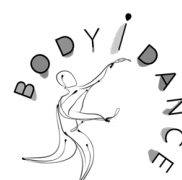


Proceedings of I – body, I – dance: The 16th Conference of Dance and the Child International

Ljubljana, Slovenia,
July 7–12, 2024



daCi
CONFERENCE
2024




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Introduction to proceedings of the 16th conference of Dance and the Child International entitled I – body, I – dance; I for Imagination, Improvisation, Inclusion, Identity, Intelligence, and Interdisciplinarity 2024

This focused publication of four keynote extended abstracts, nine research papers, seven practice papers and two reports make a total of 22 contributions. Spanning 11 different countries across five continents these papers embrace the 2024 Slovenia conference theme of **I – body, I – dance; I for Imagination, Improvisation, Inclusion, Identity, Intelligence, and Interdisciplinarity** from a variety of standpoints. The concept of I served as a central lens, from which the following papers bounced off, in a range of relationships and exciting viewpoints relating to the I theme.

Publication Process

The 22 contributions have undergone a comprehensive double-blind reviewing process plus a further thorough editorial process. My thanks go to all the following international reviewers who gave compressive feedback and constructive comments: Ann Kipling Brown, Eeva Anttila, Ralph Buck, Sue Cheesman, Peter Cook, Norma Sue Fisher-Stitt, Heather Fitzsimmons-Frey, Nancy Francis, Vesna Geršak, Joy Guarino, Susan Koff, Helena Korošec, Sophia McKain, Nina Meško, Elisabete Monteiro, Jeff Meiners, Juliette O'Brien, Adrienne Sansom, Muhammad Fazli Taib Bin Saearani, Eilidh Slattery, Dorothy Spiller and Senka Žižanovič.

These proceedings have taken time to come to fruition due to a range of circumstances, the increase in papers needing reviewing plus most of the work on these proceedings is voluntary. Despite living in complex times, the number of papers that finally made it to the conference proceedings is an encouraging increase on the previous proceedings including more research focussed papers. Of note is that several authors under the research section are focussed on PhD thesis research projects.

My sincere thanks to all for your positive engagement, patience and support of bringing these proceedings to life. Thanks to the University of Ljubljana Faculty of Education for housing these proceedings which will give open access to the collection for anyone. This **16th conference of Dance and the Child International proceedings 2024 entitled I for Imagination, Improvisation, Inclusion, Identity, Intelligence, and Interdisciplinarity** makes an important contribution to an ever-increasing dance scholarship and dance education practice across the generations and time span of daCi.

Keynotes

The collection begins with four keynotes summarised by 4 extended abstracts. The first keynote extended abstract **Embodying Hope through Dance** captures an imaginative and moving performance presentation by **Eeva Anttila** (Finland) and her daughter **Suvi Honkanen** (Finland) illustrating how hope through dance may be embodied, awakened and sustained. This duet of interplay between movement and words presented a powerful message and challenged conference participants to embrace the notion of hope in the here and now.

Robi Kroflič (Slovenia) in his keynote entitled **The first-person artistic experience in contemporary pedagogical approaches** explained that the concept of first-person artistic experience can be described as the direct involvement of an individual in an artistic event, either as a creator or as a user of art. Furthermore, he expands that the central theme of his keynote was a discussion of the significance of the first-person artistic experience in contemporary pedagogical approaches, particularly in the context of performing arts such as dance.

Rok Vevar (Slovenia) and **Maja Delak** (Slovenia) discuss the development of dance education in Slovenia drawing on a body of examples and influences over years. **Dance education between personalities and practices** begins with the premise that in the field of contemporary dance, approaches to teaching dance have changed within educational models according to needs. Nonetheless, they highlight that teaching methods have been shaped and constrained by how educators view the effectiveness of the educational process. They assert that in today's Slovenia, proficiency in dance has taken on various meanings due to the rise of different methodologies in dance education.

Minds in Motion: Creative movement as a language for learning focused on creative dance for children. **Susan Griss** (USA) advocates for academic curriculum learning through dance and movement which she explains can be a lifeline for children, making learning more meaningful, personal, creative, engaging, and memorable. She expands on her premise by discussing examples of curriculum content learning using dance improvisation and creative movement. In this troubled world Susan reminds us that as teachers, we have the ability, opportunity, and responsibility to inspire students to heal our world. She asserts that dance can help children connect with others and work as a team in order to give a deeper more personal meaning beyond what is learnt.

