

Sophie Stephenson



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Sophie is a dancer from Fort Augustus in the Scottish Highlands. Sophie specialises in a close to the floor style of percussive step dance which has origins in Scotland, although the tradition was carried forward by Scottish emigrant communities in Eastern Canada. Dedicated to promoting and passing on the tradition, Sophie set up *Sophabulous Steps* in 2012 to teach step dance whilst living on the Isle of South Uist in the Outer Hebrides where she studied traditional music at *Colaiste Bheinn na Faoghla*. Since then Sophie has collaborated on a number of projects which have led her to teach and perform at festivals throughout Scotland and internationally in Canada, America and Norway.

In 2013 Sophie was awarded the *Lisa Ullmann Dance Scholarship* which allowed her to travel to Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia to meet with dancers and explore dance traditions within their community context. Sophie has studied other percussive dance forms including Acadian step dancing, Appalachian flatfooting and Sean Nós dancing to enrich her practise and her steps encompass some techniques adopted from these other traditions. For a Celtic Connections commission, Sophie collaborated with contemporary dancer and flat-footer Rosalind Masson on 'Drop & Drone', a piece which combined Scottish and American Old Time tunes with Appalachian foot rhythms as well as fluid contemporary movement.

Sophie is particularly interested in the rhythmical relationships between language, music, song and dance. She is the founding member of trad group *Huradal* in which dance is an integral part of performance both as a percussive response to the music and also a rhythmical impetus behind the musical arrangements. Sophie has also developed *TradBeats*, a project which brings together the core elements of voice and movement through rhythm, with Gaelic mouth music, beatboxing, step dance and body percussion.

In 2015 Sophie embarked upon her first choreography for theatre piece when she was asked by director Muriel Romanes of the *Stellar Quines Theatre Company* to teach the cast steps which would reproduce the mechanical work rhythms of a woollen mill. This project required Sophie to distill her knowledge of jig, reel and strathspey steps into individual sounds, out with the context of formal rhythmical structures, and then to piece together and layer these fragments to create interesting percussive effects. In addition to projects with *Huradal* and *TradBeats*, Sophie is currently working on another theatre production with *Stellar Quines* which will be performed at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh later this year.

Performances

Acoustic Music Centre at St Brides, Fringe Festival (Edinburgh)
Best of the West Festival (Inveraray Castle, Scotland)
Blas Festival (Highlands)
Celtic Connections (Glasgow)
Ceòlas (South Uist)
MacArt Centre (Galashiels)
P.E.I Fiddle Camp (Charlottetown, Canada)
Re-Jigged Festival (Nova Scotia, Canada)
Rollobay Fiddle Festival (Prince Edward Island, Canada)
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (Isle of Skye)
Seall (Isle of Skye)
Scottish Storytelling Centre (Edinburgh)
Skye Theatre (Maine, USA)
TradFest (Edinburgh)
UKM Arctic Art Impulse (Troms, Norway)

Teaching

Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival (Inverness)
Benbecula Primary School (Benbecula, Outer Hebrides)
Celtic Connections Schools Outreach Programme (Glasgow)
Ceòlas (Isle of South Uist)
Champlain Valley Percussive Dance (Burlington, Vermont, USA)
Dance Glasgow (Glasgow)
Fèis a' Bhaile (Inverness)
Fèis Dhùn Eideann (Edinburgh)
Fèis Gleann Albainn (Fort Augustus)
Fèis Arainn (Isle of Arran)
Fèis Latharna (Oban)
Fèis Thordairnis (Staffin, Isle of Skye)
Kelvingrove Step Dance (Glasgow)
Meanbh Fhèis Ard Sgoil Phort Rìgh (Portree, Isle of Skye)
Newbattle Abbey College (Edinburgh)
Portree High School (Portree, Isle of Skye)
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (Glasgow)
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (Isle of Skye)
Sgoil Lionaclait (Benbecula, Outer Hebrides)
Re-Jigged Festival (Nova Scotia, Canada)
UKM Arctic Art Impulse (Troms, Norway)

Choreography:

THREADS (Stellar Quines Theatre Company, Edinburgh)
The View From Castle Rock - work in progress (Stellar Quines Theatre Company for Edinburgh Book Festival)