

**11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the School of Performing Arts, University of Malta, 2025:  
'Participation, Engagement and Creativity in the Performing Arts' (5-7 March 2025)**

**Presentation abstracts (in alphabetical order according to first name of [first-listed] presenter)**

**Adèle Commins**, 'Creating Common Ground for Community Integration: Exploring Traditional Material for Contemporary Expression'

2024 marked the centenary of the death of Charles Villiers Stanford, an Irish-born composer who established himself as one of the foremost composers of the British Musical Renaissance at the turn of the twentieth century. Despite his absence from Ireland, Stanford continued to incorporate musical ideas from and impact on musical life in Ireland, including the editing for publication the collections of the nineteenth century antiquarian George Petrie. This paper focuses on a community integration project funded by the Government of Ireland that brought together professional and community artists. The lead group in the project, the Oriel Traditional Orchestra, was a voluntary intergenerational cross-border community orchestra who focused on traditional music repertoire from the Oriel region in the north east of Ireland. The membership of the orchestra includes a small minority born overseas but, for this project, they sought to collaborate with others in their community born elsewhere. This included professional musicians who had moved to the region, as well as a group of young musicians displaced by the war in the Ukraine. This paper critically reflects on various aspects of the project including the arrangement of traditional music from the Petrie collection for the ensemble, the incorporation of Irish-language songs that had been collected using phonetics and could now be shared with non-Irish speakers using a similar approach, and the performance of works by Stanford by musicians born outside Ireland. The desire to connect professional and community-based artists presented challenges and opportunities, critically creating roles and connections that were mutually beneficial. Desiring to critique the use of music for community integration, the focus on material that is primarily Irish in origin, is balanced by the inclusion of Ukrainian music and Stanford's identity as a composer in the European tradition who drew on influences beyond his home country to international appeal.

**Alex Jatosti**, 'In Defence of the Musicological Art: On the Creative Dimension of Music Scholarship'

'The artist builds his temple in the grove. ... The theoretician of art tills the earth ... and accompanies the inspired creator as a lifelong companion. ... [The artist's] truth ... will be shielded and defended by the historian of art beyond the grave' (Guido Adler, 'The Scope, Method, and Aim of Musicology', [1885]). Aside from still standing as a defining text for the structure and aims of the field, Adler's manifesto for the emerging discipline of musicology survives as a document from a time when the language of scientific investigation could peacefully coexist with that of poetry, soaring metaphor, and quasi-metaphysics. Those days of innocence are long lost: mature, self-conscious musicology must continually question itself, problematise its language, and account for its historically ingrained biases and exclusionary practices. It could be argued that self-criticism and systematic deconstruction are necessary conditions for a discipline's survival: the foundations, aims, methods, and objects of study of present-day musicology could not possibly coincide with those outlined by Adler in 1885 if the field is not to fall inevitably into anachronism and irrelevance. There is no longer room, then, for

Adlerian poeticism and spiritual imagery: contemporary musicology, rather than mystifying and ‘adoring music in its verdant temple,’ should be ‘cut[ting] art down to size’ (Dolan 2015: 88).

Such a sacrifice seems more than justified in the name of the field’s currency, yet the question arises: how does the present state of our discipline account for the interpretive, literary, creative—the ‘artistic’—elements of its practice? Would it still be possible to think of the music scholar as ‘an artist under oath’, who owes as much to truth as to the creative nature of their task (Garrison 1992: 67)? And might our necessary preoccupation with the politics of language be driving our field—like the neurotic Wittgenstein-inspired protagonist of Bernhard’s *Correction* (1975), whose realisation of language’s impossibility to describe truth ends in suicide—towards dissolution? This presentation, while taking a clear stance in defence of musicology as an artistic endeavour, seeks to take advantage of this scholarly forum to open a discussion, posing the question: to what extent does problematising musical discourse and language justify the renunciation of the artistic dimension of our task?

**Alice Marshall**, *Tender Steps* (a Short Dance Film, raising awareness of Babyloss in the Digital Arena)

*Tender Steps*, a short dance film created to raise awareness of babyloss, has captivated a global online audience through its emotionally resonant portrayal of grief and remembrance. This work addresses a profound, often underrepresented experience, using the power of virtual performance to harness participation and empathy. By focusing on an issue that transcends cultural and national boundaries, *Tender Steps* mobilizes the performing arts as a vehicle for community engagement and social support, highlighting how the digital space can act as a site for collective healing and awareness-building.

The viewing of this work for delegates fits within the broader theme of ‘Performing Arts and Participation in Virtual and Online Media.’ The film’s impact lies in its use of cinematic techniques that are both accessible and emotionally immersive, leveraging the immediacy of digital platforms to reach a diverse and international viewership. As noted in the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026, cultural institutions, such as the University of Derby, are pivotal in strengthening integration and community involvement. This film exemplifies this role by engaging an online audience in a participatory experience that encourages dialogue on babyloss—a topic that often remains stigmatised or overlooked.

Through *Tender Steps*, we explore how virtual media can extend the reach of the performing arts, creating a new, inclusive space for engagement that is not constrained by geographic or social barriers. This project underscores the potential of digital platforms to facilitate participatory engagement and inclusive storytelling, setting a precedent for how performance-based art can create meaningful online communities around sensitive issues. *Tender Steps* not only deepens audience involvement but also broadens the scope of digital performing arts as a medium for empathy and awareness in addressing complex social themes.

**Amaia Mugica**, ‘Forced Migration, Audible Minorities and International Actors Navigating Identities in the UK Performing Arts Field’

Despite an evident shift in current discussions about inclusivity within higher education settings and the professional acting world in the UK, the British theatre landscape requires further development. The following essay explores the difficulties of migrant actors within the British theatre sphere and formulates questions about forced migration, identity, language, and the lived experiences of migrant actors and student-actors in the UK. The paper examines how the concepts of migration, audible minorities and *glottophobia* – discrimination of accented people – intersect and shape the experiences of international actors in the British theatre training and making. The study draws from

my embodied autobiographical experience as a Spanish migrant actor/director and contemporary researcher; it delves into the tension in which international students and actors experience their craft in training settings and professional careers.

Central to the investigation is the concept of *glottophobia* and the discrimination of accented people. Through a deep analysis of *glottophobia* the research aims to give voice to the imposed erasure of identity faced by migrant actors to be castable and respond to an Anglo-centric notion of actorship. The research employs a rigorous mixed-methods approach, using qualitative methods such as (auto)ethnographic and (auto)biographic observations, and a case study of the devised theatre play 'Miss Brexit', co-created by two directors and six actors sharing the migrant experience. The essay contextualises these experiences within broader discussions of forced migration, multicultural performance, and linguistic discrimination and aims to give voice to a current problem within the field while advocating for a more inclusive and diverse British theatre landscape.

**Aneta Głowacka**, 'Democratisation Processes in Theatre Institutions in Poland: Selected Examples and Activities'

The aim of the talk will be to present partial research carried out as part of the project 'Democratisation processes in theatre institutions in Poland. Procedures, mechanisms and power relations'. The research, conducted in theatres all over Poland, aims at answering questions such as: which management models dominate in Polish theatres, to what extent theatre directors are aware of their management strategy, what are the expectations of employees towards managers in the area of theatre management, whether artistic institutions are ready to adopt more modern and democratic ways of running a theatre (collective, participatory management) and to what extent the legal framework allows for such changes. Democratisation is not only about processes within the institution, but also about how the institution shapes its relations with the external environment. Thus, conclusions will be made about audience participation in shaping the face of the theatre institution, in which areas and how the audience is involved in the theatre. The talk will discuss the first attempts to democratise decision-making in theatre institutions in Poland, as well as examples of involving the audience in theatres' programming activities.

**Angela Pickard**, 'Critical Dance Pedagogy: Promoting More Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Dance'

Engagement in dance can be transformative, but there are systemic socio-cultural barriers and challenges that perpetuate power dynamics, inequities and injustices in the dance studio. These prevent some young dancers from accessing, participating, engaging and progressing in dance. It is the application of pedagogy, and choices of teaching strategies, that can change power relationships, and establish enabling environments that foster inclusion, and a more open exchange of ideas in the teaching-learning relationship. There is potential for greater student/dancer-centred dance teaching pedagogies, that offer more equitable and inclusive learning environments for students and young dancers to thrive.

This paper discusses qualitative findings from a UK-wide dance educator's network called *Critical Dance Pedagogy*. The network has brought together over 280 teachers, students, teaching artists, academics, researchers, dance organisations and companies, who work with young people between the ages of 11-25 years, to examine taken for granted, and systemic barriers to participation and progression in dance in the UK. Through an artist lab and a series of four symposium events, the network participants have engaged in critical thinking and knowledge exchange, to work towards developing more enabling dance pedagogies. Findings discuss the potential of collaboration

opportunities for raising awareness of today's evolving and diverse society, the need for continued workforce development to understand taken for granted assumptions, power dynamics, the complexities of the teaching and learning relationship and inclusive pedagogies in dance.

**Anna Formosa, 'Gambori – Kažin 60+ ta' Teatru Malta'**

Back in 2019, Teatru Malta presented their first show with cast and crew entirely made up of people who are 60+. Being Christmas, the play took the shape of a panto with music and dancing that got the actors, some of whom were professional actors, all moving and singing. The director and musical director were professional with many accolades under their belt and the result was full houses of audiences every night laughing and clapping along with the action on stage. It went on to win an award for audience's choice that year, however the most important aspects of this project were the high turnout for participation and the positive impact weekly sessions imparted on participants. This was a call for Teatru Malta to start Kažin 60+, a community-based theatre group for people 60+ who work towards a play. Over the years this grew and now has 6 groups, one in each region of Malta and Gozo. Engaging over 80 participants every year, it culminates in a festival of short plays called Gambori.

Community theatre has different aims to professional theatre: the emphasis is on the process as opposed to the product, enabling the creation of a platform for self-expression, building of friendships, promoting well-being, and indirectly addressing feelings of isolation and loneliness through theatre. This paper will reflect and analyse the impact this project has on the local 60+ communities, and in turn its impact on the wider community. Through interviews with the organisers and directors, it will explore the methodologies and approaches used, and through conversations and questionnaires with participants analyse the value and role of participation through lived experience, the value of community and audience engagement through the performing arts in communities who would otherwise not engage in the arts.

**Anna Rezaei, 'Beyond Recitation: Gender, Audience Engagement, and Agency in Naqqāli Storytelling'**

Naqqāli, the traditional Iranian art of epic storytelling, is a dynamic performance rooted in the rich narratives of Ferdowsi's *Šāhname*, Iran's iconic *Book of Kings*. This art form is characterized by its reliance on improvisation, audience participation, and dramatic expression, which transform it into a living, evolving tradition. Unlike static readings of texts, Naqqāls (storytellers) aim to go beyond mere recitation and engage the audience to create a dynamic dialogue between the story and the listeners. These Naqqāls employ a wide range of vocal techniques, dramatic gestures, and physical movements to draw listeners into the narrative, often adapting the tale based on the audience's background, their reactions, and even current events or news headlines relevant to the performance.

The storyteller's gender plays a crucial role in shaping the nature of interaction with the audience. Female Naqqāls not only resist the norms of a historically segregated society through their performances but also develop their agency within a political system that often centers around religious values. This system traditionally views female performers as motreb (courtesan entertainers) and has marginalized them from the public stage. This abstract examines how gender influences the storyteller's engagement with the audience during live performances. Furthermore, it explores the role of audience participation in Naqqāli, highlighting how the storyteller's ability to engage with the audience shapes the narrative experience. By focusing on both the performer's improvisational skills and the gender dynamics of audience interaction, this study aims to illuminate the multifaceted nature of Naqqāli as both an art form and a social experience.

**Anthony Hostetter, 'Teaching Lessons of the Holocaust Through Embodied Testimony'**

The immediate power of Holocaust survivor testimony and witnessing is unmistakable. As Rob Baum stated, ‘testimony arises from the concomitant, simultaneous need to *tell the story and to be heard*. [her emphasis] That’s all. The presence of the witness is that which grants testimony its power.’ (Baum, The Mark, 50) Rosalie Simon, who was twelve years old when she entered the gates of Auschwitz-Birkenau, remains an active speaker engaging with community groups large and small, young and old at age 93. My play, *Girl in a Striped Dress* (along with four other plays) serves as a tool to keep survivor’s testimonies alive and to continue their discourse with communities after the survivors no longer can.

This presentation focuses on the performance of Rosalie Simon’s verbatim testimony by Erica Gerold, who first performed *Girl in a Striped Dress* as a 21-year-old student in 2022 and has since performed the play four additional times (plus two more performances scheduled for January 2025). Rosalie Simon saw the premiere performance and two other performances of the work for adult and student audiences. While the play presents Simon’s verbatim testimony, the play opens by presenting the performer as herself and not as the character of ‘Rosalie.’ Student viewers experience the story as told by someone close to their age and adults experience the performance as if they were seeing someone close to their children’s age and close to the age Simon was during the Holocaust.

This presentation explores how this documentary theatre performance engages communities by preserving and dramatizing important history with an actor serving, in Freddie Rokem’s words, as a ‘hyper-historian,’ which helps audiences understand that the performer will ‘reappear’ as someone that existed in the past. I also explore the responsibility the performer has in telling this history, especially when the survivor is present and witnessing her own story. It examines post-performance discussions with the audience when both performer and survivor answers audience questions.

