve as gatekeepers for high culture (Arora and Vermeylen, 2013).

According to Browne (2006), popular culture is an indistinct term which is not often defined by critics. It is hard to find two individuals that completely agree with each other in all aspects when it comes to popular culture. Browne (2006, p. 15) however thinks that most people see popular culture as “whatever is widely disseminated and experienced”. Online communities, blogs and other participatory platforms are important factors for today’s popular culture and its participants. Through these communities it is possible to express opinions and evaluate different artifacts such as films and videogames. New media have become integrated in popular culture by marketing and building fan bases using electronic word-of-mouth (Arora and Vermeylen, 2013).

Arora and Vermeylen (2013) also talk about crowd wisdom in the context of social media and how it creates tension in the art world as amateurs become allowed to create and evaluate art. The art world is constructed against the mass culture and its elitism turns amateurs and the general public into outsiders. They express opinions on the art but have no say in determining the relevancy. Jenkins (2006) has similar

thoughts when discussing the convergence of grassroots – the larger, participating group – and corporate culture. The two can reinforce each other and create rewarding relations between media producers and their consumers, but when they are at war their struggles will redefine the face of popular culture.

## 2.3 Social media

Most Internet users of today have their own relation to the term “social media” and the definition is widespread. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 59) “75 % of Internet surfers used ‘Social Media’ in the second quarter of 2008 by joining social networks, reading blogs, or contributing reviews to shopping sites.”. In order to avoid confusion in this report, the definition of social media given by the Oxford English Dictionary (2013) has been considered: “websites and applications which enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking”.

In the 1990s Internet usage started entering the homes and people could create their own webpages posting information about themselves. This can be looked at as a form of social media and parables can easily be drawn to today’s blog with the difference that the blogs come complete with a ready-to-use interface. As high-speed Internet became more accessible the popularity of sites such as MySpace (founded in 2003) and Facebook (founded in 2004) grew extendedly. The term “social media” was at last coined and contributed to the prominence it has today (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

### 2.3.1 Twitter

*Twitter is the social media platform which will be studied in this report, since it was used in the project of study.*

MySpace and Facebook opened up to a new wave of social media platforms, each with their different focuses and goals. One of them was the microblogging service Twitter which encouraged users to write small blog posts about news and events numerous times a day. Founded in 2006, Twitter reached 50 million users over the next four years and the community is still growing (Cha et al., 2010). Twitter users can send messages, so called tweets, with a maximum length of 140 characters to be seen by their followers and anyone who visits their profile page. One characteristic attribute of Twitter is that the relationship of following and being followed requires no reciprocation. A user can follow any other user, and the user being followed does not need to follow them back (Kwak, H. et al., 2010).

## 2.4 Crowdsourcing

*Crowdsourcing is a term which will be used often in the report, due to its relevance in the subject. The Web Ballet implemented crowdsourcing in its making.*

Sloane (2011, p. 3) mentions crowdsourcing to be “an extrapolation of OI [Open Innovation] in which you throw out a challenge to a group of people that you may or may not know and solicit their ideas and solutions for your issue.” While applying crowdsourcing to a project, a job traditionally designated to an agent is instead outsourced to an undefined group of people by using an open call. (Howe, cited in Hopkins, n.d., p. 15). By implementing crowdsourcing in a task, both a broader expertise as well as a wider range of innovation from various viewpoints is accessed. The collaboration occurs with a more diverse group of people (Keith Loren, n.d.).

## 2.4.1 Creative collaboration through social media

A creative dialogue between participants on a great distance from each other is facilitated by the use of social media, as social media does not impose restrictions on the location of its members. While exceeding geographical boundaries, the social networks enable people to engage with a diverse group of other people with minimal cost. At the same time, such engagement provides the participants with flexibility as it lowers the requirements of involvement of each member (Hamidi and Baljko, 2012). For example, participants are able to get in touch with each other at any time of the day, from any location. Social media as a creative environment allows work to be shared and commented on. It is also a tool to create rather than to just present artistic content (Smith, 2009).

## 2.4.2 Previous studies

While Diablo Ballet might be the first company to create a ballet using crowdsourcing, there are various other creative projects that have used social media and crowdsourcing in the past. Some of them have been intertwined with research within the field.

One of the earlier projects was the Spindelnev@ project, which during 1998 and 1999 allowed the audience of an upcoming concert to submit creative material – text, images, video and music – for the concert. The creative material was sent to a gallery on the Internet, from which professional musicians and a video artist could select material from a specific audience. That way, the professionals could provide a customized performance based on the audience’s material in the gallery. 36 unique concerts were given.

The main goal of the Spindelnev@ project was to investigate the possibility to use computers and Internet-based communication as a creative channel, through which a large group of people could create new musical experiences – which was shown to be possible (Knudsen, 2000).

“Our Digital Tapestry” was a multimedia poetry project run on Facebook, where 19 participants from different locations of the world created a multi-language poem. In the study of “Our Digital Tapestry” the characteristics of the social network Facebook, as a channel and content creation tool were the areas of focus (Hamidi and Baljko, 2012).

Another study within the field was done by Dr Sophy Smith, who looked on Facebook as a collaborative artistic tool or environment. The subject in focus was how the tools provided by social media could be used by artists to connect and share content with collaborators (Smith, 2009).

Bench (2010) talks about a project called Twitter Community Choreography using Twitter-based crowdsourcing to create a series of YouTube-videos. By borrowing compositional strategies from crowdsourcing they explore the aesthetic effects that the result can get. In this project, Twitter users were challenged to tweet different movements to be interpreted and put together by a performer. Some videos would have a different theme; for example video #11 asked tweeters to use “actual movements” narrowing down the range of possible suggestions. The project proved to be popular enough for as many as 21 complete videos to be made in the series (Bench, 2010).

## 3. Methods

*The process of the research – including literature studies, questionnaires and email interviews – will be described in the following part of the report. The purpose is to provide an overview of how the data has been collected.*

### 3.1 Literature studies

To gain a better understanding of the field a search for literature was made looking for previous studies. The search for literature was done online using Google Scholar and KTH Library's search tool Primo. Search terms which were used were: "social media" and "Twitter" along with "performing arts" and "dance". When the term "crowdsourcing" was stumbled upon, it was subsequently also included in the search which lead the search to generating helpful results.

### 3.2 Twitter suggestions

Diablo Ballet sent a list of all the suggestions, along with the participants' Twitter names, to the writers of this report. From that list, a division into the four categories, emotions of the dancers, mood of the entire work, dance moves and other ideas, was made trying to see the popularity of the categories.

Not all Twitter suggestions were marked with a category, which meant that some suggestions were harder to place in their rightful category. Suggestions which involved moves of some sort were placed in the dance moves category. Emotions of the dancers and mood of the entire work were sometimes harder to separate, since they overlap somewhat. When a suggestion did not seem to fit into any of the three specific categories, it was labeled other ideas. Some tweets included two or more suggestions. These tweets were divided into the number of suggestions which they consisted of.

### 3.3 Questionnaires

The Twitter users were of great importance in the research since they played an important role in The Web Ballet. Therefore a questionnaire was conducted for the Twitter users, with the hopes of receiving usable information which would help in answering the sub questions, and consequently the main research question. Several attempts had to be made to collect answers, since the Twitter followers of Diablo Ballet make up a large, scattered, constantly changing and somewhat anonymous target group.

