The BIG Picture

Carole Edrich rounds up the highlights of this year's Big Dance in words and pictures









Left and below, the record-breaking open air tea dance in Trafalgar Square. Above (right and left), Shobana Jeyasingh's *Counterpoint*

I'm feeling robbed. Tired, exhilarated, inspired and robbed. I spent the whole of the T-Mobile Big Dance dancing, watching dance, learning about dance, participating in dance. There was so much to do – there was too much to do! Thousands of people were performing, learning, watching and participating with hundreds of dance-related activities.

But even with careful planning, I still missed some of the things I really wanted to see. I only caught the vaguest hint of *The Bunker Thing*, a stunningly atmospheric East London Dance production – think *Blade Runner* meets *Boy Blue* with a community feel. I didn't get to any of the Pop Up Salsa events (free dancing on Oxford Street Plaza).

I missed taking atmospheric photos of TangoNautics' *Silent Tango* from Southwark Bridge; dance workshops at St Pancras International; the Daoist summer school; hula hooping; street dance at the Kenneth More Theatre in Ilford; a Scottish country dance picnic at Kensington Gardens; burlesque lessons in Covent Garden; a dance battle between hip hop dancer, busker and a BMX bike rider, and more.

I missed countless great contemporary performances, African, flamenco and improv. I missed jazz and contemporary workshops and a lesson in a fusion of dance, martial arts and yoga. I missed watching *Billy Elliot*, *Strictly Ballroom* and *Hairspray* on huge screens and I didn't get to the schools' dance →





Photograph by Tumi Ferris





Left, Deborah Colker's *Cruel* at the Barbican. Above and top right, 12-hour non-stop tango in Spitalfields. Right and below, vivid choreographies at the Big Bus stop at Horse Guards Parade



record-breaking attempt or the Hackney Youth Street Carnival. There just wasn't time.

But I had fun. I helped try to break the record for most people at a tea dance in Trafalgar Square, without managing to find the free tea. I learned to jive, jiggle and tried to do some hip hop. I was inspired by Shobana Jeyasingh's stunning choreography in *Counterpoint*, set amongst the fountains of Somerset House, and envious of Deborah Colker's inventive, visceral choreography in *Cruel* at the Barbican.

I went to a jive event at the stunning Royal Albert Hall, danced tango throughout the 12-hour non-stop event in Spitalfields →

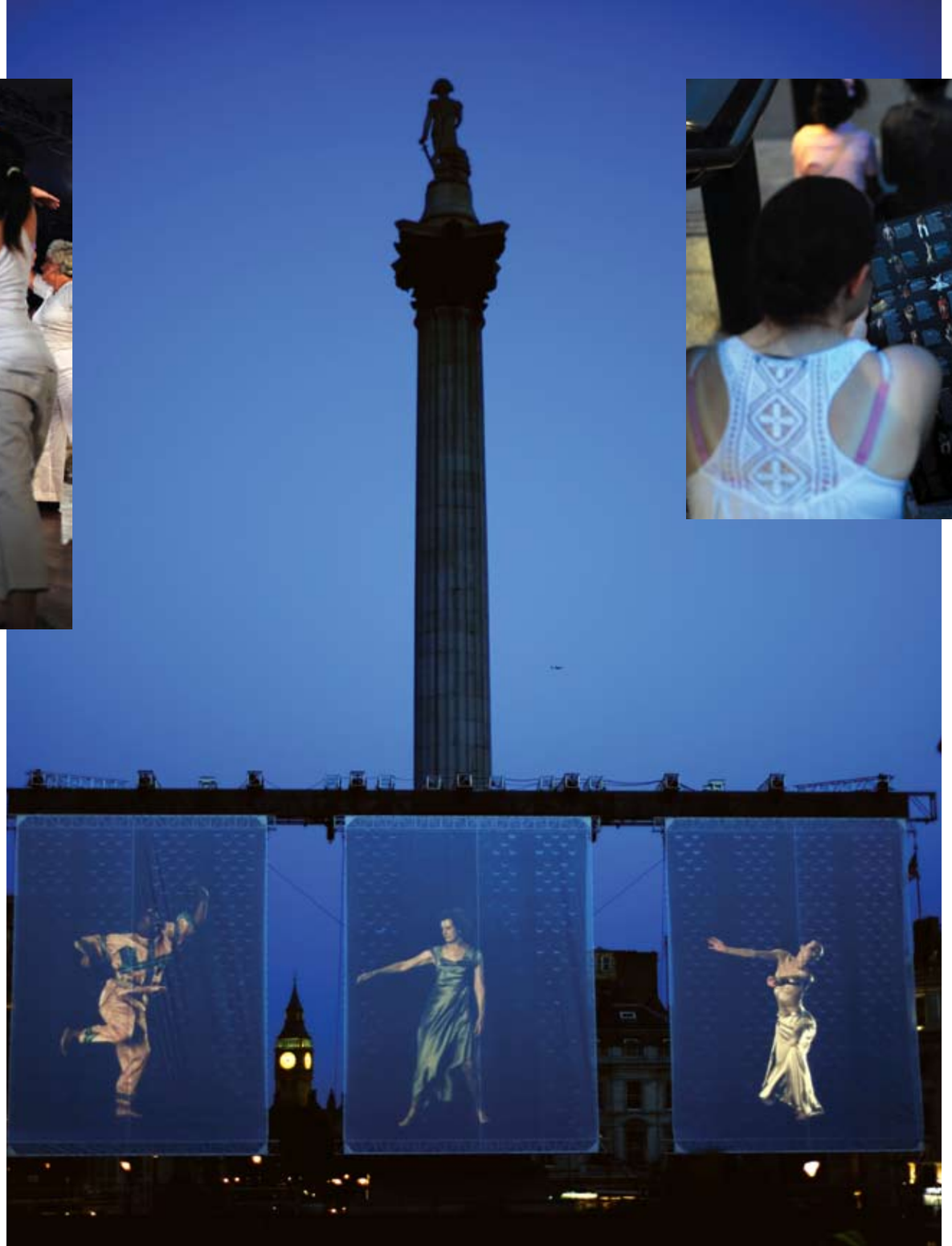








Top (right and left) and above (right and left), dancers in *Dancing stAGE,* held at the Royal Festival Hall, were aged over 50 and under ten. Right and far right, *Slow Dancing* in Trafalgar Square





– despite the strong summer sun – and watched great jazz dance, ballroom and the inspiring choreography of a number of troupes at Horse Guards Parade.

But the work that moved me most was neither lesson nor great choreography, but a piece performed by "normal people" aged over 50 and under ten – *Dancing stAGE* at the Royal Festival Hall. This performance spoke of love, loss, friendship, age and youth, of the need we all have to express ourselves and of the power of dance. It made me cry and I'd go back to watch it again.

I was robbed – and the next Big Dance will be much, much worse. At this year's launch, before the week began, London's mayor, Boris Johnson, said he wanted three million people dancing in London by 2012, and before you think I'll mind feeling so robbed again, I'm telling you: I can't wait! ●