**Antonio Bukhar Ssebuuma, ‘Culture as a Site of Knowledge for Interdisciplinary Artistry and Audience Participation’ (Research Sharing)**

This presentation is part of Antonio Bukhar Ssebuuma’s broader practice-based research project, MUTUBA, which explores the hypothetical consciousness of the *Ficus Natalensis* (Mutuba) tree, native to Uganda. The tree’s bark is skillfully harvested to produce Barkcloth (Lubugo)—an eco-friendly, versatile fabric used in fashion and visual art. When properly extracted, the tree regenerates its bark and grows larger; however, improper extraction results in the tree’s death. This contrast serves as the foundation for an artistic exploration of the intersection of culture, nature, and people, highlighting the tree’s vulnerable position in this equation. MUTUBA examines the tree’s regenerative ability and the diverse cultural and spiritual uses of Lubugo, posing the question: How can these elements inspire profound creative practice that fosters multisensory-interdisciplinary artistic expression? To provoke thought and emotional responses that spark a broader conversation about the pillars that support our holistic being.

The presentation includes a 15-minute abstract film shot in Uganda, which explores the Idea of man as nature. Then transitions into a 10-minute live movement performance that extends the emotional expression of the tree’s vulnerability. This activates a durational exhibition featuring photography and artefacts from Uganda, further contextualizing the work. Following the activation, the absence of the body invites the audience, now participants, to reflect on how this shift affects their emotional response, visual interpretation, and overall experience. Beyond observation, they will also be permitted to engage in a multisensory experience through touch and smell. Throughout the exhibition, audience members are encouraged to participate in writing reflections on a review board, which will serve as prompts for a 20-minute interactive dialogue at the end of the durational piece, discussing deeply the themes emerging from the work.

**Axel Petri-Preis, 'Working Towards a Universal: How Participatory Music Projects Can Contribute to Commonly Shared Values and Cultural Practices'**

In an era marked by increasing diversity and cultural fragmentation, the question of what binds societies together when so little is commonly shared has grown more pressing. Contemporary European societies reflect this challenge, as varying lifestyles, identities, and cultural expressions create complex dynamics that nationalist and right-wing movements exploit to advance essentialist agendas centered on shared identity. This paper investigates how socially-oriented musical practices might foster shared cultural practices and values as an alternative to such divisive agendas. Drawing on ideas by Omri Boehm, François Jullien, and Andreas Reckwitz, I ask how socially-oriented musical practices can contribute to shared cultural practices and values and propose *joint work towards a Universal* as a possible answer.

To this end, I apply the authors' theories to participatory music projects as frameworks for (re-)building a culture of the general. Boehm's 'radical universalism' serves as a foundation by establishing human dignity as non-negotiable, guiding respectful interactions within these projects. Jullien's idea of the 'universal' as a continually expanding and unfinished process encourages participants to view their cultural differences as 'fruitful in-betweens,' where shared expressions can emerge. Reckwitz's concept of 'doing universality' positions these music projects as active, ongoing collaborations in which all participants, regardless of background, contribute equally to the creation of commonly shared practices and norms. Through this lens, I suggest that participatory music projects, understood as *joint work towards a Universal*, have the potential to facilitate democratic negotiation processes. By fostering community encounters and interactions in artistic spaces, these projects can ideally (re)establish shared knowledge, norms, and practices among participants and thus contribute to societal reconciliation and cohesion.

**Azzurra Ardonini, 'An Inquiry into How to Develop a Deeper Level of Ownership and Co-agency in a Contemporary Dance Technique Class Using Reflective Practice'**

This research investigates student engagement and ownership in technique classes through targeted teaching strategies and reflective practice; pedagogical considerations and theoretical frameworks that promote active interpretation of set material are examined. Grounded in qualitative dance research, this practitioner-led inquiry focuses on how students can actively find their own interpretation instead of replicating steps. By employing an inquiry-based learning approach, the study aims to enhance self-awareness and deepen understanding of interpretation within set material to emphasise the interrogation of movements. The process is based upon a reciprocal and relational exchange between the researcher and the dancers, where the students are seen as participants and co-owners of the space and the content offered.

Reflective practice serves as a crucial tool, linking reflection with learning and helping students become more self-sufficient. This method cultivates a richer perspective on teaching and learning in dance, aligning with the evolving emphasis on student ownership through student-centred methodologies. By integrating reflective practices into the learning environment, the research underscores the significance of valuing student contributions while fostering critical thinking and collaboration. The findings contribute to ongoing discussions about participation and engagement in higher education, illustrating how reflective practice can enhance the educational experience. Ultimately, this work offers insights into how educators can facilitate student agency and active engagement, enriching the pedagogical landscape in the arts. Through these explorations, the paper advocates for teaching approaches that prioritise student involvement, promoting a more dynamic and interactive learning atmosphere in technique classes.

**Ben Krakauer, 'Participatory Music Culture as Supportive of Lifelong Musical Motivation'**

This paper highlights the centrality of participatory musical settings in sustaining creative motivation and desire for musicians in my vernacular string community at the intersection of bluegrass, jazz, old-time, and Celtic music. Drawing on ethnographic interviews with 39 professional and semi-professional musicians, this work illustrates how immersive communal contexts—such as camps and festivals—help musicians to integrate artistic techniques and sensibilities within a holistic sense of self and community. Interviewees recalled foundational experiences at these events including jamming, creative collaboration, and both active and passive listening. Returning to these settings over the years provided a creative refuge and counterbalance to demands of professional and touring life. Furthermore, as musicians grew into tradition bearers, they found additional inspiration by assuming positions of leadership at these events. Interviewees described working to enhance inclusion and accessibility, cultivating a joyful environment, facilitating participatory experiences for colleagues and audiences, and empowering students to find their own musical voices. In addition, many were motivated by their students, both by the long-term familial quality of the teacher-student relationship and by the sense of creative collaboration in solving problems and learning together. My findings reinforce aspects of Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory (2000), finding that musicians were most motivated and inspired by activities and contexts that were intrinsically interesting and enjoyable; that they had opted into and for which they were self-motivated (as opposed to being compelled to participate or held accountable by others); and that promoted social, emotional, and physical health. My research reinforces the importance of participatory and communal artistic spaces, and suggests that higher education music programs should prioritize cultivating vibrant, inclusive, and non-hierarchical contexts with an explicit emphasis on communal cohesion and collaborative process. My research suggests that such settings support acquisition of musical competencies, development of artistic voice, and lifelong creative engagement.

**Brenda Suyanne Barbosa, 'Ancient Musical Instruments in Contemporary Performances'**

During the last centuries, archaeological excavations uncovered many horns and trumpets across different countries on the Atlantic coast of Europe. Those musical instruments date back to the late Bronze Age and Iron Age, when the so-called Celtic societies inhabited a good portion of Western and Eastern Europe. During music-archaeological studies on those artefacts, the Irish instruments were baptised with new names, and alongside the Carnyx, they were introduced in the contemporary music scenario by different organisations, who have done a progressive work not just about the probable use and social representation of those instruments during the Bronze and Iron Ages, but also composed new music, and played them in international performances with educational and entertainment purposes. Besides that, European seasonal festivals have also incorporated the instruments into their shows. This relatively new movement requires the attention of scholars in the area of ethnomusicology. Focusing on a diversified and collective educational scenario and discussing the contemporary use of Bronze and Iron Age wind instruments, it is possible to understand what the composers aim to communicate with their sounds and their significance to the soundscape. Based on netnographical research, the material analysed comprises CDs and videos available online and interviews with composers and musicians. Under semiotic and identity studies, we can consider the value and role of participation in the performing arts, analysing the interaction between the performer, audience, and musical instruments while agents of the music-making process.

**Carlotta Travaglini, 'Joseph Sieber: An Example of Engagement Experience in the Marches Region in the Late 18th Century'**

Joseph (Giuseppe) Sieber (Prague 1754 - Offida 1801) was a Czech musician emigrated in the Marches in 1778, when the family Compagnoni-Marefoschi, an aristocratic household based in Macerata (centre of Italy), proposed him a contract with a payroll of 2,5 scudi per month. The collaboration between Sieber and the Compagnoni-Marefoschi family is proved by an intense exchange of letters between the composer and his patrons, according to which it probably continued until 1795. This vast correspondence is collected in the Casanatense Library of Rome, in the Compagnoni-Marefoschi collection (see Rostirolla-Szpadrowska, *Una biblioteca musicale del Settecento: il fondo Compagnoni-Marefoschi della Biblioteca Casanatense di Roma* (Rome 1995), pp. 29-86 et Appendix docs. nos. 22-26, 28-29). Delving into the communications, it is possible to find precious information, first of all about the performing practice in the Papal State, particularly in the Marches, that, at that time, was marked by an extreme political and social fragmentation. Secondly, the correspondence will portrait the figure of Sieber himself, a talented musician and prolific composer, never studied until now, who contributed to bring Bohemian musical culture to Italy.

The purpose of this paper is to present the first outcomes of this new research on Sieber, particularly on his participation in community engagement projects of production and circulation of musical works, concerts and collaborations. What I intend to do is to examine a specific interval of time of Sieber's correspondence, from 1778 to 1784, the time that perfectly highlights Sieber's employment as a court musician, and as a freelance player and conductor. Finally, my research will also address the Marches' operatic production and seasons in the late eighteenth century, in which Sieber took part as head violin and conductor.

**Charlie Ingram**, 'Community Consultations Through Participatory Practice: The "Evaluative Performance"' (Practice Sharing)

Recent developments such as the global pandemic, gender violence, Black Lives Matter, and not least the climate crisis, have accelerated the search for participatory methods of engagement, participation, and impact across a number of research disciplines. Within these disciplines, citizen voice and lived experience are sought to deepen understanding behind behavioural change as a result of policy or project intervention strategies. Within this there are limitations, for example, the UK Civil Service in 2021 recognises that 'most policymakers do not consistently have the skills, incentives, or infrastructure to find new evidence about citizens'. It is also argued that policy solutions are too often based on stakeholder opinion, and rarely are the voices and experiences of citizens used to evidence policymaking. In this short talk and practice sharing, I will explore examples of 'Evaluative Performance', an innovative research approach that responds to these issues by combining headphone verbatim theatre (HVT) arts practice and social science evaluation frameworks. Evaluative Performance is a method of data gathering that involves a performance created solely from the words spoken by interview participants, combined with a post-performance contextual discussion. Through video examples and a participatory demonstration, I will argue that the use of Evaluative Performance as an approach creates a much more direct, empathetic, connection between the audience and the contents of the citizen interviews. Audiences will gain a live insight into this method and approach, and its value to practice research through three separate case studies, in contrasting sectors. First, exploring citizens expressions of civic pride during Coventry UK City of Culture 2021, second, a study into youth perspectives of Smart Local Energy Systems through community consultation and third, an exploration of Coventry Biennial, a visual art Biennial in the UK, and how its values manifest in its practices.

**Clare Lesser**, 'Audience as Performer: The Communal "Circus" of John Cage's 33½'

Utilising 300 LPs and twelve phonographs and to be performed by its audience, the world premiere of John Cage's *33½*, given at the University of California, Davis's music department on November 21st, 1969, must have been quite an occasion. Building on the framework already established in his 1952 proto-Happening, the 'Untitled Event at Black Mountain College,' where the performance closed with a collective 'audience' coffee drinking ritual, *33½* is a collective 'circus' experience, where collaboration between participants and 'composer,' and tension between the 'live' and the recorded, coalesce in one great, musical, cultural and communal sonic collage. As with many of Cage's pieces, chance plays an important role, with the choice of records being unplanned by the composer. This opens up a huge field of sonic possibilities in performance, further augmented by the performer-audience's complete agency over the choice and order of recordings, which machine to place a record on, what speed to play it, the volume, whether or not to change a record, where to sit or stand, and when and where to move. The experience is truly communal, immersive and mobile, with moving bodies opening—or blocking—sonic pathways, and background chatter adding to the total soundscape. But is a piece so redolent of the ethos of the 1960s, still relevant today?

This paper will examine Cage's strategies for decentering traditional composer/performer/audience paradigms, while situating *33½* in the broader context of Cage's 'Happenings' and open access compositions from the 1950s to the 1970s. I question whether *33½* still has the power to engage a 21st century audience, reflecting on participation, access, and creativity in times of economic—and other—constraints on live music making, as evidenced in a recent performance I organised in the UK.

**Chris Walton, 'How *Winterreise* Was Created by Its Audiences'**

Performing Schubert's *Winterreise* complete has long been a mark of pride for lieder singers. But Schubert never called *Winterreise* a cycle, avoided any large-scale key scheme or motivic unity, and almost certainly never imagined it might be sung entire. Complete performances of *Winterreise* only began in the 1850s and remained sporadic until after WWI, a time when the 'Liederabend' in general flourished, constituting up to 30% of concerts in Central Europe. Opera had become impossibly expensive, but attending, say, a complete performance of *Winterreise* offered a cheaper, socially and aesthetically acceptable alternative. It was also now that *Winterreise* began to be described as the interior monologue of an alienated man in a wintry 'landscape of death' (Adorno). But this is a projection onto Schubert of the blasted landscapes and existential horror of the recent war and its aftermath, partly as a result of linguistic misunderstandings (the work's opening word, 'fremd', has been cited ever since as signifying the narrator's alienation, though in Schubert's day it simply meant 'jobless'). The *Winterreise* we know today – a cycle to be sung entire – is essentially an invention of the 1920s. It is arguably the only major work of the Western canon that was 'created' not by its composer, but as an implicitly communal act on the part of its audiences and performers in response to a pandemic, hunger, a lost war, economic and social collapse, and also, perhaps, to a contemporary music scene from which the concert-going public itself felt increasingly alienated.