Firstly, an attempt to receive responses to the questionnaire was made through Twitter. By tagging the Twitter account of Diablo Ballet, @DiabloBallet, only one single response was received. The response came from a student here at KTH Royal Institute of Technology, which was not within the audience group of Diablo Ballet. It was helpful, but more answers were desired. Therefore, an email was sent directly to Diablo Ballet, asking them to tweet about the spreadsheet. With the help of Diablo Ballet sharing the link to the form, another three responses were received, these being from the target group. The Twitter user names of the participants were found on the suggestion list and messages were sent directly to 40 Twitter accounts, asking them to

answer the questionnaire. After sending direct messages to these accounts seven more responses were received.

The questionnaire included both questions of “yes or no” characteristics, and questions which allowed for longer answers. The beginning of the form consisted of basic questions such as profession and location of the respondent, which was of interest to see the variety of the participants. The form then proceeded with questions related to the project, and the subject technology and performing arts.

To collect good answers from a large group of people the questionnaire must be well-designed (Preece, Rogers, Sharp, 2007). One aspect when designing the questionnaire is that it has to be known what is desired to ask and what is desired to be found out from the questionnaire otherwise the answers will become unfocused and perhaps not useable (Rienecker, Stray Jørgensen, 2008).

## **3.4 Email interviews**

The creating process was another important aspect of The Web Ballet. Receiving information from those in charge of the project was therefore of great significance. A proper view of what emotions and thoughts that went through the creators of The Web Ballet was desired to understand such a project. Interviews with persons of different areas of responsibility within the dance company and project were desired, but distance and time zone differences were two reasons that made it hard to perform live interviews. Consequently, email interviews were held with choreographer Robert Dekkers, Dan Meagher – Director of Marketing and Artistic Director Lauren Jonas. Some questions were asked to two or all three of them, while others were relevant to only one of them. For example, questions regarding the choreographing process only applied to Robert Dekkers while Dan Meagher was the one who initially came up with the idea of a web ballet and therefore he got questions more related to that subject. Dekkers, Meagher and Jonas were asked to answer the questions individually to prevent unintentional influence from each other. Individual answers provide more and truer data, rather than delivering answers which have been discussed among the interviewees.

### **3.4.1 Ethical issues**

There are three main areas of ethical issues and in this case, confidentiality is the most relevant. Since interviewing only includes a small amount of people, it is important that they are aware of the fact that the level of anonymity will be limited. The other two areas of importance are consent and consequences of the interview (Cohen, et al., 2000). None of these areas became an issue in this research, since the participants already gave their consent by agreeing to sending in their answers for the email interviews. The interviewees were prior to their interviews informed that their names would be published in this report, and were asked to leave out any information which they did not want to be included in the report. Therefore, the answers in the Results section only include information which the interviewees have chosen to share.



## 4. Results

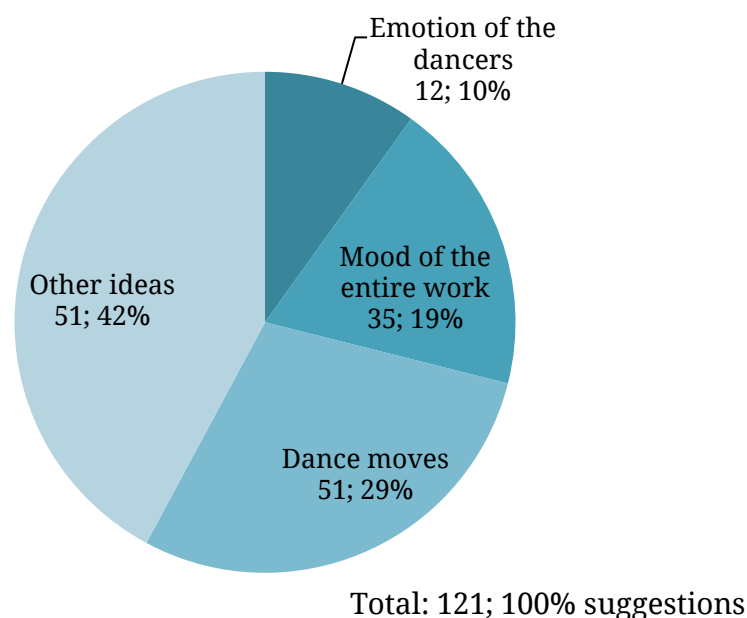
*The results received from the questionnaire and interviews will be presented below, and the Twitter suggestions which Diablo Ballet received will be categorized. Answers from the questionnaires, interviews and the Twitter suggestions will compose the results in the research, and therefore also an important step towards drawing a conclusion within the chosen field of study.*

*A list containing Twitter suggestions was sent to the writers of this report by Diablo Ballet, while the questionnaire and the interviews were carried out by the writers of this report to support the research.*

### 4.1 Twitter suggestions

From the list of suggestions it was found that Diablo Ballet received 121 suggestions from 48 different social media accounts, where 43 of these were Twitter accounts. One additional suggestion was submitted on a handwritten note, by a 10-year-old girl. Since her suggestion was not from a social media account, it has not been included in the presentation of the results. The suggestions were divided into four categories; emotion of the dancers, mood of the entire work, dance moves and other ideas. These four categories were the ones which Diablo Ballet used while collecting suggestions.

12 suggestions were submitted in the emotion of the dancers category, 23 regarding mood of the entire work, 35 suggestions included dance moves, and 51 suggestions belonging to the category other ideas were submitted. The division of the categories is shown in Figure 1 below.



*Figure 1. The division of the submitted suggestions, divided into the four categories. The diagram shows each category with the amount of suggestions and its percentage.*

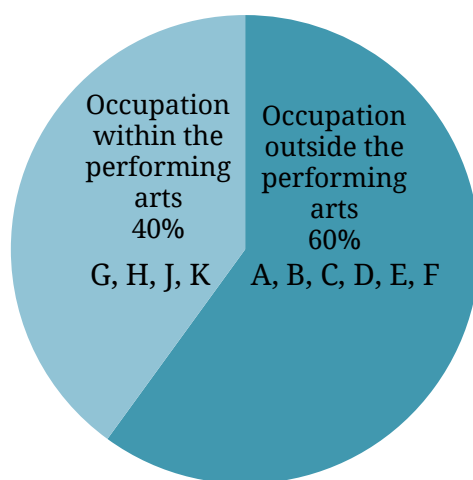
Of the eight chosen suggestions, two included dance moves, two were mood of the entire work and the rest belonged in the other ideas category. None of the suggestions from the emotion category were used.

## 4.2 Questionnaire

*All the questions asked in the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1. The respondents have been labeled with a letter from A to K in order to make the report easier to follow. The letter I was excluded to prevent any possible confusion with the word I.*

Three attempts to collect answers were made, two times by tweeting the link and then one last attempt was made which included direct messaging on Twitter. In total eleven responses were received, whereas one was not usable since that respondent did not seem to properly understand the questions, making the answers unrelated to the topic. Therefore, that specific respondent's answers will not be included in this report.

Six of the respondents, labeled as A, B, C, D, E and F, did not mention having any connection to the dance world other than as an amateur or dance enthusiast. The other four, labeled as respondents G, H, J and K, all mentioned having a current or former profession in the dance industry.



*Figure 2. Respondents A and F were students, B was a writer/editor, C was an organizer, D was a pharmacist, and E was an entrepreneur. Participant G worked as a journalist but stated being a former ballet dancer and respondent H was a combined actor, dancer and choreographer. Respondent K was a ballet teacher and J was a retired dancer, scientist and banker who was currently tutoring in dancing and writing.*

Location of the people responding to the survey was also of great variety. Figure 3 below shows a map with the location of the respondents.

