

## **Mini-Symposium:**

### **The societal relevance of improvisation in music and dance followed by a panel discussion on artistic doctorates in the performing arts**

The mini-symposium is hosted by the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, Amsterdam University of the Arts, in collaboration with the Academy for the Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA), Leiden University.

**When:** Wednesday 30 November 2022, 13.15-18.00 hours

**Where:** Sweelinckzaal, Conservatorium van Amsterdam, Amsterdam University of the Arts, address: Oosterdokskade 151, 1011 DL Amsterdam

There is no script for living your life. Each human being has to work out and invent their own way of living along the way. Improvisation is thus a vital force in life. Following Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam (2007) four things can be said about improvisation: it generates diverse forms of culture, it is relational, it is temporal and it is something we simply do. It is therefore all the more surprising that the term creativity is overly present today but that it remains rather silent when it comes to improvisation. This meeting seeks to discuss the societal relevance of improvisation, notably in dance and music. Furthermore, it aims to critically explore how both can take their proper place in education.

In this mini-symposium, we will specifically address the notion of care and response-ability. Can we consider improvisation and play as practices of care, in which living beings attend and look after one another, respond and become response-able to what happens in the moment (Ingold, 2018)? What can we learn from these embodied, improvisational practices that welcome elements of uncertainty, that take residence in the not-yet, and allow for differences? What is the role of the body, and movement, in taking care? Even more, how is this practice of care addressed in artistic research? What does it mean to do research that is ethically informed? Can we look at artistic doctorates as a practice of care, that incorporates also notions of vulnerability, resilience, plurality, and response-ability (Midgellow, 2019)?

The symposium will end with a panel discussion on artistic doctorates in the performing arts. The third cycle in higher art education is a topical issue in the Netherlands. Currently, there are different formats, ranging from preparatory trajectories (such as THIRD in Amsterdam) to full PhD programs (e.g. ACPA in Leiden). In 2023 a pilot of so-called 'professional doctorates' in the arts will start in the Netherlands. The panel will discuss these formats, taking into account the outcome of the EU project 'ADiE - Artistic Doctorates in Europe'.

You can register for the mini-symposium by mail: [tommy.vandelst@ahk.nl](mailto:tommy.vandelst@ahk.nl) or [carolien.hermans@ahk.nl](mailto:carolien.hermans@ahk.nl). There is no registration fee.

## **Programme: general overview**

- 13.15-13.30: Coming in
- 13.30-13.45: Welcome and Introduction by Carolien Hermans
- 13.45-15.45: Mini-Symposium: 'Societal relevance of improvisation and play'
- 15.45-16.15: Break
- 16.15-17.45: Panel Discussion: 'Artistic doctorates in the performing arts'
- 17.45-18.00: Closing off

### **13:45-16.00: Mini-Symposium: 'Societal relevance of improvisation and play' moderated by Scott deLahunta**

13.45-14.05: Charlotte Svendler-Nielsen  
*Arts-integrated educational practice as a 'soulful space' for children in times and places of crises and trauma*

14.05-14.25: Luc Nijs  
*A caring stance to musical development: promoting well-being through improvisation with music and movement*

14.25-14.45: Eeva Anttila  
*Co-choreographing childhood: A vision, or a possibility?*

14.45-15.05: Vida Midgelow  
*Improvising an ethics of care*

15.05-15.45: Discussion

### **15.45-16.15: Break**

### **16.15-17.45: Panel Discussion: 'Artistic doctorates in the performing arts', moderated by Henk Borgdorff**

Panel members: Vida Midgelow, Anke Haarmann, Michiel Schuijjer, Liesbet van Zoonen, Laura Cull

**From 17.45 on: Drinks at Atrium**

## **Presentations**

### **Arts-integrated educational practice as a 'soulful space' for children in times and places of crises and trauma**

Charlotte Svendler Nielsen

An artistic-educational environment that gives room for expression, creativity and imagination can be a space both of openness and vulnerability. Les Todres (2007) characterises human openness as a 'soulful space'. If an educational environment holds a spaciousness in which vulnerability is not avoided, but rather, embraced it can be a foundation both for empathic connection with others and for understanding ourselves anew. It is therefore important to question what is important for arts education to create an environment that can foster positive experiences for children. This presentation will outline the pedagogy developed in a four-year project led by an intercultural group of artist/teacher/researchers (a/r/tographers (Irwin, 2004)) from Denmark and South Africa. The group created a workshop format in the cross-over between dance and visual arts. Based on a hermeneutic phenomenological analysis (van Manen, 1990) of material from a workshop week in November 2020 that connects the children's experiences and the a/r/tographers experiences a central theme became how educational practice that integrates dance and visual arts can have impact on supporting resilience among children in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The analyses also suggested that the inclusion of an embodied perspective in the theoretical understanding of the notion of resilience might be able to guide educational practice of arts-integration in schools to better be able to promote environments that support resilience in times and places of crises and trauma.