**Daithí Kearney, 'Bringing Together Brigid: Reimagining Folklore by and for a Community'**

2024 marked the 1500th anniversary of the death of St Brigid, a patron saint of Ireland in the local tradition. Not an official saint in the canon of the Roman Catholic Church, the figure of Brigid is also linked with older Celtic traditions and beliefs. In an increasingly secular Ireland, stories of Brigid engage with contemporary social issues including gender equality, reproductive rights and class divides. This paper focuses on a creative collaborative project that brought together professional and community artists for the production of a stage show entitled *Brigid, Lady of Light*. Commissioned and funded by the local authority, Louth County Council, the production was staged for three nights in the local theatre as part of a nationwide series of events. This paper takes an autoethnographic

approach to participation in community engagement projects involving the performing arts with interdisciplinary collaborations. As part of the creative team from the outset, I was part of discussions around a variety of aspects of the production, from developing the concept, to recruiting skilled individuals, involving community groups, composing the score and contributing choreography. Two key challenges relevant to this conference emerge. The first relates to the desire to develop opportunities for collaboration between professional and community-based artists. The second explores the challenges of engaging with historical and folkloric ideas with a desire to appeal to a contemporary audience. Amongst the aspects of the production that are considered are the genre(s) of music and dance, the aspects of the stories that are incorporated, and the negotiation between the religious and secular identities of the central character. The paper demonstrates how these considerations are integral to deepening audience engagement and enhancing the overall impact of the production.

**Darija Davidović**, 'Bridging the Divide: "Xáma – Home" and the Social Challenges of Staging War'

Lithuanian director Kamilė Gudmonaitė conceived the theater project Xáta – Home at the Munich Kammerspiele in 2023, addressing the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The idea was to bring together theater professionals from Russia and Ukraine, along with Ukrainian and Russian refugees, to perform on stage and confront the horrors of war. However, after strong resistance from the Ukrainians involved in the project against appearing jointly with Russian performers, the director and the project team were forced to redesign the production. This led to the creation of a staging concept featuring a divided stage, with the Ukrainian ensemble performing first, followed by the Russian ensemble. This concept also affected the entire rehearsal and performance period, resulting in the Russian and Ukrainian performers not interacting on or off stage during rehearsals and performances, both in Munich and abroad. The outcome was a theatrical evening divided into two sections: the first featured interviews with Ukrainian refugees projected on screen, accompanied by performances of traditional Ukrainian songs. The second section showcased interviews with Russian refugees, accompanied by traditional Russian dances. Although the Ukrainians and Russians did not meet on stage, they both engaged with the same fundamental question: How can Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine be addressed? In my presentation, I will introduce the theater project, elaborating on the rehearsal and development process based on insights from autobiographical-narrative interviews I conducted with participants of Xáta as part of my field research. Additionally, I will critically discuss the concept of dividing this theater project, considering its participatory approach involving refugees. The discussion will focus on how this strict separation affected the rehearsal process, the challenges it presented for the hosting theater institution, and how it influenced the aesthetic, formal, and content-related aspects of Xáta, as well as the idea of theater as a medium for dialogue and exchange.

**David Kjar, Tanya Landau, Sara d'Ippolito Reichert**, Session Title: *Liberating Musical Engagement: Embodied Practice-as-Research, Co-Performance, and the Othered Presence of the Past* (pre-organised panel)

Academic inquiry is an ever-evolving developmental process, revealing ideological resonances and contradictions in scholarship and performance. Through auto-ethnographic case studies, we address how negotiating notions of authenticity, embodiment and identity lead to increasingly complex questions and potential answers. This session addresses the ideological contradictions presented by scholar-performers and their embodiments, or not, of cultural norms and expectations. We address the liminality of embodied practice and its epistemological relationship to the body by looking at three distinct case studies. Looking through the lens of Practice-as-Research (Nelson, 2013) as legitimate academic work, the panel explores a new understanding of artistic inquiry that sees

performance as practice and embodiment as knowledge (Spatz, 2015). These interactions lead to greater engagement with performers and audience/spectators through an autopoietic feedback loop (Fisher-Lichte, 2008) that activates participation.

The first lens explores how modern-day patronage in the early music movement creates solidarity amongst performers and how the signification of a 'royal' status defines relationships and ideological differences among all 'musicking' (Small, 1998) participants. Offering a historical perspective on participation and performance, Kjar investigates the reciprocal power imbalances in a historically informed patronage system and how analyzing these dynamics simultaneously embodies historical and contemporary social processes. The second lens explores embodiment's complexities and nuances, leading to contradictions within co-performance. As an opera singer in a production of Jake Heggie's opera *Two Remain* at the Illinois Holocaust Museum (USA), Landau nuances how personal confrontations with Jewishness in performance led to a release of ancestral trauma for herself and the audience. The third lens explores erased histories and removed bodies. As a female classical guitarist, d'Ippolito-Reichert addresses ideological discrepancies as simultaneously embodied and disembodied in male-dominated spaces, wherein her body and the body of work are present and non-present, leading to a 'sublime historical experience' (Ankersmit, 2007).

Our panel provides a radical space for dialogue between scholarly research and musician-activists' work on issues of access, equity, and diversity, leading to innovative methods of fostering long-lasting participation and engagement in the performing arts.

**Ellen Davies and Anastasia Zaponidou, 'FREE YOUR INNER ROAR and SOUND YOUR VOICE!': Examining the Impact and Future Prospects of the *Cysylltu...Connecting* Community Arts Project'**

Responding to the increasing levels of poor mental health affected by various societal changes in recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic, a collective of creative practitioners based in North Wales, developed a one-year collaborative community project entitled *Cysylltu...Connecting*. The project aimed to demonstrate the benefit of the creative arts in enabling meaningful transitions from mental health induced isolation to (re-)connection among community members, providing a safe space for participants to experience mental and creative stimulation. Creative practitioners specialising in dance, music, poetry, and the visual arts, worked closely with members of the local community in creative settings. Findings from these *playshops* formed the basis of a reflective, interactive multimedia performance by the creative practitioners' team. This performance was hosted at Bangor University's Pontio Arts and Innovation Centre in January 2024, and its success led to an extension of the programme, funded by Gwynedd Council and Tŷ Cerdd, exploring a multi-disciplinary arts approach in improving wellbeing within existing local community groups. The creative team worked in small clusters with a total of five pilot groups, aiming to establish whether this approach could be adapted for each group. Participants in these pilot groups were from diverse backgrounds, ranging from disaffected secondary school pupils to dementia care home residents.

This paper examines one case-study from these pilot groups, a playshop for a group of secondary school age children at the Caernarfon Porthi Dre Community hub. This playshop, entitled *FREE YOUR INNER ROAR*, enabled participants to express their feelings by externalising them through creative means. The playshop demonstrated how creative expression enabled students to experience positive feelings of self-confidence, fun, and enjoyment. The draft film examines the work carried out during this community-based creative activity, demonstrating its benefits in developing an effective creative playshop programme for young people and other diverse community groups.

**Elsa Urmston, 'Participating in Educational Change: Balancing Pedagogical Tensions with Educators in Tertiary Vocational Dance Education'**

The state of British dance Higher Education (HE) occupies a vulnerable position due to the low status assigned to arts practice, arts and physical education, and vocational subjects by the media and recent British governments. As dance programmes strive for sustainability, these prevailing socio-cultural and political factors influence pedagogical innovations towards educational change. One recent shift is the implementation of periodisation, an athletic training approach aiming to centralise students' health in their education by tackling overtraining, and optimising performance for sustainable careers. Whilst periodisation has been explored as part of curriculum design, little focus has been given to educators' engagement with its pedagogical application. This study involved interviews with 11 dance educators during the first year of periodisation's implementation at their institution. Using arts-based methods, they reflected on their participation and engagement in periodisation's implementation for educational change.

Three themes suggested educators' ambivalence towards periodisation. Firstly, educators construed periodisation as an institutional mandate rather than purposefully enriching pedagogic approaches. Secondly, there was an epistemological disconnect between educators' values and periodisation's underlying principles, which highlighted clashes between how artistic and scientific knowledge bases were valued. Similarly, educators questioned the paradox of periodisation's positive implications for dancers' health and wellbeing alongside its neoliberal focus on individuals' productivity through an obligation to care for and look after themselves. Lastly, educators encountered pedagogical challenges, where, for example, attaining higher levels of movement intensity when learning new material often seemed antagonistic when the focus of the education was on learning how to dance.

These findings highlight some of the barriers experienced by dance educators towards their participation and engagement in periodisation's implementation for educational change. Closing the epistemological gap between educators' values, beliefs and behaviours, and the principles driving educational change is crucial for educators' meaningful participation and engagement in it pedagogically.

**Elsbeth CHAN Chi Fan, 'Butoh as a Participatory Practice: Engaging Communities Through Critical World-Building'**

This paper explores how Butoh, a Japanese avant-garde dance form, serves as a model for participatory practices in the performing arts, emphasizing its potential to engage diverse communities through critical world-building. By examining Butoh's unique corporeality — characterized by anatomical transformation and a continual metamorphosis of non-human imageries — this study compares Butoh as a form of 'body architecture' with the concept of 'World Architecture' in critical world-building.

The paper will discuss the role of Butoh in facilitating community engagement, through highlighting the participation of marginalized bodies and non-human agencies as seen in the '7 Worlds of Butoh' from *Butoh-Kaden*.<sup>1</sup> It also analyzes how Butoh techniques lead to a ruptured ontological hierarchy and a re-bordered corporeality in creating immersive worlds and Pluriverse,<sup>2</sup> through nurturing uniquely holistic and ecological narratives that challenge dominant cultural and/or societal norms.

---

<sup>1</sup> Butoh-Kaden is Yukio Waguri's interpretation of Butoh-fu, a direct disciple of one of the Fathers of Butoh, Hijikata Tatsumi.

<sup>2</sup> Pluriverse, inspired by the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas (Mexico), envisions a world in which many worlds fit in.

Furthermore, this study will address the challenges and opportunities presented by interdisciplinary collaborations within Butoh and other performing arts forms. By situating Butoh within broader discourses of participation and engagement, this paper aims to contribute to ongoing conversations about the transformative potential of the performing arts in fostering community cohesion and social change.

**Emanuele Demartis, 'The Vocal Orchestra of Palembang (1943-1944) as Social and Gender Struggle: A Non-Violent Expression of Protest and the Assertion of Freedom and Humanity'**

'The idea of making ourselves into a vocal orchestra came to us when songs were difficult to remember, and we longed to hear again some of the wonderful melodies and harmonies that uplifted our souls in days gone by' (Margaret Dryburgh). When the Japanese invaded the British colony of Singapore in 1942, many women attempted to escape by sea, but their ship was bombed, and some of the survivors were shipwrecked on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. Taken prisoner, they were transported to the Japanese internment camp in Palembang, where they endured several transfers but remained on the island until the end of WWII (1945). Among the prisoners were missionary Margaret Dryburgh and musician Norah Chambers, who decided to create a vocal orchestra with the aim of boosting the morale of their fellow inmates, overcoming the lack of musical instruments and uniting the different nationalities of the detainees, as no words were required. The singers were divided into four vocal parts (two soprano sections and two alto sections), and on December 27, 1943, twenty months after their internment and two months of clandestine rehearsals, thirty women performed publicly in the camp. The concert began with the Largo from Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, and despite the momentary threat posed by the arrival of some guards – who instead of interrupting the performance decided to stop and listen – the program continued and concluded with *Auld Lang Syne*, a farewell song of Scottish tradition widely known in the Anglophone world. The vocal orchestra performed twice more, but as the months passed and the health conditions of the members worsened, it ceased its activities permanently in the summer of 1944. In my paper, I will discuss how this courageous endeavor was organized and present the documentary evidence that has come down to us (manuscript scores, photographs): a story of great resilience, also told on the big screen, of incarcerated women who sang to be free.

**Francesca Placanica, 'Vocal Encounters: Devising Creative Freedom through Shared Practice'**

The singing voice represents a powerful medium that elicits the engagement of participants across different backgrounds and abilities. The proven power of collective singing underpins the work of practitioners that centre their research on the transformative power of breath and phonation as connectors between the self and the other. In theatre-making, devising through the voice engenders collective creation, and the realisation of a performance score from collaboration through physical and improvisatory work. This reciprocal encounter underpins a fundamentally relational type of practice, where the performers act in an immersive state of attunement, creating an organic flux resulting from their interactions.

This paper stems from experiences derived from the encounter of different vocal practitioners coming together in the same space, and highlights the shared potential of devising through the voice, especially in relation to the narrative emergence of the site where such encounters take place. In particular, my research documents through film an artistic residency undertaken at the Bidston Observatory Artistic Research Centre (Liverpool), in January 2024 by members of the Centre for Experimental Practices at the University of Huddersfield. The research posits collective creation as a paradigm of the synthesis between vocal practice, improvisation and site-specific performance. By looking at the way voice connects and takes off immanently, this paper models collective creation at

the confluence of different lineages of training, and articulates collaborative emergence as paramount in upcoming forms of vocal practice.

**Garret Scally**, 'Kaleidoscopic Creation: Groupness as a Mode of Creation and Learning' (Workshop)

During this workshop, we will experiment with the notion of 'groupness' (see Kathryn Syssoyeva, 2013) and the attendant notions of the bond of friendship, fraternity or, in a theatrical reference, complicité, as a mode of creation and learning. The idea behind this is that collective creation and the closely associated term, group devised theatre, creates a vehicle for cooperative and non-hierarchical collaboration. While the concept of 'groupness' is vague, it is necessarily so to encourage participants to become involved in the way that they can to the extent that they can. The metaphor of a kaleidoscope is useful to describe the process of creating collectively with its infinity of patterns guided by the ebb and flow, the back and forth of human interaction allowing new routes to emerge. The etymology of kaleidoscope lends us the aim of the workshop in that we hope to create and observe beautiful forms. In a similar fashion, what we actually do in the workshop will depend on who is in the room. There are activities and exercises planned in sequences, though with each twist and turn of kaleidoscopic creation (contributions from participants) and with each 'gem' offered by participants, this may change, creating unforeseen routes.