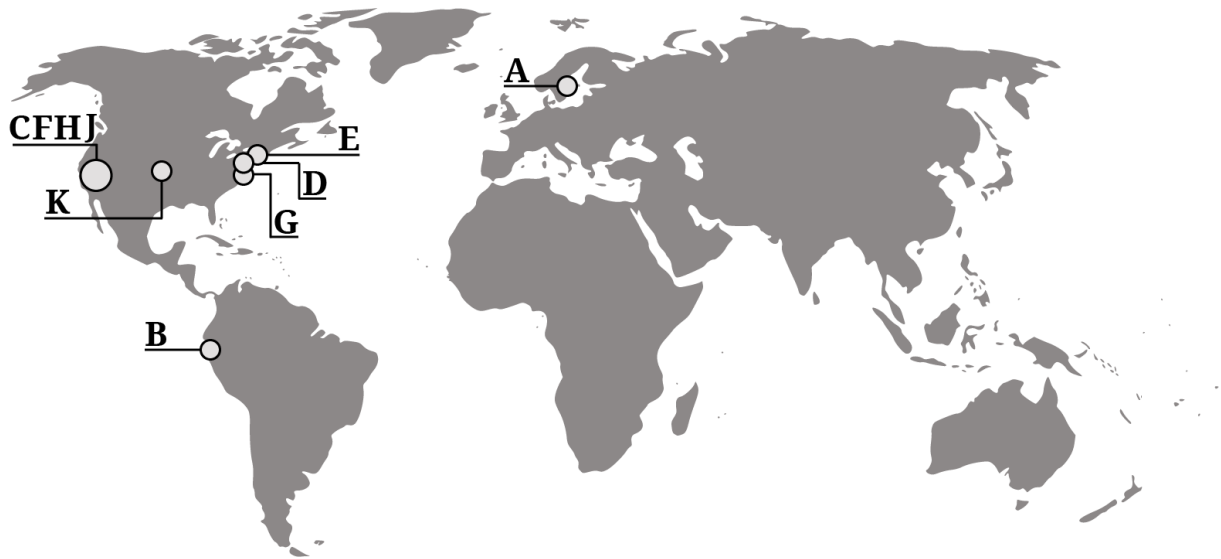


Figure 3. Most respondents lived in different cities in USA. Respondents C, F, H, and J lived in California, respondent E in New York City, respondent D in Pennsylvania, respondent G in Washington DC while respondent K answered “USA”. The two respondents who did not live in USA – respondent A and B – lived in Stockholm, Sweden and Cuenca, Ecuador.

**Question: Did you submit any Web Ballet suggestions? Why or why not?**

Six of the respondents answered that they had submitted ideas, three said that they had not – and respondent K answered “Not sure? Perhaps... I tweet a lot!” Looking through the list of suggestions, however, indicates that the unsure respondent did in fact submit a suggestion. Figure 4 below shows a chart with the specific answers of the different respondents.

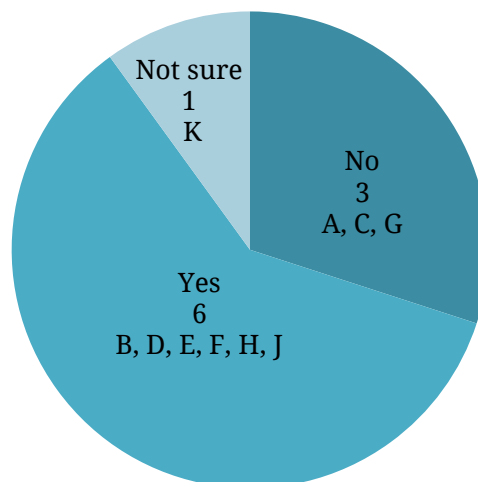


Figure 4. Respondents A, C and G did not submit any Web Ballet suggestions. Respondents B, D, E, F, H and J submitted suggestions, while respondent K was unsure when answering the questionnaire. However, respondent K was found in the suggestion list and had therefore submitted a suggestion.

The question mostly generated positive reactions. “I thought it was a great idea for sourcing choreographic ideas.” said respondent H. Respondent G answered “While I think it’s a very good marketing tactic, as a former ballet dancer, the idea of random untrained people making suggestions about choreography, well, it kind of made me cringe.” to the same question. Respondent F explained that “I submitted because as an ‘Adult Beginner’ (someone who begins learning ballet as an adult as opposed to having done it their whole lives) we typically don’t get to participate in choreography. I was thrilled to have a chance at getting to be a part of a project like this.” This comment indicated that even though the user would not normally be a part of a choreographing team, a desire to be so existed. Respondent D mentioned creating dances as a child to be the reason for participating.

A comment that further proved the interest in this type of project was received from participant E. “I thought the project was using technology in a new way, and one that directly influences the production of a dance which seemed innovative and exciting.” Respondent J answered that the concept was fun and interesting.

**Question: Was/were the suggestion/suggestions chosen? How did that make you feel?**

Respondent J, whose idea was not chosen, answered that it did not matter since J did not think of The Web Ballet as a competition. “It was just fun to participate and see all the different ideas that people submitted.” Included in the answer were the thoughts that the choreographer was the one who would be in control of the piece – the tweets were more looked upon as the “initial motivating force behind the work, [since] the final product had to come entirely from the choreographer’s brain.” Respondent D also answered that their suggestion was submitted only for fun, but added that D did never expect to win as it felt “impossible for me to convey my idea on Twitter format”.

To have a submitted idea included in the ballet made respondent F “extremely excited” and the respondent ended up flying to San Fransisco to watch and blog about the performance, while respondent B was “thrilled” since it provided the participant with a deeper, personal connection with the dance company.

Respondent C answered that it felt “just fine” that the suggestion was not used, while two other respondents, E and H, did not follow up the process and therefore did not know whether their suggestions were used or not. None of the respondents had a negative response upon not having their suggestion used.

**Question: What are your thoughts on using Twitter in a creative process, such as choreography?**

While some respondents could not relate to the technology merging with choreography they still thought that using social media to share, access and inspire was a good idea which would serve to spread art all over the world. Two different replies came from respondents K and A, respectively: “I think Twitter is an amazing social media access to all! Not sure how it relates to choreography but I certainly get inspired by stories, pictures and video shares on here...” and “With a good following I can see it working as a good source for suggestions.”

Respondent E replied that “I think it’s interesting and worth trying – especially ballet where the audience can feel so disconnected from the product on stage.” And

respondent F felt that the concept is “Such a wonderful idea! It takes a lot of skill to combine what seem like disparate ideas and make it a cohesive whole”. One less enthusiastic response came from respondent G, who answered that it is okay for visibility and marketing, but that a crowdsourcing project could easily become a “cheap gimmick”.

The respondents thought it was a great idea to open up the doors like Diablo Ballet did. B mentioned that “The more people involved in the process, the more interested they become in performing arts in general. And the more it means to them personally, the more people will support and encourage the arts at all levels of society.” It was also mentioned by C that a crowdsourced project through Twitter “engages audience and dance lovers far and wide to be part of the creative process with a few taps on a keyboard” and H thought that crowdsourcing should be used in many various contexts.

