

PoP Moves Australasia / Pacific Region

2023 Symposium

The Role of Popular Dance in Higher Education in Australasia and the Asia Pacific Region

November 28 and 29, 2023

Dance Studies Department, Choreographic Research

Aotearoa

University of Auckland

image by Peter Hsu

Location

Dance Studies Department, University of Auckland

Room 130, Level 1, Building 201,
10 Symonds Street [via Charles Nalden Way]
Enter the side of the building on level 2
Symposium is downstairs on level 1

Final Program Program Draft

Day 1 – Tuesday, November 28, 2023

9:30am - 10am	Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome Serenity Wise and Elena Benthaus
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<p>10am - 11:30am</p>	<p>Session 1 – Regular Panel</p> <p>Chair: Elena Benthaus</p> <p>Jeanette Mollenhauer - “How did we get here? And how can we fix this? Understanding dance histories, reconfiguring dance futures” - Online via Zoom</p> <p>Brontë Jones - “Finding space for a ‘Special Topic’ within a tertiary institution; a student’s perspective”</p> <p>Rachael Gunn - “The limits of ‘employability’: What can popular/social/vernacular dance offer higher education (and how do we make a case for it)?” - Online via Zoom</p>
<p>11:30am - 12pm</p>	<p>Mid-Morning Tea Refreshments (Provided)</p>
<p>12pm - 1pm</p>	<p>NappyBoyz Keynote</p>
<p>1pm - 2pm</p>	<p>Lunch (Self-Organised)</p>
<p>2pm - 3pm</p>	<p>Session 2 – Regular Panel</p> <p>Chair: Elena Benthaus</p> <p>Kate Littlejohn - “Exploring Coolness in K-pop: Choreographic Insights, Norms, and Social Identity”</p> <p>Iatua Richard Felagai Taito - “Navigating dance spirituality and theology through a Samoan context”</p>
<p>3pm - 3:30pm</p>	<p>Afternoon Tea / Break</p>
<p>3:30pm - 4:30pm</p>	<p>NappyBoyz Performance</p>

Day 2 – Wednesday, November 29, 2023

10am - 11:30am	Session 1 – Pre-formed Panel Kate-Elissah Tellamy and Jacqueline Graham “Businesswomen with Rhythm – Steps to Recognition?”
11:30am - 1pm	Session 2 – Pre-Formed Panel Jacqui Cesan (with Morgan Heron and Brian Jones, dance educators working in Auckland) “Connection in diverse dance contexts: The inclusion and celebration of popular dance within dance education”
1pm - 2pm	Lunch (Self-Organised) or Snacks (Provided)
2pm - 3pm	Closing Roundtable - Collaborative Plenary Session Facilitated by: Serenity Wise and Elena Benthaus

Keynote and Performance – NappyBoyz



NappyBoyz is a dance collective based in South Auckland. Our main focus is to provide platforms for local Pasifika/Māori creatives to use dance and art as a vessel to translate narratives of our experiences as South Aucklanders, as Mana Moana, and as street dance practitioners.

As an Indigenous-Pasifika-led collective, we value the arts as a necessary and hereditary means of storytelling. NappyBoyz recognizes that South Auckland is often associated with high levels of socioeconomic deprivation and lower-than-average educational, economical, and health outcomes (Joynt et al., 2016).

The dominant societal discourse describes it as a place to avoid if possible. Through our craft, we actively aim to reduce this stigma around our community.

Our performances include elements of street and contemporary dance, with a fusion of our own cultural influences. Political and social issues from personal experiences as Mana Moana are used as a reference point for our concepts. This is coupled with other artistic elements such as video, fashion, photography, and graphic design, honing in on the importance of individuality and self expression.

We want to provide stimulating creative processes centered around whānau and transformative performance opportunities that produce confident, hard-working, and passionate dancers. In return, we aim to foster potential and encourage youth to pursue dance as a career -- turning fresh young South Aucklanders into the movers and thinkers of tomorrow's dance industry. The ultimate goal is to put South Auckland on the map in a positive light and to change society's perspective of our youth and community through dance.

