The Everyday Cyborgs and Humanimals event on April 14th at the Filmhouse was the first public screening of four short films exploring fears, hopes and anxieties, as well as the everyday reality, of being not-fully-human. The films were made by local artists, creatives, and a group of young people, as part of the Animal, Mechanical and Me: The Search for Replaceable Hearts project led by Dr Gill Haddow in Science Technology and Innovation Studies at the University of Edinburgh and funded by the Wellcome Trust.

The project explores patient experiences and public reactions to using material from non-human animals or from implantable cybernetic systems to repair, replace or regenerate the human body. It seeks to bring patients’ experiences, anxieties, and wider questions around human identity and selfhood, to bear on conversations about recent developments in medical technology. The film screening was part of a more general attempt to showcase social science research at Edinburgh University to wider audiences, and to generate public awareness and debate about these issues.

We decided to wear rainbow lanyards in addition to the classic dark-blue one to promote a more inclusive public image of the University, but also to pay tribute to the LGBT+ contributions to academic thought around identity, selfhood, and embodiment, and around the figure of the cyborg in the Western cultural
Pride Edinburgh

Pride Edinburgh is on Saturday 16th June 2018 and we have LOTS of plans! All are welcome to join us for the march, wear a Rainbow Lanyard and a University Staff Pride Network t-shirt and stay for the Queer AF cabaret.

We’ll meet at Levels Cafe, Holyrood Road from 11am in advance of the march moving off from the Scottish Parliament at 12.

We have set up an ePay link (https://bit.ly/2xrpIaz) and an order form (https://bit.ly/2xpWwRj) so you can buy a Staff Pride Network t-shirt for the march at cost price of £13.20, and we’ll send it to you internal mail. You can also collect from Central or Little France. With or without a t-shirt, feel free to wear your Rainbow Lanyard and join us to celebrate Pride and show solidarity with LGBT+ people around the world.

Once you’ve marched, applauded the speeches, visited the community fair in Teviot and Potterow and ceilidh-danced your wee heart out, SPN are proud to present a special Pride Edition of Queer AF Cabaret. Drag queen host Georgia Tasda will be joined by a selection of Edinburgh’s finest queer performers. The fun begins at 6pm in Teviot Underground. Free
Why I do Queer Tango

by Maria Buckova

If you don’t need convincing to try Queer tango, please come along on Wednesdays either for a lunch or an evening class (12 noon – 1pm and/or 1-2pm; 7-8pm and/or 8-9pm) at Epworth Halls, Methodist Church, Nicholson Square (5 minutes from the University of Edinburgh George Square campus), otherwise, read on for why I do it.

Over the last three years, I have been dancing on and off at the Blues and Balboa events organized by http://www.edinbop.co.uk/. I like the crowd there, along with the spirit of the dancing because being able to lead or follow regardless of one’s presented gender is common and accepted. Before moving to Edinburgh, I had chosen to practice flamenco in Montreal for two important reasons: first, because this dance has very little partner dynamic and second, for its emotional intensity. This intensity, in my mind, can be found in tango as well, and it has been an unfulfilled dream of mine to be able to learn it one day. But the very rigid traditional roles of leading and following, not to mention the strict ritual of eye contact and nods across the dance floor before inviting someone to dance, have placed it in the “I don’t do this” category for me.

Until I saw an ad for Queer tango this summer, and attended several classes in July with the amazing, inspiring, igniting Louise.

One of the rules I live by as a parent and as a human being,
is to act in a way and use a type of language that challenges oppressive stereotypes. For example, I avoid saying to little girls how cute or pretty they are, and instead I ask them what their favourite story is, or ask to see something they recently drew or made. Imagine how I felt, when Louise told us in the very first Queer tango class that we would invent our own language and instead of saying lead and follow, that we would use the words suggest and interpret.

To me Louise’s will to start this class and use a new language is not only an act of activism that is in line with my beliefs but also has been a precious gift – to be able to enter the world of this magical dance that used to be inaccessible to me. I can’t wait to share this gift with as many people as possible, and I know Louise feels the same.

Here is my favourite description on how Louise teaches tango:

“Louise’s philosophy of tango is that it is about awareness and connection. To tango well, you have to be able to pay attention. Some people have called tango ‘walking with attitude’, but she thinks it’s ‘walking with awareness’ – of yourself, of the other person, of everybody else in the room, of the music. In the world and in life in general, people are often looking for different ways to connect really well with other people. As human beings, we thrive with connection, and tango is a fabulous way of being connected.”

Please join us on Wednesdays at lunchtime or in the evening for one or two hours. The lunchtime classes are 12 noon – 1pm and/or 1-2pm; the evening classes are 7-8pm and/or 8-9pm. They are at Epworth Halls, Methodist Church, Nicholson Square (5 minutes from the University of Edinburgh George Square campus). Find out more at http://www.qte.dance/ and/or join the Queer tango Edinburgh Facebook group https://www.facebook.com/groups/285415031797624/.