Furthermore, respondent D expressed interest in the idea, while at the same time having some reservations about it. “My only problem with Twitter for such a project is the difficulty in conveying [my] idea for something as complex/intricate as I had envisioned in extremely limited space – I had my choreography worked out in minute detail”. Transferring choreographic ideas – from one mind to another – using a limited set of characters, as is the case with Twitter, seemed to limit the artistry according to the respondent. That limitation was, however, interesting according to respondent J. It would give people a challenge to explain their idea in such a controlled environment. “I think it’s great, as long as you have tight controls over how the Tweets are used and as long as you communicate your expectations and the rules clearly to your audience.” The respondent continued to say that Twitter was a preferred platform since contributions are limited to 140 characters. “People cannot go on and on and take up too much time or space, they have to think through their messages carefully.”

### **Question: What do you think of merging technology and dance?**

The four respondents C, D, F and H felt that merging technology and dance is fantastic and a fabulous idea. F commented that since the world is becoming more technological, ballet should change and evolve to reflect the technological changes “if it wants to keep garnering attention from the public.” Respondent C’s thought on the subject was that technology can sometimes seem impersonal, and since “dance is so intimate, dance lends more humanity to technology”. Additionally, respondent E mentioned that the world is technological, which makes it worth seeing how technology can enhance dance and the understanding of the art form. E also stated that when technology brings people closer to the art it is well-worth investigating. Respondent B answered that technology has always pushed the art forward, and that technology always has been there as a provider of new ways of presenting art.

On using technology as in “social media technology”, respondent J commented that it “allows for the ‘democratization’ of dance in the sense that anyone can contribute ideas and opinions – you don’t have to be an expert in the field to throw in your two-cents’ worth.”

Respondent G answered that if it is done with taste and intelligence, it could be interesting and good to merge technology and dance, while the respondent labeled K thought that dance is an art that is 100% reliant on the human body and not technology. Respondent K also added that “technology can affect music (not that it is a good thing) but dance? That’s on you!”

## 4.3 Interviews

*Three interviews were performed with members of Diablo Ballet. The interviews are presented one by one since the questions asked varied. All the questions asked in the three interviews can be found in Appendices 2, 3 and 4.*

### 4.3.1 Interview with Dan Meagher, Director of Marketing

*Dan Meagher is the Director of Marketing at Diablo Ballet and the person who initiated the making of The Web Ballet. He is also in charge of Diablo Ballet's Twitter account.*

**Question: How did you come up with the idea of making a web ballet?**

Dan Meagher explained that Diablo Ballet believes that social media can make a difference in the arts. "By using social media channels, we are able to reach potential audience members, as well as expose people to dance."

The idea to create a Web Ballet derived from a Twitter night held in March 2012, where invited people would come in and tweet live during the entire performance. "After this, I started thinking of other ways we could use technology to engage audiences. I realized that dance is a collaborative process, so why not collaborate with the world to create dance through social media?" Thereafter, the idea was presented to Lauren Jonas, Artistic Director, who approached dancer Robert Dekkers with the offer to choreograph.

**Question: Did you think that it would be hard to make this idea a reality? Seeing the result, was it harder or easier than you thought?**

What the reaction on the project would be was unsure, but Dan Meagher mentioned that he had some concerns. Would The Web Ballet receive enough suggestions? How would people react to the project? Were the categories too esoteric? "However, Robert, Lauren, and I sat down and discussed many options and ideas on how to encourage participation and make the suggestion categories simple and understandable." Ideas started coming in the first day, and Meagher found the social media audience to be very smart, supportive and willing to help.

**Question: Have you done or heard of something similar to this before?**

Coming up with the idea, Meagher could not think of a similar project previously being done. He contacted colleagues in the dance industry who all confirmed that they had not heard of a professional dance company creating a ballet through social media. "Unless something else is revealed to us, this was the first time this kind of project was ever done." he said.

**Question: Was the response from the Twitter users what you expected?**

Dan Meagher's reply was that the response which Diablo Ballet received on Twitter exceeded his expectations. Suggestions were submitted from all over the world – the United States, Sweden, Australia, England, Japan among others.

Meagher mentioned that The Web Ballet engaged the followers of Diablo Ballet and inspired them to then share the project with their own followers; something that he

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was happy to see. “That’s the wonderful thing about social media – it really is a community, and when you respect and appreciate your followers, they become your biggest supporters. We could not have done this without their help.”

**Question: Would you do something like this again?**

Speaking as a true artist, Meagher thought that it would be interesting to do this again, but that he would not do it exactly the same way. “I think it becomes boring and stale if you do the same thing over and over.”

**Question: Is the use of Twitter the future of choreography?**

While Twitter is a wonderful way to get people involved in a creative process, Dan Meagher replied that he does not think that the majority of choreography will be through social media. “Too many classical arts organizations are afraid to use social media because they feel it’s ‘beneath’ them.” He does believe, however, that social media will be used in other ways to create art in the future and that social media is one of the most important tools to communicate with and engage the audiences.

### **4.3.2 Interview with Lauren Jonas, Artistic Director**

*Artistic Director Lauren Jonas is the co-founder of Diablo Ballet and was partly involved in selecting which Twitter suggestions to use.*

**Question: Have you done or heard of something similar to this before?**

Lauren Jonas mentioned that she had heard about other projects where combining crowdsourcing and social media with dance had been pursued. However, a ballet piece, created through crowdsourcing to be performed on a live stage, seemed to be a new concept. “I have heard of a contemporary dance company asking for ideas via Twitter for a dance video but never to create a new ballet to be performed two weeks later.” she said.

**Question: Would you do something like this again?**

Jonas replied with “I am not sure we would do something just like this again”. She added that a project along the similar lines of The Web Ballet could be of interest, but that she would certainly not want to do the same thing again.

**Question: Is the use of Twitter the future of choreography?**

“I don’t think so, but it was certainly a wonderful experience”, Jonas replied.

Jonas rounded off the interview by mentioning that Diablo Ballet strives to making performing arts more accessible to the general public and that they continue to be relevant in today’s society. “If we can find a way to bring art and technology together, perhaps, we can inspire people to be engaged in ways they never thought possible.”

### 4.3.3 Interview with Robert Dekkers, Choreographer

*Robert Dekkers is a dancer in the dance company Diablo Ballet and the choreographer of Flight of the Dodo (The Web Ballet). Dekkers was the main person in charge of selecting what Twitter suggestions to use in The Web Ballet.*

**Question: Have you done or heard of something similar to this before?**

According to Robert Dekkers, the project developed out of a special segment known as “Make a Ballet” that Diablo Ballet does at its outreach performances, where audience members get to choose the setting, character occupations, and even the title. Afterwards, a short scene is quickly put together to show the audience – very simply – how dance is made.

The thought of creating a more sophisticated version of the “Make a Ballet”, made Dekkers think of a filmmaker who last year created a short film based on limitations submitted by friends and fans. “It turned out beautifully, and I liked the idea of taking disparate suggestions and weaving them together to create a cohesive work.” Dekkers explained that the filmmaker’s project along with his own desire to collaborate with different artists and people helped him shape The Web Ballet project.

“Using these various influences as inspiration, we ultimately created ‘The Web Ballet’, the first project that incorporated suggestions from worldwide participants through the use of Twitter and Facebook to create an all-new dance performance.”

**Question: How did you make the choices? Did you keep different pictures in your mind – thinking what would be the best – as you were going through the suggestions, or did you choose based on a specific feeling?**

“I started by selecting a central concept that I could begin to build around. In this case, that central suggestion ended up being to ‘create a dance about the dodo bird, who is flightless and becomes extinct.’” Dekkers said. He then continued to explain that he only had three days to make the final selection. After spending an afternoon researching the dodo bird, that limitation was the one which he chose to use for the piece. After that, the additional six suggestions were selected. He added that they all intrigued him in different ways. One extra eighth contribution was an exception not coming from Twitter or another social media platform. About the extra suggestion Dekkers said “Her idea, to set the piece ‘in a safari, where the girls are explorers and the boys are animals,’ was a perfect fit with the dodo bird suggestion!”.