Research Papers

This research papers section begins with **Carol Brown's** (Australia) paper entitled **Connecting with country, kith and kin**. She begins with a pertinent question that the field of dance education needs to engage with -how do we build and sustain anti-racist praxis towards an inclusive pedagogy within tertiary dance education in Australia? The paper discusses important and current issues in dance education, especially inclusive pedagogy and decolonising approaches in Australian tertiary dance. For both practitioners and academics the case studies of curriculum innovation and the discussion of shifting from “space to place” offer insightful information and specific examples of practice. The work addresses urgent questions about decolonisation and inclusive practice, with Carol concluding by urging the dance education field to engage more deeply with these issues for fundamental change.

Becoming All Ears – ‘Embodied Listening’ in early years dance education and beyond discusses the concept of embodied listening in early childhood dance pedagogy. **Tuire Colliander** (Finland) uses the practical lens of an improvisation-based hunting-gathering method, to explore the consequences of embodied listening in dance pedagogy. The ultimate goal is to change dance pedagogy for children into dance pedagogy with children, highlighting the ethical and responsible sides of being, doing, and learning together while explaining how posthuman thinking enhances early childhood dance pedagogies. Concluding, she points out that engaging in ‘embodied listening’ serves as a crucial counterbalance to the increasing pace and pressure to perform learning outcomes, making learning experiences more creative and joyful for early childhood dance education.

Of note is that several authors under this section are focussed on PhD thesis research projects. The primary conclusions of **Ana Germ's** (Slovenia) thesis, **The implementation of contemporary teaching approaches in ballet education** serve as a foundation for this paper. In two parts, the first identifies contemporary teaching techniques while the second focusses on ways to implement teaching approaches, methods and different teaching styles in practical ballet teaching.

Helena Korošec (Slovenia) in her research paper entitled **Puppet Atelier – From atelier to puppet and creative movement performance: An interdisciplinary artistic research project** looks at puppetry and creative movement used in developing a performance highlights the interdisciplinary integration of puppetry, creative movement, and visual arts in an educational setting. The painting *Atelje* (Atelier) created by Gabrijel Stupica as a central stimulus, acted as a catalyst for students enrolled in the elective course on puppetry and creative movement to engage in artistic exploration with the goal of enhancing their comprehension of the arts and uncovering its influences. The project reflects a commitment

to student agency. A SWOT analysis documenting the student participant point of views helps reveal both the pedagogical impact and the challenges of implementing arts-based projects within institutional contexts.

Story Makers – Many Voices, Many Lives: Cultivating inclusion, creativity, and resilience through storymaking examines the impact of participatory storymaking among socially marginalized youth, across four European countries. Through this study authors **Elisabete Monteiro** and **Paula Lebre** (Portugal) highlights the value of storymaking as an interdisciplinary approach, while offering practical tools of puppetry, creative movement, writing, and digital storytelling, for youth and youth workers engagement and empowerment across diverse contexts.

A further two papers use their respective research thesis. **Alexandria Panetta** (Australia) in her thesis **Enacting (Re)Actions: Affect theory and embodied resonance in improvisational contemporary dance and compositional pedagogy** advocates for reforming the New South Wales dance curriculum by incorporating improvisational pedagogy, ensuring alignment with contemporary choreographic practices locally and beyond.

Rita Rato's (Portugal) **Nurturing perception of dance students: embracing Imagery in somatic movement explorations** analyses the findings of a course on somatic movement. It discusses the function of imagery in promoting awareness of the living and feeling body plus how imagery can influence and take part in body perceptual processes when it is embodied by the dance student. The author asserts that the use of imagery fostered greater spontaneity in movement experiences and promoted a more creative and intuitive organization of movement.