Syssoyeva, K. M. and Proudfoot, S. (2013) *A History of Collective Creation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

**Gioia Filocamo**, 'Fighting for Poetry: The "ESTRO-VERSO" Competition at the Conservatoire of Terni'

In my very long experience as a teacher of *Poetry for Music and Musical Dramaturgy* at the Conservatoire, I have always taught Italian metrics to my students from the very first lesson, to make them aware of the close formal connection between poetry and music existing in sung texts. To motivate them as much as possible, and to spread awareness of this indisputable interrelationship, I devised the first national competition based on Italian metrics among conservatoire students (at bachelor's and master's level). It is called 'ESTRO-VERSO' ('ESplora e TROva il VERSO giusto' = 'Explore and find the right verse') and will debut during this academic year at my Conservatoire of Music in Terni (Italy), first in local form, and then in a national version. It would be also quite fruitful if this competition crossed Italian borders in the future and stimulated foreign students' interest in Italian opera by looking at it through its librettos.

For example, texts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Italian operas contain serious and comic characters that speak (and sing!) using typical metrical features mirroring their feelings: serious and socially important characters use the noble septenaries (verses with mobile accents within them), while comical or low-class characters sing octosyllables (verses with a hammered rhythm pattern). When librettos present exceptions to these general situations, they can be justified by looking at deviations imposed by special dramaturgical situations. Moreover, every metrical structure has a musical consequence: in fact, a composer should follow the stresses of each verse by tracing their rhythmic outline. This does not mean that every composer agrees every time with his poet...

**Heather S. Nathans**, 'What's at Stake: Incarcerated Students and Performance Anxiety'

In more than twenty-five years of teaching, I have never had a more humbling or inspiring experience than the courses I have offered for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students as part of the Tufts-in-Prison and post-prison re-entry programs at Tufts University. Many scholar-artists who collaborate with incarcerated students have written movingly about the transformational capacity of that work. In this paper, I turn to the stakes for the individual students that they have shared in their

acting journals and reading responses. I question how educators can think about their responsibility to support each student's journey in a system designed to foreclose on possibilities for creative collaboration. For example, I have read the following statements in my students' acting journals:

- 'I'm scared of performing because the only way I survive prison is by being invisible.'
- 'I have nothing in common with Hamlet, except that I know what it means to wake up every day thinking about killing myself.'
- 'I realized from the reading that I've flattened out my voice and personality and I don't know how to get it back.'

To encounter these kinds of phrases over and over again is to slam into the wall of my own privilege and slide down it. I sit dazed and uncertain about how to offer support to people who have taken the huge risk of making themselves visible and vulnerable in a performance class. My students acknowledge that they live in environments designed not only to squelch, but potentially to punish creativity.

In highlighting the risks my students take in class, I invite my colleagues at the conference to crowd-source their collective wisdom. When they choose to share these 'performance anxieties,' how can we support and honor their experiences? How can we help them to resist a coercive carceral system over which they have no control, and over which we as educators have very limited control? How do educators understand what's at stake for students without reinscribing the trauma they have already experienced?

**Howard Gayton, 'Commedia Club: Using Play to Foster Participation and Engagement in the Performing Arts' (Practice-based Presentation/Workshop)**

This 60-minute, practical workshop examines the deep aspects of PLAY – both practical, and philosophical – which form a fundamental part of my studio teaching methodology. Derived from my professional practices as a teacher, and my doctoral research into Modern Theatrical Fooling, the driving principle of my studio practice is PLAYING: not just using theatre games as a warmup but as a fundamental, organic part of the structure of the work, like a vein of marble which runs deep throughout the process.

I am currently applying this methodology to the Commedia Club at the University of Exeter: an innovative monthly studio session that brings Undergraduates, Postgraduates, College students and interested parties from the local cultural ecology together to explore Commedia. Rather than 'teaching' Commedia (as I've done extensively in classroom settings), in these less formal Club sessions I share my knowledge with the group to see how participants play with the form in a contemporary setting, allowing them to discover what Commedia might mean to a new generation and a modern audience. Through PLAY they learn not only the mask-work and characters of the form, but how these tools can help to develop their performance confidence and physicality overall.

The workshop will introduce core practices of this approach, showing how PLAY is introduced as a guiding principle, how it is maintained, how it leads to discussions of possible modern applications, and how, within an academic context, critical lenses can be addressed and [literally!] played with.

**Ian Watson, 'Ludic Learning: Play, Performance and Educational Innovation'**

In *Perform or Else* (Routledge, 2001), Jon McKenzie predicts a greatly expanded role for performance in the future as it becomes, in his words, the '*onto-historical formation of power and knowledge*'

(p.18). In the spirit of McKenzie's speculations, I have recently begun examining the relationships between play, performance, and the teaching/learning matrix.

My proposal focuses on an early fieldwork phase of my research, observing the teaching of a foreign language to middle schoolers in a private boy's school in New York City. I observed and interviewed a Spanish teacher from the school renowned for her innovative approach to teaching predicated upon a 'USER-BASED' learning strategy linked to play that runs counter to the dominant 'LEARNING ABOUT' model of rote learning vocabulary, grammatical rules, and the various verb tenses, etc., of the target language that dominates the teaching of foreign languages in the United States.

My proposal includes a video of the teacher at work in the classroom, following which it will examine the dynamics among and between performance, play, and learning in her work in an attempt to better understand why it is that students exposed to this 'user-learning' pedagogical model of foreign language acquisition predicated upon performative tropes and play strategies consistently outscore their peers taught in a more conventional manner?

**Indigo Knecht, 'The Chanting of Coral Reefs: Bringing Awareness to the Endangerment of Coral Reefs Through the Sonification of Settling Larvae'**

How do we persuade humankind to care about our ecosystem? How do we compel society to take an interest in preserving and restoring our environment? I seek to answer these questions through sonification—the process of converting data into sound—and using music to raise awareness about ecological crises and engage the community in environmentalism, specifically coral reef endangerment. Building on the work of Lindborg (2023) and Majhour (2023), I will consider the various possibilities for translating scientific data into sound such as how to convey numerical data through musical parameters such as pitch, timbre, and form in both abstract and concrete methods. I extend Lindborg and Majhour's discussions by exploring strategies for enhancing the accessibility of sonified data to a broader audience beyond the scientific community. Specifically, I focus on how music, when paired with interactive technologies, can transform complex ecological data into an experience that invites deeper engagement and understanding while remaining approachable to those outside the scientific community. As a case study, I will reflect upon my own *The Chanting of Coral Reefs*. This interactive installation sonifies the data of coordinates of coral reef larvae in Miami, translating such data into several musical parameters, including pitch, timbre, dynamics, and form. It combines a fixed media composition that sonifies the data with a physical installation where participants can manipulate the sound by interacting with coral reef 'stations' that include buttons and infrared proximity sensors to represent humans' effects on the environment. By analyzing how participants interact with *The Chanting of Coral Reefs*, I will discuss the challenges and opportunities that sonification presents in fostering an interest in environmentalism within the community while offering insights from my experience in this area.

**Jane Turner, 'Perform Transform'**

Dance practitioner Jane Turner brings new ideas on the conference themes, drawing on a rich career as a socially engaged practitioner and recent experience as dance artist with BEEE Creative's Perform Transform project that operated across five museums in Hertfordshire 2023-24. In this she will consider the value and role of participation in the performing arts, and how a range of social, creative, regional organisations can work in partnership with diverse communities to build meaningful creative activity with lasting resonance. In asking Royston residents - in creative outreach workshops in a care home, a town hall and at the Royston Museum - what they most valued about the changing character of their town, the word 'community' was most often cited. The challenges of

change, of meetings and partings, led to a theme of the town as a crossroads, which gave architecture to the creative work. The museum's objects thus triggered memories that led to the sharing of stories that were explored in performative creative activities that connected and embedded into the museum space using different materials.

Turner's paper will consider pedagogical approaches to engage such a community with differing needs and interests into a project with a distinct brief through activities that explored the objects and experiences of 'heritage', and that can lead to shared production of an interactive performative interdisciplinary installation with impact. Key characteristics of the innovative approaches effected in this multi partner project will be explored and elucidated via word, visual materials, demonstration and film.

**Jeremy Harrison, 'Fostering Participation and Engagement Through Musicality: an Approach to Co-creating with Babies and Young Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities'**

How can notions of 'musicality' engender skills and co-creative relationships with babies and young children with special educational needs and disabilities? In *Actor-Musicianship* (2016) I outline a training approach and methodology, Musicality, designed to support the integration of music-making and acting. Musicality, as pedagogy and approach, is underpinned by notions of 'mutuality', as defined by Wlodik Staniewski (2004) and supported by David Roesner's idea of musicality in theatre as 'an act of excavating and "liberating"' (2010). My book ends with a brief exploration of the use of actor-musicianship in theatre made for and with children and young people. In this paper-presentation I would like to develop this idea, by exploring how Musicality engenders skills and approaches that encourage co-creative relationships between performer and audience; drawing on my own practice as Lead Artist for Playground, an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, working in community settings with babies and children under 5 with special educational needs and disabilities.

This paper-presentation proposes Musicality as a training model and working method for artists from a range of disciplines, extending its application beyond actor-musicianship and towards performers and theatre makers interested in using the broader notion of musicality as a means of fostering engagement and participation from some of the most vulnerable members of society. It is a response to the 'rapid growth' in participatory arts practice internationally (Matarasso, 2019), supported and amplified by arts and cultural funders, such as Arts Council England's *Let's Create* agenda. In doing so I make a case for an approach that democratises the arts, allowing for intergenerational co-creative collaboration with what Oily Cart (the world-leading sensory theatre company) once called an 'impossible audience', i.e. young children who are pre-verbal/non-verbal and have complex disabilities.

**Jessica Edgar, 'Loneliness and Choral Singing: The Effect of Musical Experience and Presbycusis on Singing Participation'**

It has been documented that participation in choral singing is beneficial for the aging auditory system and that many people in the age range pertinent to age-related hearing impairment (presbycusis) participate in choral singing. But it has not been documented how an attenuation of high frequencies affects the enjoyment of and participation in singing for people who have been singing for a majority of their lives. This paper explores the effects of presbycusis on the production of voice and the enjoyment of amateur choral singing through an interdisciplinary 2024 research study based in the Clinical Auditory Neuroscience research lab.

The study examined a population of 220 participants over the age of 50 from eight choirs within a small geographical area to control for qualities of genre. It explored the relationship between singing experience, satisfaction, and own-voice perception, as both an immediate (laboratory simulated) auditory change, and the socio-emotional long-term effects (questionnaire evaluated). We found that singing experience directly influences the maintenance of vocal satisfaction and participation in singing, through robust kinesthetic memory and auditory practice that works around the missing high frequency spectrum. This research studies the individual experience of presbycusis and its effects on singing participation to expand the knowledge base about presbycusis as a major modifiable risk factor for cognitive impairment.

The paper will go into the results of this study to describe how singing participation and hearing relate to loneliness and music participation. It will cross audiometric examination and acoustic voice assessment with current musicological theories to provide a multifaceted view of the interaction between auditory perception and vocal production, and own-voice perception as a marker of identity.

**Ji Liu, 'Illuminating Interpretation – How Audience-Driven Lighting Transforms Participatory Performance Experience'**

This presentation explores the transformative potential of live audience participation in impacting the interpretational choices of music works. It presents two different performances of my composition, *Lightening the Piano*, drawing inspiration from Alexander Scriabin's concept of merging light and sound in *Prometheus: Poem of Fire*, Op. 60. Historically, Scriabin's vision of a 'dual symphony' of light and sound has been challenging to realise, leaving the interpretative impact of lighting largely unexplored. *Lightening the Piano* takes Scriabin's vision further by inviting the audience to shape performance dynamics through interactive lighting, creating a new dimension in the audience-performer connection.

As both a composer and performer, my work frequently examines how audience engagement, both passive and active, can reshape interpretive decisions in real-time. In *Lightening the Piano*, audience members will influence and participate in the performance via a custom mobile phone app, allowing them to adjust LED lighting tubes installed around the piano in response to their real-time experience and reaction to the music. During the performance, each participant's spontaneous input is reflected in the LED colour shifts, which the performer observes and monitors as real-time interpretational indications. This approach removes traditional musical directives from the score, such as dynamics or tempo markings. Instead, it invites the audience to influence these elements collaboratively during a performance.

This presentation will showcase two completely different interpretations of this work and its compositional framework, focusing on how audience-driven lighting enables a responsive, evolving performance. This method will demonstrate the potential for audience agency to deepen interpretational layers, transforming the work from a static composition into a fluid, collective experience. By fostering a space where the audience directly impacts performance, this project aims to highlight the collective, ephemeral nature of live performance and expand our understanding of audience-performer dynamics through music-making and technology.

**John Galea, 'The Cultural Enrichment of Community Participation in the Production of Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco* in Gozo: A Case Study'**

The operatic production of Verdi's rarely performed opera *Giovanna d'Arco* at Teatru Astra during October 2024, showcased the profound impact of the performing arts on community participation,

engagement, and creativity. The Astra Opera Chorus, demonstrated how the arts serve as a powerful medium for fostering social connection and cultural enrichment. The initiative involved not only professional artists but also volunteers, whose contributions were vital in bringing this opera to life.

This paper aims to valorize the communal effort highlighted the importance of the performing arts in everyday life, offering a platform for individuals to express their creativity and engage deeply with their cultural heritage. The volunteers, ranging from set and costume designers, to backstage crew, played a crucial role in ensuring the smooth flow of the production. Their dedication and passion underscored the significance of volunteerism in sustaining and enhancing the arts. Moreover, the production served as an educational experience, inspiring participants and audience members alike through a pre-opera lecture to the contextualization of the opera in the Risorgimento perspective. It demonstrated that the arts are not just a form of entertainment but a pivotal part of social life, promoting teamwork, fostering community spirit, and contributing to the overall well-being of society. The success of *Giovanna d'Arco* at Teatru Astra stands as a testament to the transformative power of the performing arts.