**Question: Did the creating process, for you, start before the Twitter deadline – since suggestions had already started to drop in? Had you for example already set your mind on using the dodo bird idea before the deadline?**

Robert Dekkers admits that he did look at the suggestions during the submission period, but that he did not wish to make any decisions until all of the ideas had been received. The dodo bird suggestion was one of several that had caught his eye. However, it was not a serious contender until after the submission deadline and the research on the dodo bird started. “I definitely had my wheels turning before the deadline, but it wasn’t until the music had been selected and the submission period ended that things came together for me.” The choice of music also played a part in what suggestions were chosen.” I don’t think I’d have chosen the dodo bird suggestion



if the Vivaldi music hadn't been selected! It would not have worked with the other two options."

**Question: What differences did the suggestions make in your process, compared to when you have your own idea? In what way did it affect your process?**

"The suggestions totally directed my work." Dekkers said. He thought that the process brought out a new side of his choreographing style and felt that he grew from the experience but that he would not do it again before the end of the year.

## 5. Discussion

*In the following part of the report, the results will be analyzed and discussed, which will be the next step towards drawing a conclusion. The sub questions will steer the discussion.*

*The sub questions were:*

- *What encouraged the Twitter users' participation?*
- *What do the Twitter users think of using Twitter in a creative process, such as choreography?*

### 5.1 The Twitter users and their suggestions

As previously mentioned in the Theory section, one of the advantages of using social media such as Twitter in a creative process is that it removes the limitations regarding the participants' location. This was seen in the answers to the questionnaires, since respondents lived in different parts of the world varying from cities in the USA, to South America and also Europe. People could respond from any location and whatever time of the day.

The questionnaire also showed that crowdsourcing through Twitter let people outside the dance world take part in the creation of The Web Ballet. Even though a minority, four of ten participants, had an occupation within the performing arts business, it does not mean that the other six participants do not find ballet or creative processes interesting. The crowdsourcing through Twitter encouraged everyone to participate regardless of occupation or location.

As found in the Theory section, a wider range of innovation from various viewpoints is achieved while implementing crowdsourcing. Someone who is not already a dancer might look upon creating dance differently than those who have spent a lot of time in the dance studio – but it does not necessarily mean that their ideas are of less worth than a dancer's. The dancers' thoughts are also useful since they look upon dance as trained dancers, and a good mix of both generates ideas from both parts. Twitter enabled both trained and untrained persons to participate in the crowdsourced choreography project. Moreover, not only is a diverse group of participants desirable when running a project based on open innovation, but reaching a large audience could also be of importance to find the best ideas. Looking at the projects mentioned in the Theory section along with their result it was pleasing to see the engagement from the Twitter users in the Web Ballet project as well. It gives further evidence of the fact that media technology can be used in a dance context.

The ability of how easily content can be spread through social media is an aspect to be favored and which Dan Meagher, Director of Marketing, appreciated. A project based on crowdsourcing relies upon it being seen, and Dan Meagher mentioned having a fear that The Web Ballet would not receive enough suggestions. Thus, he was happy to find out that the popularity of their project with the help of Twitter grew and that Diablo Ballet received submissions from many different countries. The Web Ballet engaged their followers which therefore pushed the project forward. In that sense, Twitter is a very suiting platform to use in a crowdsourced project where you wish to target a large and diverse audience. As mentioned in the Theory section, a Twitter user can follow another Twitter user without the constraint of being accepted by the

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other user. This means that content easily could be shared over Twitter, and be seen by followers of others which is what happened in the making of The Web Ballet.

In his interview, Dan Meagher also talked about certain angst of not having the categories accessible to everyone – that they would be too esoteric and not understandable to those outside of the dance community. Seeing that people with occupations outside of the performing arts such as an entrepreneur or a 10-year-old submitted suggestions, it was shown that the public managed to grasp the categories somewhat, even though the majority of the suggestions were submitted in the other ideas category.

In the questionnaire, one comment on using Twitter in a creative process came from respondent J who thought that it should be done with clearly communicated rules and expectations which shows that both those in charge of the project as well as the participants find the structure to be an important aspect of a crowdsourcing project. Since so many people were encouraged to participate, not having rules could quickly turn the project into an anarchy of ideas and questions and it could spiral out of control. Diablo Ballet managed to communicate with their followers well enough to receive inspiring suggestions during the submission period and choreograph a ballet within the planned time limit of two weeks. In the questionnaire sent out by the writers of this report, one of the participants gave answers that could not be interpreted correctly and thus they ended up not being used at all in the research. They gave the impression of the participant not fully understanding the point and purpose of The Web Ballet or the questionnaire used for this research. This could depend on a lack of communication either between the participant and Diablo Ballet or between the participant and the writers of this report.

The most popular category, which received the most submissions, was the other ideas category. It received 42% of all the ideas. This was also the category from which Robert Dekkers chose the most suggestions to use which made up half of the winning suggestions. The least popular category, Emotion of the dancers, only received 10% of the suggestions and was also the one which was not used at all in The Web Ballet choreography. 19% of the submissions consisted of suggestions for mood of the entire work, whereas 29% of the submissions regarded moves. Possibly, the emotion and mood categories received a lower percentage of suggestions because people could have found it harder to visualize those aspects of a piece. Additionally, moves and other ideas such as how to move, what kind of characters to imitate, what to wear and what scenario should be played might be easier for people to imagine. Grasping the mood and emotion categories might be easier for those trained to be on stage.

One of the aspects of social media which was mentioned in the Theory section, is that it allows for a creative environment in which content can be shared and commented on rather than just being presented. It could be discussable, in a project like this, if you want the creators to be able to see all the suggestions. Choreographer Robert Dekkers admitted in his interview that he did see some of the suggestions prior to deadline, which could question the authenticity of the final choices. Although, Dekkers also mentioned that the dodo bird was not a given choice until after the music had been chosen and after some research on the birds had been done. Even though YouTube is not in the field of study it is interesting to see how it had an impact on the final Twitter suggestions.

## 5.2 What encouraged the Twitter users' participation?

Out of the responses that were received from the questionnaire two thirds of the people answered that they did submit a suggestion to The Web Ballet and the total number of suggestions was counted to be 121. Dan Meagher was positively surprised about the high amount of submissions, and it seems as if he was right when he said that "I realized that dance is a collaborative process, so why not collaborate with the world to create dance through social media?". Apparently something about the project was definitely intriguing and people did seem to want to create dance. Since crowdsourcing projects through social media have been done before, such as "Our Digital Tapestry" and the Spindelvev@ project, it has been shown that people want to be part of a creative process and that social media could work as a creative channel.

Looking at the answers from the questionnaire, it seems as if the possibility to be part of a professional ballet production was as interesting as seeing what other people had submitted. One of the participants, F, was very enthusiastic about getting the chance to take part in a choreography process as an adult beginner, meaning the respondent otherwise had limited to no opportunities to create choreography. Having the submission chosen added further excitement and the winning participant F ended up flying to San Fransisco to watch and blog about the performance. Any concerns Dan Meagher had about people not supporting The Web Ballet did at least not apply to this participant. The pharmacist labeled as respondent D, talked about their childhood activities of creating dances and choreographies. This gives two indications of amateurs wanting to express their artistic abilities but normally not getting the chance to do so. None of the respondents showed negativity about not having their suggestion chosen as they did not see it as a competition but rather felt it was fun to just participate which shows that the main reason to participate was not to win. The chance of winning was perhaps only seen as a bonus.