Presenter Bios and Abstracts

Jacqui Cesan (with Morgan Heron and Brian Jones, dance educators working in Auckland) - *Connection in diverse dance contexts: The inclusion and celebration of popular dance within dance education* [Pre-Formed Panel]

Abstract

There is a disparity in dance education in Aotearoa between 'popular dance' and the 'creative dance' most often found in secondary and tertiary institutions. Modern styles of the 20th century including jazz, tap, and hip-hop are extremely popular among young people who take classes in the private sector but are not as present in secondary or tertiary dance curricula. Teachers in these styles often pass down knowledge they have learned from their previous teachers and within their career, and though this transfer of information is culturally important within these genres, this process of teaching and learning has limitations. Many students have minimal understanding of the history, context, and importance of the styles they train in. Though research into these dance genres does exist, it is not easily accessible, and many teachers in the community or private sectors do not possess a deep understanding of the styles they teach and are not required to have any formal education training. Additionally, within secondary and tertiary dance education popular dance styles are often not given the same recognition or respect as 'creative' dance, which leaves tutors unable to provide sufficient information and context to promote understanding in these styles in these contexts either. Young people who are passionate about these styles, and who will go on to create dance in the entertainment

and corporate sectors do not have access to rich educational opportunities in their chosen genres, perpetuating the lack of understanding. This suggests a gap in current research, and an opportunity to innovate and enrich teachers and dancers of all styles, and to work towards a more connected and unified dance community. Excluding or downplaying the role of popular dance within our industry does not give a true picture of what dance means to the communities we are a part of, and limits what we are able to offer in our educational institutions. This panel seeks to discuss the possibilities that bridging these gaps might offer and what this could look like in Aotearoa.

Jacqueline Graham and Kate-Elissah Tellamy - *Businesswomen with Rhythm – Steps to Recognition?* [Pre-Formed Panel]

Bios

Jacqueline Graham is a passionate advocate for women in the workforce, and for the value of women-led sectors. She has 30 years leadership experience in corporate and franchise retail, with senior roles in the UK, New Zealand and Australia. Currently, Jacqueline uses her qualifications in Business Innovation, Management and Coaching, to help small businesses grow their returns. A brass musician since age 10, she studied classical ballet as a child, reconnecting with dance as an adult, enjoying ballroom and latin classes. Her active connection with music and dance as a performer and audience member has been a constant in her life. President, Business & Professional Women Australia 2018 -2023, Jacqueline is also a Director of the Australian Gender Equity Council.

Kate-Elissah Tallamy - Dancer, Teacher, Studio Owner and Author (“The Dance Parents’ Survival Guide”) - has been immersed in dance, theatre and performing arts for over 35 years. With a Diploma of Performing Arts (Classical Ballet), and a BA in Dance, Kate has performed in professional theatre and cabaret, taught in Melbourne’s leading Ballet and Performing Arts schools, owned a studio in Tasmania and works with Australian-owned dancewear brand, Bloch. In 2020, Kate-Elissah opened (and closed... and opened again) Move Dance Melbourne, a boutique dance studio, offering ballet, jazz, tap, Latin and Ballroom for students from children to adults. During Covid-19, Kate-Elissah added a Certificate IV and Diploma in Dance Teaching and Studio Management, and is now an ‘approved tutor’ for R.A.D. Faculty of Education (Assistant Teacher Award).

Abstract

Dance teachers - outside of higher education - operate at the precarious end of the small business scale and yet are often the first introduction young women have to the possibility of running their own business. Are they inspired? How are dance practitioners perceived or recognised in business, their community and education? Specifically focusing on Dance as a women-led industry segment providing role models (positive or negative), we explore the current situation with studio owners, dancers, educationalists and businesswomen, to build a picture of opportunity, risk and reward. What lessons can be learned? Does experience vary across the industry, dance style or culture? Can we outline the steps needed to build this important link between private and public education into a properly accredited, respected and

profitable business sector, with Dance Businesswomen showing young women a pathway to a profession? Linked to a BPW Australia project highlighting the societal value of women-led industry sectors, aligned to the Women's Empowerment Principles and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5, Gender Equality), we'll also look at what further research this investigation may inform.