Barbara Snook (New Zealand), **Ralph Buck** (New Zealand), **Susan Koff** (USA) and **Bronte Jones** (New Zealand) paper **A choreography of pedagogies: How inclusion is fostered** also focuses on pedagogies but from a different angle. Namely, how different pedagogies in dance are valued by diverse communities fostering inclusion, imagination and identity. From their meta-analysis on articles on community dance practice, the authors state they were most interested in how the community dance activity was enlivened, activated, taught and received by the participants. Importantly, this study revealed a list of pedagogical characteristics that in turn foster positive community dance outcomes.

Dancing the 'I' in the Rainbow focuses on 'identity' from a qualitative research project. **Lisa Wilson, Saranya Devan, Lwandile Vilane** and **Chanté Vermeulen** (South Africa) unpack a joyful dance project which explored inter-cultural reciprocal sharing through dance. Participants included young Xhosa-speaking children in Cape Town, a culturally diverse group of university students and teachers as facilitators. The authors from the data gathering

argue that including dance students' and teachers' diverse cultural identities in dance education spaces in South Africa. Furthermore, these findings can offer a strong potential for nurturing cultural identity and intercultural understanding contributing meaningfully to social transformation, not only in South Africa but beyond.

Practice papers

A Legacy: Boorman's contribution to creative dance is the first paper under the practice papers section, recognising and celebrating the significance of creative dance education. The pivotal role **Joyce Boorman** played in sharing her knowledge and ideas about teaching dance with many students and teachers. **Ann Kipling Brown** (Canada) documents Joyce's contribution to creative dance and her pioneership of daCi.

Examining the discourse and roles of the artist-teacher and teacher-artist unpacks these two roles using responses from a workshop around the commonalities and differences of these roles. Authors **Ann Kipling Brown** (Canada) and **Jeff Meiners** (Australia) conclude with raising interesting questions about the value of both dance artist-teachers and teacher-artists.

Movement-Dance activity in the forest centres around a study that explores a group of school children ages 6-9 years participating in a movement and dance activity in a forest setting that combines BrainDance (Gilbert, 2019) elements with the socio-emotional goals and promotion of movement skills. **Tina Koščak** (Slovenia) argues that through direct engagement with the elements of nature – air, water, animals, plants, and earth, students cultivate a meaningful connection to nature, while developing artistic expression.

From visual art to performing art: Integrating creative movement into the study of Early Renaissance art centres on a case study exploring the use of creative movement as a pedagogical strategy, that explores a pilot project using 12 female students, which introduces creative movement into an undergraduate art history course, aiming to shift learning from passive observation to embodied understanding. **Vid Lenard** (Slovenia) asserts that the findings suggest by merging visual and performing arts, students not only study artworks but also live them, carrying embodied insights into their broader academic and creative practices in higher education.

Dance and socialisation: An Australian study of arts learning online in primary schools directly addresses dance education in primary schools, focusing on socialisation, embodied learning, and pedagogical practices particularly within the Australian context. This study explored teacher, parent and student reflections on online arts learning particularly during the

Covid 19 period. **Linda Merewyn Lorenza** (Australia) and **Jeff Meiners** (Australia) suggest that findings give insights into the need to consider pedagogical implications, online dance resources plus tailored professional learning for teachers.

The process of creative dance becoming a firm part of the **Framework Curriculum for primary schools in the Czech Republic's education system** offers an insight into the innovation of the national curriculum for primary schools in the Czech Republic. **Markéta Pucová** (Czech Republic), explains how creative dance has gradually established itself as an integral component of the curriculum since 2006.

The last practice-led paper entitled **I-improvise: exploring dance through viewpoints training** unpacks and discusses two standard 'Viewpoints' exercises. **Fatima Wachowicz** (Brazil) asserts that through the 'Viewpoints' process the participants experienced exciting and versatile ensemble work exploring different ways of dance improvisation through lenses that allow the group to function together spontaneously and intuitively. The discussion of approaches to improvisation is underpinned with relevant literature.