Artistic Director Lauren Jonas mentioned in her interview that Diablo Ballet wishes to bring art and technology together in a way which inspires people to be engaged in new ways, ways they perhaps never have thought of. This reflects what the questionnaire respondents said, that they thought The Web Ballet was something new and interesting. The fact that the Twitter users thought of the project as something new was not surprising, since both Jonas and Meagher had not heard of any similar project before – to crowdsource a ballet. Meagher also mentioned doing some research on the subject, to make sure that Diablo Ballet had a new idea. It was interesting to see that Robert Dekkers had another picture of how the project originated, varying from the one which Meagher mentioned. Perhaps Dekkers' knowledge of the project mentioned in his interview helped him in his process, in the same way that The Web Ballet could become a good inspiration for future crowdsourcing projects.

The participants that did not submit anything all had their different reasons for it. G was scorned about the idea of letting an untrained person direct the work of the choreographer, whereas respondent C was interested in the idea and thought about submitting but never went through with it. Aside from that, C could not mention any specific reason for not participating. It was interesting to see how differently these people looked on the idea of participating in a crowdsourcing project of this kind. While G, who was having reservations of the whole project and felt that it was against G's beliefs, C was interested in the idea but did not feel the need to actually

participate. To C it was just a good way of collecting new ideas and making people interested in the dance company and the art.

### **5.3 What do the Twitter users think of using Twitter in a creative process, such as choreography?**

Most of the users that responded to the questionnaire were positive to the idea of using Twitter as a tool for creating a ballet. Respondent F was relating to the development of technology and how it is important for art to develop with it in order to stay relevant. The Twitter users generally felt that technology pushes art forward and provides new possibilities to create, inspire and showcase. Having the Twitter users positive to projects such as The Web Ballet is crucial for such a project to become successful. One participant, B, put it as with a good following it could work as a good source for suggestions.

Opening up the doors and letting people get “behind the scenes” is also a great way of making and keeping people interested, which is important in order to renew and nurture the performing arts. The Twitter users seemed to appreciate that The Web Ballet provided something more beyond The Web Ballet itself. Respondent B mentioned that allowing the general public to participate makes them encourage and support the arts. Respondent E mentioned that Twitter and choreography is worth trying especially in ballet, where the audience can feel so disconnected from the product on stage. One aspect of ballet and high culture is that the general public has trouble relating to it, so removing these obstacles to get the audience closer to ballet was to respondent E positive. Even as some respondents were more reserved in their reasoning they still agreed that Twitter could be a useful tool, if not for creating art it could at least help marketing it. Meagher also mentioned that aspect of social media – the possibility to make a difference in the arts by exposing people to dance.

It was appreciated by respondent C that The Web Ballet engaged the audience to be part of a creative process with only a few taps on a keyboard and therefore also the possibility of being part of a creative process in a way which does not require too much effort from the participant. This has also been found in previous research on social media as a tool for creative collaboration – that the participant is allowed make as much effort as desired. Choreographer Robert Dekkers agrees with the Twitter users’ positive undertone and feels that he grew as a dancer from the experience. Dekkers expressed a desire about collaborating with different artists and people and thought that working with The Web Ballet allowed this in an untraditional way. Getting to use those keyboard taps and creating a uniform piece of art was something he enjoyed and it helped him develop into a greater choreographer and dancer. What can be seen from this is that both the audience and the artist have something to gain from this kind of collaboration and both sides can see this clearly.

Participant G was reserved about the project and thus the question arose whether letting Twitter users choreograph could be disrespectful to the art form. Being a former ballet dancer, G may have been colored by the mentioned background in the elitist dance world where one dances and choreographs for a living. This aspect was also briefly mentioned by Dan Meagher, who said that many classical arts organizations do not use social media since they feel it is beneath them. This shows evidence of the constraints between high culture and popular culture where the

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general public is becoming interested in taking part of high culture while art elitists are still conservative about letting them in.

One aspect of using Twitter was the limitation of the number of characters that you can use in a tweet. This was mentioned by participants J and D and it was interesting to see that they both debated against each other; J supported the choice of platform and D did not appreciate it. 140 characters was not enough space for one of them to convey their idea while the other person thought it added to the challenge in a good way and made you think more on how to phrase the suggestion. The limitations given by Twitter could therefore be seen as something negative, or positive.

The combination of technology and dance was also a subject which generated opposing opinions. While respondent C mentioned that dance lends humanity to technology, respondent K thought that dance is 100% reliant on the human body and implied that technology affecting art is a bad thing. It is interesting to see that the thought was revealed that not only does performing arts benefit from technology, but that the performing arts also brings something to the technology. That is an aspect which perhaps not crosses everyone's minds. Thoughts regarding technology affecting performing arts in a negative way could have something to do with people generally see technology as something artificial – and therefore not as a true art form. Still the respondent submitted a suggestion to The Web Ballet. The project must have been intriguing enough to make K send in a suggestion after all.

## 5.4 Evaluation of Methods

*The purpose of this section is to evaluate the methods used in the research.*

### 5.4.1 Source criticism

Mainly research reports, conference reports and published works have been used in the research due to them having higher credibility than changeable content online. The only two sources which are not published reports or books are Diablo Ballet's page [diabloballet.org](http://diabloballet.org) and Oxford University Press – both pages with information which could be changed over time. Diablo Ballet are believed to be the main source of their own information, and Oxford University is a well-known university. Using a definition from their Online Dictionary was judged to be safe.

The risk of using Diablo Ballet as a source for their own previous work is that they may only show biased information. However, the main focus in this study has been The Web Ballet and the information on that project. Therefore, biased information was not a crucial aspect to consider when reading the crowdsourcing instructions to The Web Ballet and its results.

### 5.4.2 Twitter suggestions

Diablo Ballet announced on their page that they received over 130 suggestions for The Web Ballet. However, looking through the suggestion list for the research, a total of 121 suggestions were found. The counting seemed to differ between the dance company and the writers of this report. For example, some suggestions could have been missing from the list used in this research. Since some tweets included two or more suggestions, the idea of where the separation between two suggestions occurred could also have differed.

Not all suggestions were marked with which category they were submitted to, which meant that it was not always clear which category they belonged to when going through the list. This could very well have had something to do with the character limitation, meaning that the users had no space left in their tweet to mark which group the suggestion belonged to. If someone else went through the list the division could be done differently. For example, the words “mood” and “emotions” are almost synonyms and could be interpreted in various ways. Going through the list to see the division in the categories and which suggestions were chosen was interesting for the degree project and to understand a crowdsourced project.

### 5.4.3 Questionnaires

As previously mentioned in the Methods section, the target group – the Twitter followers of Diablo Ballet – make up a large, scattered and constantly changing combination of people.

It is difficult to know exactly how many were reached by the tweets from the writers of this report and from Diablo Ballet. This depends on how frequently users log on to their account and how thorough they are when reading and scrolling through past tweets in their feed. What can be said is that when 40 accounts from the suggestions list were directly contacted, seven of them answered the questionnaire, which means that 17.5% of the directly contacted Twitter users answered the questionnaire. It was also known that these Twitter users had submitted suggestions in The Web Ballet project, since their names were taken from a list of all the received suggestions. Their answers were helpful for the part examining why people wanted to participate, but it would have been desirable to receive more answers from those who chose not to submit any suggestions. Receiving more answers from both sides would make a richer discussion and help the research in understanding the Twitter users.