### **A caring stance to musical development: promoting well-being through improvisation with music and movement**

Luc Nijs

Making music together is an empowering activity, that fosters both personal and artistic growth. In a recent publication, Nijs & Nicolaou (2022) argue that combining music and movement, helps engaging in empowering musical sense-making processes that support building resilience, and in this way, growing together and deeply experiencing eudaimonic values such as self-awareness, confidence and self-esteem, personal autonomy, connection, belonging, and bonding. In this talk, I elaborate on how improvisation connects to this embodied perspective on the power of music, when music and movement are combined in learning to play a musical instrument (kinemusical approach). I start by pleading for a "caring stance" to instrumental music teaching, in which development in and through music are intimately connected. Next, by using the

building blocks of well-being as presented in positive psychology (PERMA model, e.g., Seligman, 2011), I explain how improvising with music and movement fosters the adoption of such a caring stance. I end with some practices of the kinemusical approach to instrumental music learning and teaching.

### **Co-choreographing childhood: A vision, or a possibility?**

Eeva Anttila

In this presentation I will share my thoughts about children as co-choreographers of their own lives. Even very young children can act as co-choreographers of their lives, provided that they have a safe, rich environment, possibilities to explore it, and an affectionate partner in this choreography. As children grow, they enter the world of peer relationships, and children's mutual play gains more significance. During these various encounters, the child takes part in creative interaction with the social, physical and imagined worlds. The interrelationships between moving bodies develop into even more complex patterns of interaction, creating webs of ever-changing constellations. Once children enter formal education, time for play and self-directed exploration within the social and physical world decreases. My argument is that maintaining the possibility physical play and embodied improvisational activity throughout childhood and school years is crucial, and that choreographing childhoods should happen through a reciprocal, interactive, creative, spontaneous process where each partner is entitled to creative agency.

### **Improvising an ethics of care**

Vida Midgelow

I propose four intersecting notions for an improvisatory ethics of care, these are: 'Self-Care and Attentiveness', 'Other-Relatedness and Agency', 'Meshwork and Nesting', and 'Repairs and Eco-Ethics'. I invite you to encounter these notions through listening and in movement such that we might begin to both open ethical questions via improvisation and concurrently question the ethics of improvisation.

## **Biographies**

### **Anke Haarmann**

Anke Haarmann is a philosopher, artist, and design theoretician. She is director of PhDArts at the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA), Professor of Practice and Theory of Research in the Visual Arts at Leiden University, and research lector Art Theory & Practice at the Royal Academy of Art (KABK), The Hague. The main focus of her work is artistic research, design research, visual culture, and public space. Anke Haarmann studied philosophy and fine arts in Hamburg, Berlin, and Maastricht and earned her doctorate in philosophy at the University of Potsdam. Anke Haarmann founded the "Centre for Design Research", a platform for practice-based, design research as well as critical theory, at the University of Applied Sciences in Hamburg. She currently heads the German Society for Artistic Research together with Mathias Zeiske and Michaela Melián.

### **Charlotte Svendler Nielsen**

Charlotte Svendler Nielsen is Associate Professor in Education, Program Director at the Department of Nutrition, Exercise and Sports, and part of the research group "Embodiment, Learning and Social Change," University of Copenhagen (DK). She is Co-Editor of the Routledge book series "Dance, Young People and Change" (2015, 2018 and 2020). Currently she is carrying out research in a dance – visual arts project in schools and with student teachers in Cape Town and Copenhagen. She is also collaborator of the Finnish based research project "Embodied Language Learning through the Arts (ELLA)" and the Norwegian strategic research project "Empowering Student Teachers as Agents of Change in Cross-Sectorial Collaborations using The Cultural Schoolbag in Norway as a Learning Platform (pARTicipED)." She was Executive Board member of Dance and the Child International from 2009-2022, and from 2019 she has been Chair of the European Network of Observatories in the Field of Arts and Cultural Education (ENO).

### **Eeva Anttila**

Eeva Anttila works as a professor in dance pedagogy at Theatre Academy of University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland, and leads the MA program for dance pedagogy. Her research interests include dialogical and critical dance pedagogy, embodied learning, embodied knowledge and practice-based/artistic research methods. Anttila is actively involved in national and international dance and arts education organizations and journals. She has published several articles and book chapters nationally and internationally. Currently she leads the ELLA - research project (Embodied Language Learning through the Arts), funded by KONE foundation.