Reports

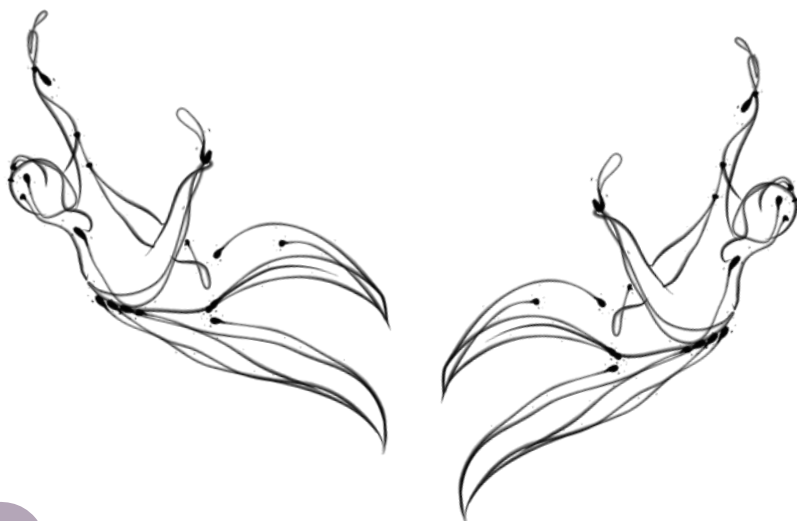
Introduction to the Dance and the Child Ljubljana Declaration is a report in which **Vesna Geršak** (Slovenia) and **Jeff Meiners** (Australia) document the development, purpose and signing of this declaration during the daCi Slovenia 2024 conference. The daCi Ljubljana Declaration provides a framework for dance education and serves as a shared responsibility and a call for everyone involved in dance pedagogy. This declaration is in line with UNESCO Abu Dhabi Framework for Culture and Art Education (2024) that highlighted the need for lifelong learning in culture and art within all types of educational settings. The reasons for past and present declarations are that they both support UNESCO's work and seek to influence 'top down pressure' on nation states (Buck, 2019) with 'bottom up' influence through daCi's collaborative conferences and research. The declarations serve as excellent illustrations of how research and practical application can enhance and motivate one another in the pursuit of generating new insights and formulating future political strategies for implementation in practice. It encourages educators, researchers, artists and legislators to keep pushing for meaningful, inclusive, and accessible dance education in variety of diverse contexts.

Wang Ruping's (Taiwan) report comes from a lens of inclusive practice through documenting a dancer's experience of working with members of the deaf community in Taiwan between 2022 and 2024. Through a series of creative workshops and the development of a performance work, **Embrace: dance and Taiwan Sign Language (TSL)** reflect on the intersections between dance and sign language, highlighting both the possibilities and challenges of inclusive artistic practice.

Summary

These extended keynote abstracts, research papers, practice papers and reports provide a lasting snapshot of this face-to-face 16th conference of Dance and the Child International entitled I – body, I – dance; I for Imagination, Improvisation, Inclusion, Identity, Intelligence, and Interdisciplinarity 2024 from a range of diverse perspectives. I thank all who made these proceedings possible and hope you enjoy reading these contributions.

Editor: **Sue Cheesman**,
Senior Lecturer in Dance Education, University of Waikato



I for Imagination, Improvisation, Inclusion, Identity, Intelligence, and Interdisciplinarity

The sixteenth daCi conference was held in Slovenia 2024 and brought together an international community of 651 participants from 31 countries to explore and celebrate the profound relationship between the body, dance, and humanity. Under the theme “I – Body, I – Dance,” the conference focused on the essential ways in which children and young people express, learn, communicate, and shape their worlds through movement. Hosted in Ljubljana – a city where cultural heritage, artistic innovation, and educational vision intersect – the conference unfolded within a vibrant cultural space that values creativity, dialogue, and the role of the arts in society. Ljubljana became not only a location, but a living environment in which ideas were embodied, shared, and transformed.

The concept of I served as a central lens, unfolding into six interconnected dimensions that guided dialogue and discovery throughout the conference: **Imagination – Improvisation – Inclusion – Identity – Intelligence – Interdisciplinarity**. These dimensions reveal creative dance as a dynamic, inclusive, and interdisciplinary practice – one that nurtures imagination, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and personal identity. Rooted in both pedagogy and artistic practice, dance emerges as a transformative force in the lives of individuals and communities, particularly children and young people. Through movement, children develop self-expression, resilience, and social connection. Dance becomes not only an artistic activity, but a way of knowing, learning, and being in the world – a space where transformation becomes possible and where hope can be embodied.