Although more varying thoughts in the questionnaire would have been preferred, the direct messages helped gathering more answers – which provided more material to work with. Even so, the participants that were reached through direct messaging would be likely to have an interest in the subject and give reasonable answers. Still, the questionnaire showed a diversity of the participants when it came to location and profession – which supported what was mentioned in the Theory part of the report about the diversity of the group and removed constraints on location.

Also mentioned in the Theory section, a questionnaire has to be well-designed and it must be known what is desirable to find out in order for the answers to become useful. The questionnaire used in this research was assembled quite early in the process, when the problem definition and the sub questions were yet not fully stated. However, the choice was still made to send out the form – but with the knowledge that some of the questions would perhaps not be helpful in the research. The sub questions were answered with the help of the answers to the questionnaire – which was its purpose. *Videlicet*, the outcome of the questionnaire was satisfying.

### 5.4.4 Interviews

Since Diablo Ballet is a dance company based in California, USA, and the writers of this report at the time were studying in Stockholm, Sweden, a live interview face-to-face would have been very costly and time consuming. Therefore, the interviews with those responsible of The Web Ballet project had to be done over the Internet.

The choice stood between using email or Internet-based phone calls or video chat. Email was chosen as the medium for the interviews, which meant answers in text form written by the interviewees themselves. Due to time-zone differences along with different schedules, holding interviews over email was found to be easier rather than trying to schedule a chat with five persons. While a live chat would make the answers and the interviews more vivid – including emotions and movements of the interviewees – an email interview gave the interviewees a chance to sit down and think through their answers properly. It is discussable whether it is something positive or negative that an answer is written in text form and could be changed a few times, or if it is preferred with more spontaneous answers. Considering that the research was done with a small group of interviewees and respondents to the questionnaire, longer and more thought through answers containing rich information were helpful due to them providing more material to work with and allowing for possible exclusion of redundant questions or answers.



## 6. Conclusion

*The conclusion is the final part of the report, and in the following section the different parts of the report will be tied together. Based on the discussion in the previous section conclusions will be made regarding the problem definition.*

*The problem definition was:*

- *What part does crowdsourcing through Twitter play in the future of choreography in the world of ballet?*

### 6.1 Twitter as a tool in a choreography process

As supported by the Theory section earlier in this report, ballet is sometimes described to be a part of high culture where acceptance and closed circles are key words. Diablo Ballet is mixing up the hierarchy by letting the general public participate and become a part of the ballet world. The line between mass culture and high culture becomes blurrier as amateurs get the chance to help choreograph a professional ballet piece. Using social media and crowdsourcing to collaboratively create art opens up new opportunities to those who are otherwise unable to participate in such activities. Additionally, using Twitter as the platform to run the project through was successful seeing that Diablo Ballet received suggestions for The Web Ballet, not only from different parts of the world, but from people with different professions and with different levels of dance knowledge. Apart from revealing the benefits of Twitter and its open way of content sharing, it also shows that there amongst the Twitter users exists interest and a desire to be part of a creative process and that crowdsourcing definitely opens up new windows and possibilities.

Diablo Ballet strives toward making performing arts more accessible to the general public and this project is one way of doing that. The research found that crowdsourced art projects through Twitter could generate something else rather than just a product made by the Twitter users, but also attention to the art which was appreciated by the users.

The interview and questionnaire answers gathered a general feel that the respondents and interviewees thought that crowdsourcing through Twitter is interesting and innovative, and that it is exactly what the ballet world needs in order to survive and develop in line with the society. Not many negative thoughts were acquired in this research and even respondents that had something negative to say still argued that being too conservative is not an option when it comes to nurturing the art. However, there is still some struggle between the two sides of the culture gate. On the one hand there is the general public being curious about the high culture and art. They are using Internet and social media to get closer to ballet and other similar art forms and getting a chance to discuss and even participate. On the other hand the art connoisseurs are trying to keep the line between popular and high culture clear and maintaining the hierarchy by keeping fine arts on a certain level that cannot be reached by those that are unenlightened. Twitter allows for the hierarchy and division to be blurred, which enables sourcing of ideas from both viewpoints.

Crowdsourcing through Twitter will not become the main source of choreographic ideas in the future – especially not in the world of ballet which is considered to be high culture. However, Twitter and crowdsourcing could definitely be used as a tool in

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similar projects to find new inspiration and as a way of inspiring and reaching new participants as well as viewers. Even though most choreography will not be created through crowdsourcing, it can still be implemented through Twitter in different ways and several times. Twitter and crowdsourcing will hopefully, and should, be used more often in the world of ballet. Merging media technology and dance is something that can bring the art forward and keep its relevance.

## **6.2 Twitter as a creative tool in future projects and future research**

When it comes to future projects using Twitter this research has found that there are a few things to keep in mind. It is important to have clear instructions that are understandable to the participants which they easily can follow. It has been shown to be desirable to both the project holders and the users. The project holders must be aware that if they want something a certain way it is up to them to make sure that the message is clear and that it cannot be misinterpreted.

Furthermore, to engage the Twitter users, different projects cannot be too similar. The questionnaire showed that one of the things which intrigued the Twitter users was the new and fresh aspect of The Web Ballet. Doing the same thing over and over again will not keep their attention. From the interviews with Diablo Ballet it was also found that the project holders would not want to do exactly the same thing again – they would need a new direction, something different to make it worth running and for them to benefit from it. A new project must therefore also profit those in charge of it. Furtherly, the Twitter users enjoyed the aspect of being able to see others' suggestions, and even though choreographer Robert Dekkers did not make his final choices before submission deadline, the open atmosphere of Twitter should be considered before choosing it as the platform of use.

While it is impossible to stay on good terms with everyone all the time, it is important to keep such projects from becoming too commercial. Even though the intention could be to open up the art to everyone, it is important to still respect the art when choosing to use Twitter as the main tool. Even when the purpose is to strengthen the world of ballet, someone out there will always see it as disrespectful to the art form. It is good to remember that out there in the Twitter crowd, there are users with wonderful things on their mind who are eager to create and be part of something new and exciting.

Suggestions are that future research should be done on other crowdsourcing projects using Twitter, in order to explore all of its possibilities. If the research should be done on Twitter and choreography, another problem definition should be used and the research should investigate other ways of using Twitter for choreography. The methods could be different, and finding an efficient way to gather responses to a questionnaire could be useful. If the process of the crowdsourcing project is of great interest, a project which is geographically close is suggested to facilitate the study, as it becomes easier to stay close to the project itself. A possibility to broaden the research is by examining how Twitter and crowdsourcing could be applied in other fields of the performing arts.

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# Appendix 1 – Questionnaire

## Users of social media and The Web Ballet

*We are two students who study Media Technology at KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden. We are currently writing a Bachelor's degree project on merging social media with dance, and would like to know what the Twitter users think of The Web Ballet. Your response will be greatly appreciated since it will be used in our research.*

*Thank you for helping out! /Caroline and Anna Maria*

Name:

Age:

Living location:

Occupation:

How did you hear about The Web Ballet?

For how long have you been following Diablo Ballet?

Did you follow them before the Web Ballet project was started?

- Yes
- No

Did you submit any Web Ballet suggestions? Why/why not?

What was/were the suggestion/s?

Was/were the suggestion/s chosen?