### **Henk Borgdorff**

Henk Borgdorff is emeritus professor of Research in the Arts and former Academic Director of the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA), Leiden University. Until 2021 he was also professor ('lector') at the Royal Conservatoire, University of the Arts, The Hague. Earlier he worked as professor in Art Theory and Research at the Amsterdam School of the Arts (until 2010), and as visiting professor in Aesthetics at the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts at the University of Gothenburg (until 2013). Borgdorff served as editor of the *Journal for Artistic Research* (until 2015), and as president of the Society for Artistic Research (2015-2019). He has published widely on the theoretical and political rationale of research in the arts. A selection is published as *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia* (Leiden University Press 2012). See his profile page on the Research Catalogue: [www.researchcatalogue.net](http://www.researchcatalogue.net).

### **Laura Cull**

Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca is Lector and Head of DAS Graduate School at the Academy of Theatre and Dance, Amsterdam University of the Arts. She is also Head of THIRD, a two year 3rd cycle artistic research program hosted by the ATD Lectorate. Her recent research includes the project, Performance Philosophy & Animals: Towards a Radical Equality which asks how performance can contribute to more ethical ways of knowing non-human animals in the entangled contexts of climate crisis and social inequality. She is now working on a new project Climate Imaginaries at Sea which looks at the role of the arts in responding to rising sea levels. Her forthcoming publications include *Interspecies Performance* (2023) co-edited with Florence Fitzgerald-Allsopp for Performance Research books.

### **Liesbet van Zoonen**

Liesbet van Zoonen is a professor of Cultural Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Previously she worked at the universities of Maastricht, Amsterdam and Loughborough in the UK, in a variety of cultural disciplines. Her research covers a wide range of issues in the social sciences and humanities, but all concern the question whether and how digital and popular culture is a relevant resource for civic understanding and social participation. Liesbet holds a number of positions in the cultural and educational sector, among others as chair of the supervisory board of Waag Society, theatre group ArtoLoco and dance company Plan-D. She is also a member of the supervisory board of the Breda University of Applied Sciences. She currently leads the taskforce of the Dutch art and design schools which leads the development of a professional doctorate for the sector.

### **Luc Nijs**

Luc Nijs is Associate Professor in Early Childhood Music Education at the University of Luxembourg, and Head of the Bachelor in Music Education at the

University of Luxembourg. In addition, he is Visiting professor at Ghent University, affiliated to IPEM (Systematic Musicology) and - as co-founder - to the Jonet Chair on Music Making and Social Action. His research integrates theory development, empirical studies and practice, focusing on the musician - instrument relationship, on the role of body movement in the instrumental learning processes, and on the role of technology in provoking an embodied approach to instrumental music education. Apart from his work as a scholar, Luc is active as a musician, mainly performing with his band The Holy Seven.

### **Scott deLahunta**

Scott deLahunta is Professor of Dance, Centre for Dance Research, Coventry University and co-Director of Motion Bank, Hochschule Mainz University of Applied Sciences. His research seeks to deepen and apply the understanding of dance as a form of embodied knowledge and choreography as a skilful bodily practice. This builds on over a decade of working within contemporary dance companies as research director and facilitator. Since 2010, he has held a research position at Coventry University and assisted in setting up the Centre for Dance Research in 2015.

### **Vida Midgelow**

Vida L Midgelow is Professor of Dance and Choreographic Practices at Middlesex University where she leads the doctoral provision. As a movement research-artist her work focuses upon somatic approaches to dance training, improvised dance practices and articulating choreographic processes. She is a committed educator and mentor, undertaking dramaturgical, curatorial and consultancy roles for artists and organisations. These facilitative activities combine with her own research within the framework of the [Choreographic Lab](#), of which she is co-director (with Professor Jane Bacon). The Choreographic Lab, has sought to provide platforms for sharing choreographic practices and critical inquiry manifesting in the [Creative Articulations Process](#) (CAP), which is used internationally for embodied enquiry. Selected public works include [BreathBone](#) (NottDance19 and Online 2020) and *Practice-as-Research* (Bloombury). She is also editor of the [Oxford Handbook of Improvisation in Dance](#) and is principal researcher for the [Artistic Doctorates in Europe](#) project (Erasmus+ funded). With Prof Jane Bacon, Midgelow founded and co-edited the hybrid peer reviewed journal, *Choreographic Practices (2010-2020)*. She recently qualified as a Thai Yoga Massage practitioner for the sheer pleasure of working with and supporting bodyminds.