**Julia Escribano Blanco**, 'Performing Tradition, Asserting Power: Female Agency in the Pinochada Festival of Vinuesa (Spain)'

The Pinochada of Vinuesa, a festival held annually on August 16 in the pinewood region of Soria, Spain, offers a unique lens through which to examine female agency, ritualized conflict, and performative traditions within rural Spanish culture. Rooted in local lore, the Pinochada commemorates a historical victory by the women of Vinuesa over those of neighboring Covaleda, symbolized by the shared devotion to the Virgin of the Pine, the town's patroness. During the event, over 300 *piñorras* (local women dressed in traditional attire) reenact this victory, wielding pine branches as emblems of their communal strength and historical legacy.

This study examines the Pinochada as a form of sound-based ritual performance (Abels, 2021), highlighting its role in interweaving gender dynamics, musical expression, and cultural memory. By investigating how women in Vinuesa reclaim symbolic authority annually through this event, the research demonstrates the nuanced ways in which local traditions function as frameworks for expressing and sustaining social power structures. Additionally, the paper explores the performative roles of music and dance within the Pinochada, framing the festival as a dynamic arena for identity negotiation and community cohesion (Grégoire, 2021). This event of embodied music-making is thus profoundly connected to social participation and female empowerment, underscoring the Pinochada as both a lived experience and a cultural assertion of collective memory and agency.

**Julija Bagdonavičiūtė**, 'Musical Body vs. Performing Body: Escaping Dualism in Contemporaneity'

The presentation is dominated by two perspectives: the territory of virtuosity and the musical instrument, which is analysed from a material perspective. According to J. Bennett, matter is not defined as passive or mechanical, but as vibrating and vital, able to create, to be active. Could it be that it is the instrument, or, as articulated by S. J. Wilson, *musical body* that defines the limits of performer's artistic expression?

The auto-ethnographic reflection of the creative processes (live concert and a sound sculpture/installation 'CONCERTO AND INSTALLATION FOR PIANO AND A PIECE OF FURNITURE', contemporary circus and music performance 'Compost') becomes a fertile material for analysing the artist's relationship in the context of changing materialities. In case of the first work, the project explores the dualism of the domestic-physical and artistic-ideal nature of the piano: the paradoxical roles of one of the most popular musical instruments and a piece of home furniture. In the second

creative project, the viewer sees three different pianos on stage: 1) a piano that has started to decompose; 2) a rusted metal part of the piano, the *harp*, which holds the strings; 3) a piano that hasn't been played for many years, but is still fully functional. This expression of the pianos raises the questions: How are the usual performance practices altered by changes in instruments, deviations from the norm? All in all, do the performers playing these instruments remain *pianists*?

Drawing on B. Latour's *Actor-network theory*, J. Bennett's *vital materiality* and the concept of *rhizome* by G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, it is assumed that the new materiality in the context of the posthumanistic worldview could be one of the main conditions that dictate the diversity of approaches to contemporary art and encourage the search for new objects of attention in artistic practice.

**Karen Wood and Kathryn Stamp, 'Strictly Come Dancing: A Site for Inclusion and Social Engagement?' (Practice-based presentation/Workshop)**

This workshop invites participants to critically engage with BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing* as a transformative site for participatory practices and social engagement within the intersection of dance and media. We will begin by presenting a brief history of the show and development of recent casting choices and how they challenge traditional gender roles, bodily norms, and promote inclusivity in the performance of dance. Participants will then have the opportunity to view selected archival material from *Strictly Come Dancing*, providing a foundational context for discussions. This archival analysis will serve as a springboard for a hands-on GIF-making activity, where attendees will create visual representations of a future they envisage for *Strictly*.

Drawing on insights and methods from the 'Strictly Inclusive' project, funded by the AHRC and the BBC, the workshop will facilitate a collaborative exploration of how the show might impact public perceptions of representation and engagement across diverse communities. We will examine the complexities of audience involvement and the dual role of *Strictly* as both a cultural unifier and a platform for contesting entrenched societal norms. This workshop aims to inspire broader academic dialogue around inclusivity in televisual presentations of dance, highlighting the potential of *Strictly Come Dancing* as a medium for social change and community engagement.

**Kate Campbell Strauss, Badie Khaleghian and Aruna Kharod, 'Musicking Access: Building Inclusion Through Participatory Practices of Cross-cultural Improvisation' (Workshop)**

This 90-min workshop presents three strategies for fostering inclusion in musical performance and pedagogy in academic and public settings rooted in musical improvisation, an essential component of the three distinct musical styles that we practice: jazz, interactive electronic music, and South Asian music. Through this workshop, we demonstrate how the effects of participatory, improvised 'musicking' (Small 2008) can have powerful creative and community-building effects in and beyond the classroom.

Exploring audience participation offers an opportunity to dissolve the traditional boundary between the stage and the audience, transforming a passive experience into an immersive, collaborative one. When performers actively engage the audience, they foster a shared space that allows participants to influence the performance itself, whether through guided interactions, responsive technology, or creative improvisation. Thus, we use participatory improvisation to build community amongst people from varying backgrounds and to foster empathy through cross-cultural musical understanding.

We will begin by giving a brief performance that models how each of the three improvisation-based pedagogical strategies works in conversation with other musical genres in our trio. Through

participatory performance, we demonstrate how we each use improvisatory musicking in classrooms and performances to engage students and audiences from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds in self-expression and cross-cultural understanding.

After teaching participants one embodied, improvisatory musical skill from each of our genres of expertise, we will discuss how we use these improvisatory practices to address issues of access, inclusion, and cross-cultural understanding in performance and teaching, offering attendees a strategy that they can adapt to their musical contexts and goals.

Finally, attendees will apply these styles of improvisation to create a collaborative performance in conversation with other audience members, ending with a brief discussion of their takeaways. We welcome attendees from different musical backgrounds; no previous experience needed.

**Katerina Grohmann**, 'The Power to Create and the Way to Convey That Creativity: The Concept of Participation in the Performing Arts and Pedagogy Work'

The significance of participation as a design principle in the performing arts is becoming increasingly important nowadays and influences both cultural organizations and educational institutions in their professional activities. Therefore, a structure that combines a theoretical excursion into the use of participation with a practical part seems to make the most conceptual sense for the intended lecture. First, some examples of performances will be presented that either involve the audience by allowing them to co-determine the course of the opera ('Votre Faust' by Henry Pousseur in Bonn 2002) or invoke active participation through their presence in the 'played-in' non-seated performance spaces ('HOCH-ZEITEN' by Karlheinz Stockhausen in Cologne in 2012 or his 'FRESCO' in Brno in 2024).

Afterwards, an example from my own performance work will be presented (musical-scenic reading 'Ich habe ein glühend Messer...' in Berlin 2018), which, among other things, presupposes a participatory involvement of the recipients in an inclusive sense. One of the decisive methodological approaches in modern performance-oriented courses is participation - in both performance-based and pedagogical professional orientations. From the perspective of the pedagogy students' content, participation is an important conceptual approach. From the perspective of the content essential to education students, participation is an important conceptual component of every educational program and even more so of every project in child and/or youth work. The basic elements of this design principle can best be conveyed to pedagogy students through their practical work in the aesthetic subjects, for example in the implementation of internal differentiation in musical or theater pedagogical projects. This part presents some participatory music- and theater educational projects and an inclusive tactile musical tour with a haptic focus, which were planned and carried out by our students. The audience is invited to comment on the structured progression of the documented projects and encouraged to share their own creative ideas and solutions.

**Kevin Egan and Rachel Rimmer-Piekarczyk**, 'Navigating Participation, Protest and Resistance in the Making of Reckless Sleepers' *Binary Opposition* Project'

Reckless Sleepers artists Egan and Rimmer-Piekarczyk examine the company's devising process for *Binary Opposition* (2025), a contemporary performance piece that is adopting a participatory model where groups within the community have the opportunity to input into the creative process itself. The presenters will discuss the opportunities and challenges of the participatory approach, which has involved residencies with children and young adults in Belgium and the UK. The presentation will reflect on two residencies carried out in 2024 with children at Farnham Maltings (UK) and Pavilion Dance South West (UK). The residencies provided a vehicle for participants to engage with the company's creative strategies and to gain an insight into how a piece of contemporary theatre is

made. However, during the process the artists encountered different forms of resistance and protest from the participants, which exposed tensions between the creative values and beliefs of the company and participants, exposing a binary that required deconstructing.

The *Binary Opposition* project relates to the Saussurean structuralist system (1916) of the same name, where every idea or term is defined by its reciprocal counterpart and where one of the two opposites assumes a role of dominance over the other. The project, following Derrida's deconstructionist attitude to such binaries (1976), is an attempt to destabilise these assumed hierarchies, both through the participatory devising process and in the resulting performance. In this way, the concept, explored through the work, serves as a metaphor for the power struggles between the different voices involved; a process whereby the artists, as professionals, would typically be positioned as having greater 'capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) or control over participants in a community setting. The presenters will examine whether the artists were able to destabilise these assumed hierarchies during the residencies, or whether they inadvertently reinforced them.

**Lan Zhou**, 'Exploring Diversity Expansion in Chinese Dance Education: A Practical Exploration of Dance Movement Therapy in Traditional Children's Dance Classes'

Childhood is the key stage of individual's rapid physical and mental development. As a significant form of art, dance holds unique value in children's education. However, in traditional Chinese children's dance classes, the teaching content generally focus on technical training and standardized movements, with less attention paid to children's emotional expression and psychological needs. Many dance teachers in China know that dance movement therapy, as an innovative form of art therapy that emphasizes the interaction between mind and body and promotes free expression, shows distinct advantages for children's holistic development. Nevertheless, concerns about maintaining uniform standards, safety, and cultural differences have deterred its application, preventing its broader use and development in traditional Chinese children's dance classes. The paper delves into real-world applications of dance movement therapy in traditional Chinese children's dance classrooms, analyzing its multiple advantages such as promoting physical and mental development, enriching the form of teaching methods, and enhancing learning interest. It explores the effects of dance movement therapy after its specific application in traditional children's dance classes, aiming to expand its applicability, inspire innovation in children's dance education, and promote the harmonious unity of dance education and children's physical and mental health.

**Magdalena Marija Meašić and Gustav Lundberg**, 'How to Break and Make a Nation: Latvian Rock Opera *Lāčplēsis* (1988)'

In the wake of the Latvian independence movement, composer Zigmārs Liepiņš and librettist Māra Zālīte adapted the national epic of Latvia – *Lāčplēsis* ('The Bear-Slayer') – into a rock opera, premiered in 1988 in Riga National Sports Arena. The Latvian *Rokopera* from the dusk of the Soviet regime, maintained its popularity over the ensuing decades, earning recognition as 'a symbol of the Revival of our nation' as described in the preface to its 2018 performance, which celebrated the centenary of Latvian independence. This study, situated at the intersection of ritual and opera studies, analyses the two versions of *Lāčplēsis* and examines their potential as political rituals aimed at either strengthening or undermining political order. While rituals often serve to preserve traditions, they can also function as vehicles for large-scale political change. The two productions of *Lāčplēsis*, which were staged in entirely different political contexts, is an example of these two distinct functions of ritual. The original production, set against the backdrop of the Latvian 'Awakening' in the late 1980s, can be understood as a subversive ritual that leveraged the national epic as a call to action and political resistance. In contrast, the later production functions as a nation-

building ritual, aimed at strengthening the bonds between the state and its citizens, fostering loyalty rather than dissent. This analysis focuses on the central themes and symbols of the opera, as expressed through its libretto, music, set design, and costumes, and their significance within the context of anti-Soviet resistance. Additionally, the study examines how these themes were reinterpreted and recontextualized in the post-independence period, when the emphasis shifted from political resistance to the preservation of the existing political order. Although this research centres on a specific Latvian rock opera and its unique political and cultural milieu, it also considers the broader potential of the operatic genre to foster public engagement, generate political impact, and drive significant societal change.

**Marco Beghelli, 'Historical Perspectives for a Dialogue between Musicologists and Opera Singers: The Performance of the Vocal Appoggiatura'**

As a musicologist and music philologist, for many years I have been collecting sources for the historically informed performance of nineteenth-century Italian opera, trying to transmit them to young singers. It is a participative dialogue broadly themed around the practical application of theoretical studies on the past to the performances of the present. In other words, the aim is to shape the choices of the contemporary performers through a historical perspective. The set of sources I deal with consists of singing treatises, letters from musicians, newspapers of the time and – starting from the very last years of the century – sound recordings.

In my paper I will propose as an example the issue of the appoggiatura, showing many of the practical examples that I use to instruct singers, interfacing historical musicology with performance stylistics, in a collaborative process. The vocal appoggiatura, also called prosodic appoggiatura, is a particular type of melodic appoggiatura that is almost never written down by composers in the scores, but which should always be performed by singers. The examples I will give demonstrate that this performance practice was not limited to the eighteenth century, as is commonly believed, but remained in use until the beginning of the twentieth century, when it was forgotten due to a misunderstood respect for the written signs in the score. The precise identification of the passages in which the unwritten appoggiatura should be added by singers, as well as the proposal of unequivocal examples from ancient performance practice, should be able to guide the modern performer to recover that lost practice, under the guidance of music historians.