- Yes
- No

How did that make you feel (for both Y and N)?

Were you interested in following the process or seeing the final result?

- Yes
- No

*Comments to the question above.*

Did you see the performance live?

*Choose other if you would like to add a comment to your answer.*

Yes

No

Other:

What are your thoughts on using Twitter in a creative process, such as choreographing?

In what ways do you feel that Twitter contributes to your interest in dance?

What do you think of merging technology and dance?

Do you have any other comments?

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## Appendix 2

### – *Interview with Dan Meagher*

*The answers to these questions will be used in our research for our Bachelor's project and our report will be published online for anyone to see. If there is something that you do not wish for us to mention please, specify so or leave it out. Please answer the questions separately since it will provide us with a broader research.*

*Your answers will be very much appreciated since it will make out an essential part of our Bachelor's project in Media Technology at KTH Royal Institute of Technology.*

*Thank you for your help!*

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*Caroline Arkenson and Anna Maria Stipic*

#### **Questions about the process - from idea to result - of making the Web Ballet**

How did you come up with the idea of making a Web Ballet?

Did you think that it would be hard to make this idea a reality? Seeing the result, was it harder or easier than you thought?

Have you done or heard of something similar to this before?

Was the response from the Twitter users what you expected?

Was the response from the media what you expected?

Was the response from the audience what you expected?

Would you do something like this again? If so, what would you change?

Were you pleased with the outcome?

Is the use of Twitter the future of choreography?

Any additional comments?



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## Appendix 3

### – *Interview with Lauren Jonas*

*The answers to these questions will be used in our research for our Bachelor's project and our report will be published online for anyone to see. If there is something that you do not wish for us to mention please, specify so or leave it out. Please answer the questions separately since it will provide us with a broader research.*

*Your answers will be very much appreciated since it will make out an essential part of our Bachelor's project in Media Technology at KTH Royal Institute of Technology.*

*Thank you for your help!*

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*Caroline Arkenson and Anna Maria Stipic*

#### **Questions about the process - from idea to result - of making the Web Ballet**

What was your reaction to Dan Meagher's idea of making a Web Ballet?

Did you think that it would be hard to make this idea a reality? Seeing the result, was it harder or easier than you thought?

Have you done or heard of something similar to this before?

Was it a tough process of choosing? Did you feel that some suggestions were left out that you wanted to use?

How did you make the choices? What did you base your choices on?

Was the response from the Twitter users what you expected?

Was the response from the audience what you expected?

Would you do something like this again? If so, what would you change?

Were you pleased with the outcome?

Is the use of Twitter the future of choreography?

Any additional comments?

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## Appendix 4

### – *Interview with Robert Dekkers*

*The answers to these questions will be used in our research for our Bachelor's project and our report will be published online for anyone to see. If there is something that you do not wish for us to mention please, specify so or leave it out. Please answer the questions separately since it will provide us with a broader research.*

*Your answers will be very much appreciated since it will make out an essential part of our Bachelor's project in Media Technology at KTH Royal Institute of Technology.*

*Thank you for your help!*

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*Caroline Arkenson and Anna Maria Stipic*

#### **Questions about the process - from idea to result - of making the Web Ballet**

Have you done or heard of something similar to this before?

How did you make the choices? Was it hard? Did you keep different pictures in your mind - thinking what would be the best - as you were going through the suggestions, or did you for example choose the one that felt the funniest, the coolest, the most challenging?

Did the creating process, for you, start before the Twitter deadline since suggestions had already started to drop in? For example, you mentioned in the Live Webcam Chat that you really liked the idea with the dodo birds. Had you already set your mind on using this idea before the deadline?

What differences did the suggestions make in your process, compared to when you have your own idea? In what way did it affect your process?

In what ways do you feel that you have benefitted from this? For example personal development or your career.

Would you do something like this again? If so, what would you change?

## Appendix 5 – Article



### Students see promise in technology's convergence with performing arts

**MEDIA TECHNOLOGY** Published Apr 11, 2013

While an American audience watches this weekend's encore performance of the world's first crowdsourced ballet, a pair of undergraduate students halfway around the globe are paying even closer attention.



*The world's first crowdsourced ballet, "Flight of the Dodo," inspired a undergraduate thesis by two KTH students. (Photo: courtesy of Diablo Ballet)*

The piece, which the California-based Diablo Ballet company based on suggestions collected from Twitter users, tells the story of the extinction of the dodo bird. But for KTH Royal Institute of Technology undergraduates Caroline Arkenson and Anna Maria Stipic, the ballet also could reveal the possibilities of combining technology and the arts.

The two are writing a paper on the making of "Flight of the Dodo" for their course, DM129X Degree Project in Media Technology, First Level. The ballet will be performed April 12 and 13 at the Hillbarn Theatre, in the San Francisco Bay-Area community of Foster City.

“Since dance is a common interest of ours, we wanted to find a project which combines media technology with the world of dance,” Arkenson says. “We narrowed our research down to examining how social media – in this case Twitter – can be used as a tool to create performing art.”

Arkenson and Stipic had at first set their sights on a local performance project, but production problems and possible delays led them change course and contact Diablo Ballet, which they had learned about through a mention in a ballet magazine’s Twitter feed. “It immediately caught my interest,” Arkenson says.

Through a questionnaire the pair interviewed Twitter users who sent 132 suggestions, to find out why they participated and what they thought about the creative process.

“Flight of the Dodo” is widely believed to be the first ballet that is crowdsourced from social media. Even the score, Vivaldi’s Concerto for Two Cellos in G Minor, was decided by online vote. Via Twitter and Facebook, Diablo Ballet invited followers to submit suggestions on January 8, 2013, and the production quickly gathered a batch of ideas.

Lauren Jones, the company’s artistic director, says that the choreographers finally worked from six tweeted suggestions:

- “The story of the Dodo Bird, birds who can’t fly and became extinct”
- “Feel of the dance work: Deliberately ironic”
- “Include at least one moment that you hope the audience will find hideously ugly... another evoking awesome beauty... investigate their similarities and differences”
- “Setting: Insane asylum”
- “Initiate movement from shoulder blades”
- “The color turquoise”

Jones says the results of the project have been encouraging. “I’m hoping that crowdsourcing will continue to impact individuals through sparking an interested in the art form and feeling as though they have a true part in artistic expression,” she says.

Like Arkenson, Stipic began dance training at the age of 4. For her, the Diablo project represents a cross-disciplinary interaction with great promise.

“I believe that we can go even deeper in combining technology and art. Caroline and I chose this as our subject for the degree project to get a chance to discover new ways of doing so,” she says.

Diablo’s marketing director, Dan Meagher, believes artists have little choice but to embrace collaboration through technology. “We have to do this in order for the arts to survive,” he says. “We can no longer operate in modes that exclude technology. Billions of people are on social media and are waiting to be engaged.”

For Arkenson, who had considered a career in dance before enrolling at KTH, the project represents a way forward professionally. “I would like to find a way to combine my academic choice with the world of dance,” she says. “I believe that they



*Media Technology student  
Caroline Arkenson*



*Media technology  
student Anna Maria  
Stipic*

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do not necessarily have to be two completely separate worlds.

“By writing my degree project about a subject such as social media and dance, I can start exploring the ways of combining dance with media technology.”

**David Callahan**

Watch "Flight of the Dodo"

[To the news list](#)

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<http://www.kth.se/en/aktuellt/nyheter/students-see-promise-in-technology-s-convergence-with-performing-arts-1.381884>

