

Rachel Calleja

Performance Educator – Contemporary scene



Photos by [Lindsey Bahia Pictures](#)

'Don't do unto others what you don't want done unto you'

Confucius

Country of the business: Malta

Industry/sector (architecture, art & culture, crafts, design & visual arts, media, advertising, multimedia, online gaming, entertainment, printing & publishing, translation & interpretation, music, dance & performing arts, film & tv & radio)

Objective

- To use my skills to offer dance and self-expression experiences where they were not previously accessible, primarily with those experiencing difficulties or limitations.
- To continue growing, sharing and experiencing dance and performance art in new forms, with new people, on new platforms and other countries too.
- To continue generating a sustainable income from doing what I love.

Services/Products

- Choreography
- Performance
- Mentoring
- Teaching:
- ❖ Groups
- ❖ 1 to 1 dance interactions: specifically, with children who have learning disabilities or no other means of communication.

Audience

The people I currently work with range from 3 to over 40 years of age and include men, women, from 25 different countries with a very wide and varied range of physical and intellectual abilities. I love the experience of meeting so many people through dance and psychology and getting to know people on a deeper level, it teaches me a lot so I look forward to working with any person.

Business model/Innovation

When I started I did not realize how ingrained business is in every activity. I naively thought that work in the creative sector would be fueled by passion and dedication and that somehow if I worked hard enough I would manage. So, I started off with no business ideology whatsoever. Through working with various dance and education entities, as well as funding bodies such as Arts Council Malta, independent schools or other grants I have learned a little better about the way money flows in this sector. After these three years I am now starting to think more about how to integrate sustainable financial living with the work I love to do.

Short description of case:

How the idea was born, motivation for setting up the business, time wrap for implementation of idea in life, external environment and influencing factors (e.g. external support programmes, crisis, changes in legislation, geographical location, demand, originality of idea etc.)

Challenges (concerns that emerged, various perspectives)

On a practical level, a significant challenge is not having a consistent income. Not always knowing when you're going to get paid can be a difficult concept to accept to begin with. At first, I was completely depending on performances and short terms projects with each of them paying at different times. As you can imagine, the lack of security and certainty can be quite overwhelming to start out. Another challenge for me has been the fact that dance is such a personal thing, and so to offer something so personal of yourself and for that to be the source of your income can cause conflicting feelings. For instance, needing to participate in performances that were not creatively satisfying to me but accepting them for the sake of income. It felt as though I was somewhat defeating the purpose of choosing to freelance and having a choice as to what I felt was worth applying myself to.

How clients are identified (creative techniques used by the business' PR/marketing strategy)

I find self-promotion quite difficult because I prefer not to be caught up in the online world, yet I also understand how useful it is for attaining more work or different opportunities. For me, the most effective way to promote myself so far has been through the work I do and sharing that work with others in any means possible whether its social media, public sharing or meaningful conversations with people about the work being done. I also have a show reel and an artistic CV which is important to keep updated and to use for applications.

Social impact *(if it is the case)*

I believe the educational and community focused work that I am involved in has a big impact as we continue to uncover new abilities from people labelled as having a disability. Dance has the potential to positively impact anyone for whom it is a medium and can even help those who have difficulty expressing themselves. As a result, this positive impact then can either directly or indirectly trickle down into the wider community and so on. The truth is learning goes both ways, for every student I teach something to, that student teaches me something too. This is a sentiment many teachers share so I really think that human relationships and break throughs happening through art and education have a wide-reaching effect on how we view ourselves and the people around us. Regarding performing and choreographing, I feel it is important for me to create and apply myself to work that **matters** and has a meaningful impact on an audience. My biggest concern when presenting a work is that the audience can relate to it, that they can extract something from it. The worst-case scenario for me would be someone coming to the theatre and finding the work so unrelatable that they think performances are not for them.

2) Solutions

Lessons learned

- Manage your energy as well as you manage your time, so you do not 'burn out'
 - Remain realistic with the number of projects you commit yourself to at one time. They tend to end up requiring a lot more of you and your time than perhaps you initially anticipated.
 - Don't allow the reality that opportunities may be limited to override your sense of self and what you believe is worth representing or not. Stay true to yourself.
-

Photo Courtesy: Emma Tranter



Photo Courtesy: Lindsay Bahia Pictures



Photo Courtesy: Lindsay Bahia Pictures

Photo Courtesy: Lindsay Bahia Pictures

