

**Citation for Kerry Fletcher
EFDSS Gold Badge ceremony
At The Instep In Time showcase
Manor Pavilion Theatre
The Sidmouth Folk Festival
1 August 2022**

By Rachel Elliott, EFDSS Education Director

I have had the pleasure and privilege of working with Kerry for around 14 years - in her capacities as a folk dance artist and as the part-time, freelance Co-ordinator of our flourishing national Folk Education Network, now in its 12th year with Kerry at the helm. Kerry is absolutely dedicated to this role, building bridges between folk educators and the wider sectors of learning and participation, championing the best quality practice, and learning on all sides. She is cheerful, encouraging and with a great attention to detail and has organised over 36 successful events all over England (and online), with multiple partners and collaborators

What makes Kerry an outstanding recipient for an EFDSS Gold Badge is the fact that she is a genuine trailblazer. She is one of the *tiny* handful of professional folk dance practitioners in England, and is also a *total inspiration* across all areas of her work - as an Appalachian clog and step dance artist, choreographer and educator, and as co-founder and Co-Artistic Director of Folk Dance Remixed.

Her total commitment to the absolute best quality in her delivery, whilst being incredibly generous in supporting, mentoring, and championing others, is one quality – among many – that makes her shine.

Kerry has danced as part of the folk dance community all her life having been born into a folk-loving family. However, it was only at the relatively late age of her mid-30's that she decided to take the plunge and work towards becoming a professional folk dance practitioner. She started this journey by undertaking a dance foundation course attended mainly by young people in their late teens and early 20s as the only folk dancer. She then went on to gain qualifications in Community Dance leadership and a City and Guilds certificate in teaching adult learners. Since then, her career has blossomed; characterised by an ongoing curiosity, willingness to embrace change and new challenges, and commitment to professional development to constantly update and extend her skills and knowledge.

Kerry is wholeheartedly dedicated to widening the reach of folk dance to the people of England and beyond – people of all backgrounds, abilities, ethnicities, and communities - many of whom have never experienced it before. She has been willing to take risks, be brave, and collaborate with others as part of this mission. She was a member of Paddington Pandemonic Express Urban Molly Dancers in the

1980's, the first side to change their black facepaint to blue – in recognition that the practice of blackface was alienating and offensive to many people on the ethnically diverse streets of London where they were dancing.

Through an East London Dance project created in partnership with the English Folk Dance and Song Society, Kerry met choreographer Natasha Khamjani, and together, they founded Folk Dance Remixed 12 years ago. The important work they have done bringing their distinctive blend of folk and hip hop music and dance together, and presenting it outdoors, has reached thousands of people new to folk. Their engaging, innovative, creative, colourful, and cross-cultural approach has won many fans. We are proud that Folk Dance Remixed is an Associate Company of the English Folk Dance and Song Society and delighted that we have been able to commission them to create various projects, including commissions for the prestigious U.Dance national youth dance festival and more recently, Hope, their first indoor production.

Kerry has worked with children, young people, and adults as an educator in many community contexts – including folk festivals and adult learning, immigration removal centres with refugees and asylum seekers, and in schools of all types and levels.

She is quite simply one of the best community dance practitioners – of *any* dance genre – that I have encountered in my long career in dance and arts education.

Kerry balances sheer professionalism, with warmth and kindness. She is well networked in the dance sector, with very strong bonds within the folk community. She is an active social folk dancer and dances as part of Bower Street Morris in Kent close to her home, as well as her professional practice in Appalachian clog and step dance, and with Folk Dance Remixed.

In summary, I simply cannot think of anyone more highly deserving of the EFDSS Gold Badge award for her outstanding – and greatly needed - services to folk dance and wider folk arts.

I am delighted to be her colleague and thrilled to be presenting EFDSS' highest honour to her!