**Mariella Cassar-Cordina and Charmaine Zammit, 'What Might Become...'**

Contemporary arts often embrace interdisciplinary collaborations between visual artists, dancers, actors, and musicians, blending traditions from both visual and performing arts to create innovative performances. This fusion has historical roots in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, where paintings, sculptures, and set designs were incorporated into public events and theatrical performances. This paper engages with arts-based research methodology, focusing on merging visual and performing arts experiences. It offers recommendations for community-based projects that use arts-based approaches to construct and intertwine narratives. By involving communities in such experiences, artists can discover, tell, and re-tell their own stories as well as those of participants and audiences. Through the lens of researchers-as-practitioners in music and visual art, the paper promotes a deeper understanding of the role of art in research. British visual artist Victor Pasmore exemplifies this interdisciplinary approach. In his 1951 article 'The Artist Speaks,' Pasmore likened his compositional approach to music, emphasizing formal elements like space and balance, which resonate with musical principles. In his 1969 article 'The Space Within,' Pasmore argued that a scribble's significance lies in its potential for transformation. His work transcended mere depiction, extending lines and colours into immersive, transformative experiences akin to live musical

performances, encouraging dynamic interactions between artwork, artist, and spectator. Similarly, American artist Meredith Monk exemplifies this through her multifaceted works, which integrate music, movement, and visual elements to explore new perceptual modes. This paper further examines alternative performance modalities, highlighting collaborations that dissolve the traditional boundaries between artist and audience. Composer Paola Prestini's concept of 'boundary-blurring' pieces exemplifies these collaborations, encouraging participatory art practices that challenge the conventional audience-musician dichotomy. Ultimately, the paper emphasizes how these interdisciplinary approaches enhance both artistic expression and community engagement. Stemming from arts-based research, it provides unique insights that might otherwise remain inaccessible through non-artistic approaches (Archibald et al., 2017).

**Mark Turner**, 'Introduction to *The Tempest* Masque Chorus' (Workshop)

This workshop offers a practical introduction to the classical and carnivalesque choruses of the renaissance masque through the lens of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The focus is on the chorus, with inspiration from the ancient Greek comedy, the Renaissance masque, and contemporary theatre. We will work with varying performance configurations, music, structured improvisation, the neutral 'veil', and types of dance.

**Marta Salvatori**, 'Playing Through Time: Teaching Music History as a Lived Experience'

This abstract addresses the integration of pedagogical strategies within the performing arts, emphasizing participatory practices, and community engagement in educational contexts. The discourse spans theoretical and practical aspects, highlighting historical influences and contemporary dynamics within dance, theatre, and music. The significance of interdisciplinary dialogue emerges as pivotal in fostering deeper connections among various performing arts sectors, facilitating collaborative processes and innovation.

The methodological approach centers on interdisciplinary analysis combining theoretical perspectives with case studies from various sectors of the performing arts. By examining historical data and contemporary practices, the study identifies effective strategies for participatory engagement. Special attention is given to collaborative processes that integrate different art forms, enriching the pedagogical landscape of History of music and enhancing audience interaction. The primary objective is to explore how participatory practices in the performing arts can be leveraged to deepen audience engagement and enhance the educational impact of performances related to History of music. This includes identifying challenges and opportunities that arise from collaborative efforts and understanding the dynamics of audience interaction in both educational and community settings. Case studies illustrate the success of innovative pedagogical practices that engage audiences and participants in meaningful ways. These findings suggest that active participation significantly improves learning outcomes, fosters greater community involvement, and supports the creation of inclusive, accessible performing arts experiences. The results underscore the potential of interdisciplinary approaches to transform spectatorship into active engagement, thereby strengthening the overall impact of the performing arts on society.

**Mary Kirchdorfer and Cheston Humphries**, 'Concert Life in Vienna 1780-1830: Database Presentation and Perspectives of Historical Performance and Audience Experience'

Despite the tremendous volume and scope of musicological scholarship concerning Viennese classical music, the musical-cultural context in which many canonical figures worked are less well-explored than one might imagine. Much of what is known about this context remains trapped in literature about specific composers or performers (for instance, Theodore Albrecht's work on the

Kärntnertortheater's musicians in the early 1820s). Other literature, such as Mary Sue Morrow's *Concert Life in Haydn's Vienna*, while groundbreaking, can now be expanded upon thanks to the mass digitization of newspapers and other sources. Today systematic efforts to collate this information and disseminate it more widely are sorely needed. The research landscape to date has especially overlooked the contributions of women and musicians from the outer reaches of the Habsburg empire, who make up a significant portion of the musical population. The bigger picture, beyond the performances involving composers such as Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, and Haydn, consists of thousands of events organized and performed by these relative unknowns, in a variety of unorthodox locations, featuring repertoire which does not enjoy canonical status today (not to mention non-musical content such as *tableaux vivant* and declamations of poetry).

The ongoing WEAVE/FWF project 'Concert Life in Vienna 1780-1830' is tasked with assembling a comprehensive database of all documented performances, persons, repertoire, and venues during this 50-year period. This database aims to consolidate and verify what is already known about Viennese concert life from a wide body of secondary sources, and chip away at what is still unknown by incorporating various primary sources which have been relegated to obscurity. Such a comprehensive database will allow previously invisible networks and forces driving musical culture to emerge and be quantifiable, which may shed new light on the types of performance practice in Viennese concert life before an official concert hall existed, as well as the practices of listening and audience member experience at the time.

#### **Melek Kaptanoglu, 'Performing Peace in the Divided Cyprus'**

Cyprus is a (post) conflicted and divided island. Although there is no ongoing violence on the island, peace is also absent. After years of conflict and war between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, the two communities continue to live apart, physically divided by a division line (the Green line) since 1974. Since 2003, crossing between the north and south is allowed if impeded and subject to contentious views. Even though peace negotiations have continued between political leaders and institutions for years, no peace agreement has been reached. However, peacebuilding culture and activism to achieve peace are lively at the grassroots level. People who wish for a united Cyprus perform various events to reconcile communities and show the importance of peace. Cypriots across the divide meet, especially in Nicosia and particularly in the Ledra Palace buffer zone, to imagine, express, and foster the unity of both communities.

This paper will present ongoing research on an emerging culture of peace in Cyprus through performances. Creative practices, including theatre, poetry, music, sports, conscientious objection protests, and many more, are organized multi- communally to highlight the necessity of peace. The nature of these events is primarily multilingual (Turkish, Greek, and English). Through evocative performance practice, these efforts challenge mainstream historical discourses and deconstruct the evil image of 'the other'. Through case studies from ethnographic research 2023-4, the paper aims to investigate the role of performance in bi/multi-communal peacebuilding activism in Cyprus. How do public, political, and artistic performances reflect 'construct, and imagine a united Cypriot identity beyond Turkish/Greek prefixes? What are the components of these performances?

#### **Mirco Michelon, 'From Stage to Audience. Interactive Workshop on the New Frontiers of Opera Direction: The Case of Luca Ronconi's *Il Viaggio a Reims*' (Workshop)**

This interactive workshop explores modern directing practices in opera as a tool for active audience engagement. The workshop aims to transform participants from passive observers into active co-creators of the directing process, through a practical experience structured in three phases. The

session will open with a short analysis (10 minutes) of the innovative contemporary production of Rossini's *Il viaggio a Reims ossia L'Albergo del Giglio d'oro* (Rossini Opera Festival 1984, with revival at Teatro alla Scala 2009) highlighting how Luca Ronconi's directions approaches have reinterpreted iconic scenes for contemporary audiences. This will be followed by the central and most interactive part of the workshop (60 minutes), where the participants, divided into small groups, will work on the direction of the opera. Each group will receive stimulus materials (short audio clips, set images, descriptions of directorial concepts) and will be guided in the creation of their own innovative directorial concept, considering elements such as: Temporal and spatial recontextualization; Use of digital and multimedia technologies; Audience engagement strategies; Balancing tradition and innovation. The session will conclude (20 minutes) with a collective discussion where groups will present their proposals, followed by a reflection on the ways in which these directorial strategies can be applied more widely in contemporary musical theatre.

**Morag Galloway, 'Dog Daze: Performing to Catalyse, Commune, Coalesce and Continue ...'**  
(Performance Workshop)

I am a composer whose practice research explores lived experience through embodied ways of knowing. I wish to perform 30 minutes of my piece, *Dog Daze*, followed by a discussion of its themes and impact. I would then lead a creative workshop, facilitating participants to write words, music, movements and responses from their own lived experience. To end, we would gather these responses into an improvised group piece. My piece deals with personal experience of endometriosis and neurodiversity, and the workshop will explore performative ways to engage with illness – personal and that of others – in a way that hopes to bring new insights, connection with others, and strategies for moving forward.

*Dog Daze* is a 'one-woman-show' exploring themes connected to illness (personal and societal), endometriosis, motherhood and menopause, ageing, neurodiversity, relationship and agency. My piece fuses my own writing, Shakespeare's soliloquies, music, dance and voice. Within the piece there are specific sections dealing with endometriosis, post-partum ADHD overwhelm, and it explores the narratives we create for ourselves and how those narratives are (mis)heard by others, and the medical profession.

I am keen to develop my ideas on the efficacy of performance to facilitate communal coalescence beneficial to participants. My workshop will support participants in the safety of a performance moment where they are witnessed, respected, and facilitated to explore in new and innovative ways. I would like to expand this performance workshop into a paper/chapter for the publication outlining my approach and measuring its impact.

**Nicholas Arnold, 'Should You Look Before You Leap?'**

Fifty years ago, the University of Aston in Birmingham resolved to open a public Arts Centre. The rationale was simple: the university, as a publicly funded institution, was supported by the state. It therefore owed the people, who paid its wages and tolerated its presence, some return. It was also a 'technological' university, specialising in Engineering, and wanted to introduce both breadth and balance into its culture and the daily experience of its students. To further this, for reasons of both finance and social involvement, it was determined that the Arts Centre would, except for a few core personnel, be staffed and run entirely by volunteers – staff and students – from the University. But it was not to be an amateur theatre. The operation was to be full-time and open to all, and to cover also Music and the Visual Arts. The advantages of this ambition are obvious – there was no connection with existing, more conventional models. But the drive and energy which produced it had

their own drawbacks. The university had already, without taking independent advice, bought a building to house the project. It had bought some seating – from an old cinema. And so on. It is into this scenario of lofty ideas and hasty action that the first professionals who were to get the project off the ground were introduced. This paper examines the problems and possibilities, and describes both the short and long-term successes of the project, and the factors which led to its eventual demise.

**Nicola Visser**, 'Practicing Radical Hospitality for Fugitive Gestures: *Eye Improvisations for Witnessing*' (Practice-based Presentation/Workshop)

This practice-based presentation is an invitation to explore the art of witnessing. I offer physiological eye practices as improvisational scores for witnessing. These quiet scores give us a particular muscle of attention to create radical hospitalities for fugitive gestures. These are movement and thought gestures that flirt at the margins of our knowing and doing, that we may at first not comprehend in the usual way. By attending to the background of interaction, we widen a playing field for movement and thought to emerge at the brink of our habitual perceptions and beneath the invisible scripts of representationalism. It is a fleeting and glimmering thing, best activated not by a practice of doing, but of allowing. The theoretical underpinning of this work draws on concepts of the Minor Gesture (Manning 2016) and the interaction-first principle of A Process Model (En#2 and EN#3) (Gendlin 2018) to play into the embodied critical thinking of dance improvisation. The practice explored in the workshop is witnessing, and the context most fit for suspending the interaction so that we can 'walk around in it' (Berlant 2016), is a MoverWitness relation.

*'I am different because you are here'* writes dance artist Barbara Dilley (2020, p.163) of relational practices. Whether we participate as audience or witness, the way in which we look, co-creates what we see. Witnessing is a constitutive practice that enables another to reposition themselves in relation to their experience, to engage differently with their situation, to participate with a clear beam of curiosity amidst the muddy middle of experience. In the workshop we explore *how we allow ourselves to look-on* stuff happening.. art, the other, ourselves, policy... as playing an urgent and radical function in our community participation. The eye practices are invisible embodied techniques that have the capacity to lever open sedimented ways of seeing and easily cultivate courage in doing and knowing other-wise.

The workshop is open to all. Curiosity is the only requirement. Come as you are. Wear comfortable clothes. The scope of movement is the use of eyes and gestures – as small or big as you wish, you may even sleep.

**Pierfrancesco Tordini**, 'Hans Werner Henze: Beauty, Communication and Social Engagement'

This paper analyzes the relationship established by the German composer Hans Werner Henze with his audience, adopting an original perspective that closely links three fundamental aspects: the primacy of beauty, the importance of communication, and the social engagement. First, beauty plays a crucial role in the poetry of the composer and represents one of the main reasons for his departure from the Darmstadt School, to which he was initially connected. In his view, in fact, the formalism and dogmatism typical of that context focus on correct structures and lose sight of poetry and singability, thus hindering the creative and communicative nature of music, ultimately contributing to a distancing with the audience. By pursuing an ideal of beauty, Henze creates an 'utopian bridge' in which the depth of artistic thought connects with the curious and engaged listener. This relationship, however, does not translate into an attempt to please the audience, but rather into a participative dialogue based on the search for a balance between innovation and tradition.

Finally, through this reciprocity, the composer keeps a vigilant eye on the social world around him. Henze's audience is not limited to potential listeners, but encompasses a broader public that includes his entire cultural environment. Henze's commitment never turns into militant art, as he always preserves his identity as a composer. Nothing is trivialized through ideologies, and these interests – not strictly musical – nonetheless have a positive impact on the compositional work, thus ensuring its indispensable poetic success. The aim of this paper is to illustrate an attitude that permeated Henze's work and that can contribute to shedding new light on his figure. It will also attempt to draw a parallel with other musicians who, in the same years pursued a similar 'humanistic' vision of music.

**Rebekah Farrugia, 'D.Cipher(ing) Detroit: A Music Nonprofit's Creative Placemaking and Placekeeping Efforts'**

Historically in the US, the recognition of the social significance of arts and culture has paled in comparison to that in European countries. There is no state supported plan that is comparable to the 2023-2026 EU Work Plan for Culture that acknowledges the pivotal role that the arts play in the well-being of communities. Little attention and funding is earmarked for the arts, especially in economically precarious cities such as Detroit whose population faces a long list of challenges ranging from racist policies, poverty, environmental hazards, and housing insecurity. Despite minimal governmental support, Detroit artists have woven arts and culture into the very being of the city. Detroit is home to thriving music, dance, theatre, and visual arts scenes. There exists a long legacy of interweaving grassroots social justice and arts movements. In Detroit, one is just as, if not more likely, to encounter the performing arts in streets and parks than in theatres or classrooms.