These six pillars illuminate dance as a field of knowledge and experience:

Imagination opens pathways to artistic discovery, enabling children to envision possibilities beyond the limits of spoken language or conventional structures.

Improvisation strengthens adaptability and resilience, supporting young people in navigating uncertainty and developing confidence in the unknown.

Inclusion ensures that everybody belongs. Dance creates environments where differences are valued and participation becomes possible for all.

Identity is shaped and expressed through embodied experience, allowing personal and cultural narratives to be recognised and shared.

Intelligence is understood as holistic – cognitive, emotional, physical, and social – and is integrated through movement and embodied learning.

Interdisciplinarity expands the role of dance across education, culture, and society, connecting artistic practice with broader social and educational contexts.

In today’s digitally mediated world, these dimensions are more important than ever. As technology becomes increasingly present in children’s lives, dance sustains the human need for physical presence, touch, spatial awareness, cooperation, and embodied understanding. It strengthens our capacity for empathy, community, and well-being.

The Ljubljana conference was built on a rich tapestry of encounters:

I-OPEN and **I-RISE**, opening and closing events that framed and celebrated a shared journey;
I-(RE)SEARCH, a programme of presentations, plenary lectures, movement workshops; demonstrations, and round tables, offering space for critical reflection and international dialogue;

I-DECLARE, the signing of the Dance and the Child International Ljubljana Declaration by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia, under the auspices of the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO – a milestone recognising dance as an essential educational right and a moment of deep significance for the community;

I-PERFORM, dance performances by young groups from many countries, celebrating diversity, creativity, and intercultural connection;

I-TASTE DANCE, morning “Dance Flavours” classes, fostering intergenerational exchange;

I-COLOUR DANCE, **I-WRITE DANCE**, **I-SHOOT DANCE**, workshops for young dancers, supporting creativity and international collaboration;

I-DANCE FOR PEACE, a ritual emphasising unity, empathy, and global responsibility;

I-SPRING and **I-TWIN**, presentations of international collaborations;

I-WATCH DANCE, evening performances showcasing artistic excellence and creative perspectives.

Together, these activities created a dynamic environment in which dance was practised, questioned, shared, renewed, and celebrated. The conference programme demonstrated that children’s dance practices are not only artistic activities, but also a powerful cultural, social, and educational force. Dance builds relationships, nurtures confidence, supports mental health, and expands how we think, feel, relate – and imagine the future.

Dance is not an addition to education – it is a fundamental way of knowing.

Dance is not a luxury – it is a right.

Dance is not only expression – it is transformation.

The work continues beyond the conference. We carry forward a shared commitment to making dance an essential part of children’s rights, education systems, and cultural landscapes; locally and globally. As we conclude this gathering, we reaffirm our commitments:

- to advocate for dance as part of children’s rights;
- to ensure access to quality dance education;
- to build communities where movement matters;
- to contribute to a more humane and connected world through dance.

In these commitments, dance emerges as a space of hope – a way of imagining and shaping more inclusive, compassionate, and sustainable futures. From the “I” that moves, expresses, learns, and transforms emerges a collective “We” – a community that dances toward a more humane, creative, and hopeful future.

We warmly thank all presenters and participants of the daCi Conference 2024. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the proceedings editor, Sue Cheesman, for her outstanding work in preparing this publication. Her dedication, professionalism, and careful attention to detail have been essential in ensuring that the valuable contributions of the conference are presented in a coherent and meaningful form.

Conference co-chairs:

Vesna Geršak

University of Ljubljana Faculty of Education

Nina Meško

Public Fund for Cultural Activities of the Republic of Slovenia





iMPROVISATION



iNTELLIGENCE



iMAGINATION



iDENTITY



iNCLUSION

iNTERDISCIPLINARITY





Conference programme

At the links below, you can access the full conference programme, including presentation abstracts and biographies of the presenters. The programme also highlights the rich contributions of young dancers and scholars, as well as the welcome addresses and accompanying programme of the conference.

<https://www.pef.uni-lj.si/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/daci2024.pdf>



Through the following link, you can also experience the atmosphere and spirit of the conference through the video created during the event.

<https://youtu.be/fX2MeYj1EQ8>