Drawing on ethnographic and interview data, this presentation focuses on two arts nonprofits in Detroit and their community engagement efforts. D.Cipher is a music nonprofit dedicated to advancing the Michigan music economy through shared learning, collaboration, and partnerships. Since 2018, the collective has hosted listening and jam sessions that connect the city's diverse music community and in-studio sessions with established musicians that create intergenerational learning experiences for emerging artists. Additionally, through its free, outdoor summer concert series, D.Cipher engages in placekeeping efforts to preserve the city's rich musical and neighborhood histories. A second organization, Sidewalk Detroit, engages in placemaking work, incorporating music but also dance, poetry, and installation projects to create interactive productions that engage audiences in city parks. Arts nonprofits like D.Cipher and Sidewalk are instrumental to cities. They are exemplary models for arts preservation and continuation in cities with scarce governmental support.

**Ruth Horáčková, 'Engaging in Senior Community Music'**

In my presentation I would like to introduce the involvement of a senior women's group in community music performance. The Prague choir *Elpida*, with its 25 female members with an average age of 77, led by a young female choirmaster, was the subject of my anthropological research (using ethnographic methods). I focused on the choir's regular rehearsals as well as its public performances, where this remarkable choir, among many other events (public and private), has in the past participated, for example, in the internationally renowned *Rock for People* music festival or performed as part of the side events at the prestigious *Karlovy Vary International Film Festival*. The *Elpida* choir has thus proved to be an example of a group that sees its choir as a space for negotiating a place in contemporary society heavily, however covertly, burdened with ageism. According to the classical ethnomusicological model 'music as culture', music and specifically participatory performance (Turino 2008) is a model field for these negotiations. This happens through repertoire or public performances. In addition to the aforementioned concept of ageism, I

also introduce the choir based on a project by Canadian ethnomusicologist Michael Frishkopf entitled 'Music for Global Human Development: Participatory Action Research for Health and Well Being' (2022). This concept of applied ethnomusicology is based on the social theory of Jürgen Habermas and his 'lifeworld' – the realm of lived intersubjective reality. Frishkopf then uses Habermas's model to coined the term 'soundworld', described as an *epicentre of social interaction and solidarity, which has a role in the application to connecting groups of the elderly and young*. The work of the *Elpida* choir thus reflects music as a tool for the realisation of the lifeworld of today's Prague seniors.

**Sabina Sweta Sen-Podstawska, 'Rasa-Bhava in Audience Engagement for Odissi Dance: Revisiting Traditional Aesthetics to Enhance Contemporary Practices and Experiences'**

This presentation focuses on the evolving dynamics of audience/spectator engagement in Odissi dance creation and presentation by revisiting the theory of *rasa-bhava* (essence or taste and feeling-doing). Indigenous ritual practices that influenced the reinvention of Odissi dance in the late 1950s were meant to evoke specific rasas in both divine and secular audiences. Despite the shift from the sacred to secular spaces and viewers, the *rasa-bhava* aesthetic remains fundamental in how Odissi dance establishes and communicates emotions, creating an immersive encounter for spectators and transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries. Examples from contemporary Odissi dance practitioners' work illustrate how they incorporate the principles of *rasa-bhava* with an awareness of embodied and enactive audience participation. This approach views the audience as active co-participants in the performative experience. Fostering physical and emotional resonance guided by intentional movement, gesture and story deepens the performer's and audience's connection to the dance. This approach allows *rasikas*' (the educated spectators') to 'feel into' the narrative, creating a shared emotional journey that enriches the mutual experience. Furthermore, the study positions Odissi as a vital medium for societal engagement, integrating its practice into daily life and contemporary thoughts, feelings and aesthetics. By inviting audiences to partake in the dance, Odissi dance serves as a conduit for enhancing community connection, cultural identity, emotional expression and transformative experience. Ultimately, this exploration highlights how the *rasa-bhava* theory can foster deeper engagement and participation, ensuring that Odissi dance remains a vibrant and meaningful art form in contemporary and international contexts.

**Sara Accettura and Ilona Baldacchino, 'Sensory Symphony: Inclusive Performance and Audience Engagement in Community Arts'**

This presentation will examine the development of an inclusive, multi-sensory and interactive performance and workshop, *Sensory Symphony*, which premiered at *Notte Bianca 2024*. Coordinated by *Opening Doors Association*—a Malta-based organization providing arts training for adults with intellectual disabilities—this project builds on prior workshops and events aimed at fostering accessibility and engagement in the performing arts. Our process began with the *Empowerment Through the Arts* workshops, offered to the *Opening Doors* members during World Disability Day and held in collaboration with *Spazju Kreattiv* and the University of Malta in 2022. Through my Seeds Fund research, we created an inclusive and sensory-friendly environment that encouraged creative expression among participants with intellectual disabilities. Building on this foundation, our 2023 project *Engaging the Senses* involved participants in an interactive experience with Soundbeam and Light Technology, where audience members of all ages and abilities manipulated sound and light by moving through the space.

This concept of sensory immersion was further developed in *Sensory Symphony*, where a mixed-ability cast of members of *Opening Doors Association* used light, sound, and movement to foster direct audience involvement, inviting spectators to collaborate in shaping the performance. The aim

of this collaborative project, co-directed with Douglas Comley and Moritz Zavan Stoeckle, is to highlight the transformative potential of participatory arts, demonstrating how inclusive performance practices can foster meaningful engagement and accessibility for diverse audiences.

This presentation/workshop will outline the progression of these projects, emphasizing inclusive, collaborative practices as an emerging approach to engage participants with intellectual disabilities in both creation and performance. Further insight will be shared on the role of a sensory-friendly environment in facilitating participation. The session will combine an overview of project development with hands-on activities, giving conference attendees a chance to experience aspects of inclusive practices themselves.

**Satwika Penna, 'Revival of Periṇi in Telangana – Fostering Community Participation and Engagement'**

The paper explores the initiatives taken to promote community participation and engagement in developing Periṇi as a distinctive dance from South India while discussing the historical relevance and political interventions in reviving and reconstructing Periṇi. Periṇi, one of the Deśi<sup>3</sup> dance from the medieval period has evolved over the centuries into a prominent dance form in South India. The Kakatiya dynasty's reign is historically significant for its artistic contributions offering valuable insights in reviving Periṇi, seen in the Ramappa Temple sculptures in Warangal, Telangana. Moreover, a thorough study of the medieval dance treatises provides a strong theoretical foundation for reconstructing Periṇi.

Dr Nataraja Ramakrishna was the first researcher to visualize Periṇi as Tāṇḍava<sup>4</sup> and initiate the reconstruction in the 1970s. Later, in 2014, the formation of Telangana as a separate Indian state provided a fresh impetus to recognize Periṇi as the state's primary dance form by the government. The revival and reconstruction of Periṇi with the help of scholars and practitioners establishes the government's commitment to preserving the regional identity and ensuring cultural continuity. In this regard, the Government facilitated Periṇi's propagation through various performances, workshops and demonstrations. Further, introduction to women and their increased participation, alongside the inclusion of Periṇi as an academic course in the Government's music and dance colleges helped strengthen community participation and create awareness. As the first female performer of Periṇi, the researcher is involved in the creative process of reconstructing Periṇi and its widespread engagement.

**Saverio Beccaccioli, 'Welfare Pop: The Garrincha Dischi Record Label Revolution in Italy in the 2000s Decade'**

Garrincha Dischi, an independent record label founded in Bologna (north of Italy) in 2008 by Matteo Romagnoli (a musician and educator for disabled people), represented a significant bulwark in the national independent music scene. Matteo Romagnoli had gathered around him the songwriters of what was considered to be the 'local music' of the early 2000s, and together they built a home. Garrincha Dischi was not a genre label, there were no dictates, but instead light threads on an artistic, political, social, and aesthetic level that made the songs come to life to become something else. In Italy at this time, popular music struggled to acquire a name, a physiognomy and a personality. The 2000s preferred to offer a concentrate of all the previous decades: a simultaneity of pop chronology that abolished history with genres revitalized and renewed with vintage sound material reprocessed and recombined.

---

<sup>3</sup> Practices done according to regional influences and interests.

<sup>4</sup> Vigorous male-oriented dance.

While maintaining their independence, many of the bands produced by Garrincha Dischi had an impact on Italian culture that is equal to that of the major labels. The various appearances at the most important Italian song event, the Sanremo Festival, are worth mentioning. While continuing to preserve ethical, political, and social values. The aim of my presentation is to highlight the cultural and social impact of Garrincha Dischi in Italy. I will rethink the concept of independence and analyse how that label has addressed and exploited the evolution of digital technologies. I will illustrate the educational programmes developed by the label and its artists in secondary schools to simulate youth creativity and provide tools to face the social challenges that the new century shows every day. Garrincha Dischi has always worked to promote interdisciplinary dialogue with the community, education, civil, and social institutions.

**Simon Farrugia and Philip Ciantar, *Sounds of Weeping: Funeral Marches in Maltese Society and Culture* (documentary film)**

*Sounds of Weeping: Funeral Marches in Maltese Society and Culture* is an ethnographical film which explores the emotional spaces engendered by funeral marches on the small Mediterranean island country of Malta.

Maltese wind bands are renowned for their *festa* celebrations, which highlight a strong and significant aspect of local tradition. Renowned for their vivid *festa* celebrations, Maltese wind bands are recognised for both their festive marches, as well as for funeral marches, which provide a space for profound emotional expression and the communal expression of grief. This documentary explores how funeral marches in Malta are not only central to formal events, like Good Friday processional outdoor pageants, but are also employed in other situations and spaces, such as during social gatherings, funeral cortèges, and at moments of personal relaxation. By exploring the multifaceted use of these funeral marches in Maltese society, the film demonstrates how these marches transcend specific times, places and occasions.

Furthermore, it captures spaces created and shaped by these same marches in which personal emotions and sentiments fuse with other such emotional and sentimental aspects which may be considered as more collective and public. Through ethnographic filming and the interviews it contains, *Sounds of Weeping* portrays the intriguing ways in which such funeral marches blend into diverse socio-cultural spaces of Maltese society.

**Sravya Bandaru, 'The Role of Documentation in Participation and Community Engagement of Performing Arts: A Case of Indian Classical Dances'**

Performing arts documentation is a specialized area that not only preserves cultural heritage for future generations but also serves as a powerful tool for community engagement and participation. Over a period of time, documentation through new-age technologies and tools has provided unique opportunities for engagement, learning, and participation, transforming local arts into shared international heritage. National cultural institutions in India have made concerted efforts to capture and organize the history, evolution, and performances, especially of Indian classical dances (ICDs). While documentation at a global level has its roots tracing back to the establishment of institutions like the New York Public Library for Performing Arts, Jacob's Pillow and Dance/USA, the documentation practices in India are still evolving and have yet to fall into a fully structured form.

The post-independence era in India witnessed a notable evolution in the methods employed for documentation, which began at an institutional level with the inception of Central Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) in 1953. These documented materials acted as primary sources for research, academic learning, revival, and appreciation of Indian cultural heritage. Thus, systematic

documentation practices help extend the global reach, encourage cross-cultural dialogue, strengthen the dance fellowship, and ensure the sustainability of cultural forms.

The paper discusses i) the role of documentation of ICDs in strengthening local and global participation and community engagement; ii) explores how comprehensive documentation frameworks can both preserve and amplify the cultural voices of communities worldwide; iii) identifies potential and limitations of documentation practices at national cultural institutions in India. The paper is based on the fieldwork and virtual interviews conducted with the personnel involved in and associated with the documentation and preservation of ICDs at national cultural institutions in India and the USA.

**Stefan Aquilina**, 'Bridging Research and Community Engagement: An Example from Modern Theatre'

In an academic context which is increasingly underlining performance metrics, student satisfaction, added admin duties, increased teaching workload, etc., this paper reflects on ways through which the bridging of research and community engagement can assist academics negotiate some of the contemporary challenges posed by their work. Using modern theatre as a case-study, the paper asks the following question: how can I transform an element of my research into a form of community engagement? It argues that academics attempting community engagement would do well to integrate these community-based activities within their broader academic work, including research and, possibly, also teaching.

Community engagement is a broad term that encapsulates ways through which a university and its academics engage with non-academic stakeholders, institutions, individuals, or communities. It destabilises the narrow image of academics locked in an 'ivory tower', detached from real-life concerns and churning out research outputs that are relevant only to a restricted number of peers. Community engagement, on the other hand, is informed by a more open and collaborative disposition, which necessarily brings with it issues related to politics, power dynamics, and epistemology. These considerations are key to this paper, with a particular emphasis on the power dynamics involved between the 'academic expert' and the 'receiving community'. The paper unpicks these two spheres to show that community engagement where knowledge flows downwards from the expert to the community should be treated with suspicion because of the hierarchical power dynamics that are imposed. As an alternative, a more democratic approach is suggested, one where different but complimentary skills and knowledge are shared in a barter-like environment.

**Stephanie De'Ath**, 'Exploring Undergraduate Dance Students' Citizenship and Engagement Through the Lens of Well-being'

As first-year undergraduate dance students transition into higher education (HE), their engagement and participation require navigation of numerous 'new-to-them' encounters before they feel like a citizen of the institution they have joined. Educational citizenship research suggests that for students to belong, they must navigate the complex micro-politics and intersectionality of their environment. Whilst institutions must embrace complex student identities to support participation, robust student well-being is also required to journey through this significant period of change. This mixed-method, descriptive case study explored how students' well-being fostered development of their institutional citizenship.

Two cohorts of first-year undergraduate dance students (2023: n=52; 2024: n=46) from a British vocational dance education institution completed an online survey in October 2023 and 2024, which included The PERMA Profiler. Nineteen participants (2023: n=11; 2024: n=8) also attended activity-based focus group discussions that explored transitions into higher education.

Analysis of survey responses categorised feelings of loneliness as 'languishing' (scoring <5/10) with mean scores of 4.54 ( $SD \pm 2.31$ ) and 5.00 ( $SD \pm 2.16$ ) in the 2023 and 2024 cohorts, respectively. Focus group participants suggested the transition into HE as the cause. Homesickness, social anxiety, and adapting to cultural norms heightened students' loneliness in their first term, especially if they had not previously lived away from home. These factors distracted students from full engagement and participation during the early stages of their education, slowing their institutional citizenship. Mature students and those with previous experience of HE also experienced loneliness; however, they evidenced greater optimism and hope towards settling in, making friends, and building a sense of institutional belonging and citizenship over time. These findings have informed strategic responses to foster student well-being through the optimisation of institutional support mechanisms (pastoral, mental well-being, learning, housing, financial), induction activities (student ambassador support, social opportunities), and dance science curriculum content.

**Steriani Tsintziloni, 'Inviting the Audience to Dance Events Beyond Dancing'**

This presentation will examine two different projects of public engagement from a curatorial perspective. The first one, entitled 'Time Travel' (2012) was an ephemeral exhibition of archival dance materials at the occupied theatre 'Embros' in Athens, during the years of the economic crisis. The second, under the title 'Dance Day' was organized by the Athens Festival in 2018 and 2019, intending to bring audiences and dance artists together within frameworks other than performances. Being involved as curator on both occasions, the question of how 'can we curate dance without making a festival?' (Ricci, 2019, 38) was pivotal, leading to formats that expand the notion of performance. In addition, the curatorial perspective embraced the question of how to create a space for the audience to enjoy and appreciate dance experiences, to generate commitment and care. The different institutional contexts and social conditions enhance the examination with important questions regarding the protocols of audience participation, issues of politics and power. Finally, the role of the curator is approached as being a catalyst and mediator in creating the contexts for bringing audiences and dance closer to each other.

**Susie Crow, 'Girl in a Broken Mirror: an Example of Educational Engagement and Participation in Performing Arts'**

2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the death of British composer Sir Arthur Bliss; commemorations include a book of essays focusing on his music for ballet. Bliss wrote four major ballet scores, with a strong sense of narrative and theatricality. *Checkmate* choreographed by Ninette de Valois in 1937 has remained in the Royal Ballet companies' repertoire; *Miracle in the Gorbals* premiered in 1944 was recently restored to great acclaim by Birmingham Royal Ballet. *The Lady of Shalott* based on Tennyson's poem was originally composed for the San Francisco Ballet in 1958, where with choreography by Lew Christiansen it had significant success. However this has never been seen in Bliss' native land, and his dramatic score has never been used by a UK choreographer – apart from on one extraordinary occasion.

Secondary modern New Parks Girls School in Leicester took the unusual step of including ballet in its curriculum. In May 1975 a full scale version of this work choreographed by ballet teacher Mary Hockney was performed by students from the school at Leicester's Haymarket Theatre, with the score played by the renowned Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra under their founding conductor Eric Pinkett. The process of bringing the production together was filmed for a documentary later shown on national television.

What enabled this ambitious but now largely forgotten project to happen? This historical paper charts primary research in local government records, tracking down participants through print and social media. It reveals the impact of not only inspirational teachers but far-sighted education officers, facilitating support and resources to make high quality practical arts education available to state school students (a significant number of whom went on to have professional careers in music and dance), and generating innovative initiatives for wider dance education in the area. How did the educational context of the time differ from current STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) oriented national curriculum policy; would such a project be possible today, and what can we learn from it?

**Thomas Page, 'An Immersive Case for National Dance Infrastructure and the Vitality of Ethical Institutional Participation' (Practice-based presentation/Workshop)**

Following the structure of an open-level contemporary dance class interwoven with creative and discussion based tasks, this practice based presentation will invite participants/viewers to explore ways of building a national dance infrastructure with a focus on fostering vibrant artistic communities and promoting ethical participation supported by established institutions.

Through practical activities (no dance experience required), attendees will engage with case studies that highlight successful models of collaboration between artists, institutions, and communities. The workshop will provide a platform for dialogue on the challenges and opportunities faced in the dance sector, particularly in the context of social equity and cultural representation.

Together we will examine the impact of institutional practices on the vitality of dance as an art form, focusing on how ethical frameworks can enhance relationships between artists, organisations, and other art forms. By leveraging interactive discussions and practical exercises, the workshop aims to cultivate a shared understanding of how a robust national infrastructure can support diverse voices in dance, encourage innovative practices, and promote sustainable distributions of resources. Key areas of consideration will include the importance of collaboration, knowledge exchange, and goals for community engagement. As well as a focus on cross-institutional programmes and networks.

The final section of the workshop will include a group discussion and mapping of ideas that unfold during the workshop. The aim is that attendees will leave with actionable ideas for their own practices and a strengthened sense of commitment to collaborative approach in participation/outreach. This collaborative exploration and discussions seeks to empower participants to share, envision, and then implement a more integrated and equitable approach to national dance infrastructure, ensuring its continued relevance and vitality in a rapidly changing cultural landscape.

**Vera Djemelinskaia, 'Queer Politics "In Motion": Participatory Art and Normative (Feminist) Learning'**

This paper explores the potential of participatory dance performance and collective experiences to intentionally challenge and reshape societal norms that sustain systems of oppression. It builds on a doctoral project aimed at deepening our understanding of how participatory choreomusical practices can activate and foster community-centred normative learning. Using Turino's participatory art model as a foundation, this research investigates the mechanisms of sound-to-motion translation in participatory musical theatre dances. The focal artistic practice navigates a spectrum between fully participatory formats – where all actors are potential participants – and presentational formats based on the audience/performer divide. This choreographic approach strategically engages with normative learning, as indicated by the title, setting queer politics in motion.

The theoretical framework is interdisciplinary, drawing from sound-performative analysis (Schroedter, 2024), social cognition, and queer phenomenology, thereby enriching the evolving field of participatory art. Two of my choreographic performative and community engagement practices serve as case studies. First, the cheerleading squad of Vienna's women roller derby team, Fearleaders Vienna, is a community-led initiative featuring synchronized choreography performed by CIS- and nonbinary men. This material is designed to be transmitted through a one-day rehearsal and thus embodied within a 'thought community' (Zerubavel, 1996) via Schön's (1983) concept of 'knowing-in-action'. Second, the Feminist Dance Workshops project provides an educational space where adults explore queer storytelling through textual (libretto) and choreomusical narration, employing a semantically enriched movement vocabulary to engage with intersectional feminist themes in a musical theatre dance environment.

**Véronique Vella**, '*One of the Number*: An Exploration of Compositional and Artistic Choices in Electroacoustic Music Reflecting Personal Narratives of the Covid-19 Pandemic'

The presentation will feature excerpts from Véronique Vella's full length electroacoustic music album, *One of the Number* released in 2021. Each of the 10 tracks features women's commentaries on their personal experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic. The participants, aged between 35 and 80, include Maltese, Italian, French, Spanish, Scottish and Irish women working in diverse fields such as the Arts, Education, Medicine and Journalism. The instrumental music acts as a 'canvas' for the speakers' spoken reflections. The choice of timbres attempts to reflect the narrative created by each speaker. Each track was named after the participants who shared their candid thoughts. Elspeth, a Scottish musician/long-distance runner talks of feelings of frustration after catching the illness, while Nathalie, a Chemistry professor who retrained as a schoolteacher, recalls initial reactions to the news of the pandemic in France while having young children in her care. Lucia, former Head of Dept. of Dance Studies at UM talks about the challenges of managing the department during the pandemic and living far away from her family in Spain, while singer Aimee reflects on how she has had to adapt to online teaching and performing. Theresa, a retired school teacher speaks from the perspective of an elderly/vulnerable person living alone during the pandemic. Sara, an Italian dancer and lecturer at UM became a mother for the first time during the pandemic and could not travel to Italy at this time due to restrictions & health risks. Jessica works as a nurse at the neonatal intensive care unit at Mater Dei and discusses her fears as a front-liner while Claudia – a writer of mostly human-interest stories for *The Times of Malta* reflects on the challenges she faces while working from home and home-schooling her young daughter. Finally, former branding manager and mother of 3 boys, Olivia, ponders on the more philosophical aspects vis a vis current state of affairs.

*One of the Number* was funded by Malta Arts Council and forms part of the ongoing 'Memorja' project, an initiative by The National Archives of Malta. Through the sharing of various women's thoughts and perspectives, we are given a tiny peek into the complexity of shared human experience during unnatural times.

**Vicky Hunter**, 'Bringing the Body with You: Group Dynamics, Gaps and Embodied Mapping in Participatory Site-Dance'

In this presentation I explore embodied experiences in site-based movement workshops that engage participants with lived environments through the body, fostering human-nonhuman relations in urban sites and nature spaces. Drawing on examples from working with participants in the UK, Spain, Lebanon, Malta, and Ireland I articulate how 'site-based body practice' valorizes embodied spatial practice and instigates corporeal dialogues between bodies, sites, and group members.

In this work, participants engage with body mapping tasks and movement scores that reveal human-nonhuman relations (Barad 2003, 2007, Bennet 2009, Haraway 2014, 2016). Through performative approaches and creative tasks (such as drawing, mark making, movement tableaux, walking and partner work), open exchanges and intra-actions between bodies and sites are encouraged to flourish. These strategies are employed as a means by which; subjective and collective site explorations are invoked, the mobilities of body, space and place are perceived, human-nonhuman relational strata are exposed, and subjective wellbeing is fostered supported by the group endeavour.

In this paper I offer my observations on group dynamics emerging through this practice and pay particular attention to the gaps in-between tasks – the gaps and the goodbyes – in which a key dynamic emerges offering a vital space in which some of the workshops' aims (fostering wellbeing and connectivity with lived environments) are realised. I advocate for a greater recognition and validation of these moments within participatory workshop design and acknowledge the 'relationscapes' (Manning 2009) they invoke. These moments are therefore proposed in this research as constituting vital episodes in which individuals are seen and acknowledged as co-makers of knowledge, sharers of 'spatial stories' (Cresswell and Merriman 2011:5) and collaborative participants within the co-constitutive workshop assemblage (DeLanda 2016).

**Vipavinee Artpradid**, 'What I have learned from developing an Embodied Phenomenographic Approach for Inclusive Dance Training Programme Evaluation'

In this presentation, I share what I have learned from leading a collaborative process of developing a more equitable programme evaluation approach for an inclusive dance training programme (FRONTLINEdance's Advanced Training Programme [ATP]). Aimed at being accessible for neurodivergent and disabled emerging artists who prefer movement-based forms of communication, the approach is developed in partnership with artist-led dance company FRONTLINEdance (FD) in Stoke-on-Trent (UK). All participant interaction is led by FD's facilitators. Interviews with FD facilitators who engage with programme participants on a weekly basis have informed the selection of data collection tools that would be most supportive for the participants. Data collection sessions are scheduled for December 2024.

I discuss the effectiveness of, and challenges involved in using each of the tools which are tailored to participants' communication needs, as tools for inclusive programme evaluation. The anchor points for tool implementation are based on the ATP's key areas of technique, creativity, performance, health and wellbeing, complementary activity (e.g. body conditioning), awareness of available industry pathways, information retention knowledge translation and transfer, sense of belonging, and self-confidence.

Tools include programme-specific symbols-based visuals, video-based observation, a hand-moveable 1-10 scale, and participant-led photography. The research is a practical application of research into embodied phenomenography, exploring its effectiveness, and making its impact more visible through an industry-based dance training programme for neurodivergent and disabled individuals. The approach shifts the attention to data that is centred on the body rather than verbal and written language.

The research aims to impact different sectors such as the performing arts, education, and third sector in terms of bringing in peoples' voices that are often left out of ableist evaluation methods that emphasise verbal and written responses, such as through interviews and questionnaires.

The project is funded by a British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grant (SRG 2324\240089).

**Yanik Giroux, 'Social Engagement & the Vagus at the Heart of the Art; Boosting Confidence and Engagement Through Wellbeing'**

The mental health benefits of singing solo or in a group, participating in a local theatre group or preparing for a dance recital have always been recognized. Singing and making art together is good for us, but why exactly? Thanks to the work of the likes of Dr. Stephen W. Porges and his *Polyvagal Theory*, we can now look into somatic explanations as to why making music feels so good and find ways to further contribute to this wellbeing. From the concept of co-regulation, to the understanding of 'neuroception' and the creation of safe work and study spaces, being able to meet the students where they are and adapt to their needs is an important pedagogical asset; even more so following a pandemic that has challenged our autonomic nervous systems and disturbed our sense of safety and belonging, bringing in a wave of anxiety for some students, and affecting commitment and participation with our theatre audiences. It's within that framework that we can look into the integration of healthy concepts and practices into our work in order to build and keep our creative community active and engaged.

There is a growing interest in *Trauma Informed Pedagogy* and a wealth of information and techniques to support this. Self-help exercises proposed by Stanley Rosenberg in his book *Accessing the Healing Power of the Vagus Nerve* or based on Stephen Porges' work on finding safety through social engagement and activation of the vagus nerve, can be most beneficial to singers. Meditations such as Dr. Dan J. Siegel's '*Wheel of Awareness*' can help actors find that center source. Other methods like *Emotional Freedom Technique* can be useful when dealing with performance anxiety or challenges arising from the demands of day-to-day activities of learning.

Rebuilding a class or a small community through the application of somatic work and a sense of connection may be a first step towards rebuilding a healthier society as a whole.