Rachael Gunn - *The limits of 'employability': What can popular/social/vernacular dance offer higher education (and how do we make a case for it)?* [Paper]

Bio

Dr Rachael Gunn is a lecturer in media and creative industries at Macquarie University (Sydney). Her work focuses on the cultural politics of breaking and street dance cultures. She is particularly interested in broader questions about the body, identity, community, and belonging, and how dance can act as a catalyst for transformation. Her research approach is interdisciplinary, drawing on her own breaking practice, as well as ethnography, cultural theory, and the disciplines of dance studies, popular music studies, hip hop studies, and media studies. She is an elite breaker representing under the name 'Raygun'. She recently won the Oceania Breaking Olympic Qualifiers and will be representing Australia at the Paris 2024 Summer Olympic Games for breaking's Olympic debut.

Abstract

The growing emphasis on 'employability' within higher education has substantially altered the university landscape. The 'value' of a degree is increasingly viewed through 'return on investment' post-graduation employment outcomes (Wallis 2021). Surveys and frameworks that measure short-term employment figures (like the 'Graduate Outcomes Survey' in Australia) not only legitimize a neoliberalised hierarchization of what courses are seen as valuable but are also increasingly used to inform university funding. As a result, creative arts and dance courses have been discontinued or merged into more generalist subjects across Australian tertiary institutions. In this presentation, I draw and reflect upon my experiences working in higher education, where I have balanced my work as a researcher and practitioner in street dance, while teaching and administering work-integrated learning units in media and creative industries units. While I do not dispute the usefulness of some emphases on career management given the fast rate of technological, social, and environmental change, I call attention to the limitations of the current discourse. Not only does the focus upon short-term employment outcomes disproportionately impact creative and performing arts courses, but it also fails to see the distinct strengths of these courses, even beyond creative work in creative industries (which much of the literature is limited to). In this presentation, I use Wallis' (2021) application of 'capital' to unpack how a popular dance curriculum might be best placed to prepare graduates to navigate, create, and sustain meaningful employment across increasingly disruptive industries. In short, I aim to expand the discourse of employability to develop a case for popular/social/vernacular dance in higher education curriculums.

Brontë Jones - *Finding space for a 'Special Topic' within a tertiary institution; a student's perspective* [Paper]

Bio

Bronte Jones is an emerging dance educator, researcher, and performer based in Aotearoa, New Zealand. She is currently a PhD candidate in Dance Studies at Waipapa Taumata Rau (The University of Auckland), exploring Early Career Teachers' meanings of Diversity, Inclusion, and Difference in the context of Secondary Schools in Aotearoa. Bronte holds a Bachelor of Dance Studies (Honours), and has received a Doctoral Scholarship from Waipapa Taumata Rau (The University of Auckland). Bronte is also a Graduate Teaching Assistant in The University of Auckland, where she teaches both Undergraduate and Postgraduate Dance Education papers.

Abstract

This presentation will discuss the role of a 'Special Topic' paper within a tertiary education context. This presentation will highlight the ideas, experiences and voices of students who have previously been enrolled in a 'Special Topic' paper within a tertiary education context, and reflect on its relevance within a Dance Studies programme. Exploring ideas such as neoliberalism, the voices of students, and liberal arts education, this presentation presents the student perspective on the role of teaching and learning subjects like Jazz, Street Dance, and Ballet in a tertiary dance education context.

Kate Littlejohn - *Exploring Coolness in K-pop: Choreographic Insights, Norms, and Social Identity* [Paper]

Bio

Kate is a dance artist, researcher and choreographer based in Auckland. Within 12 years of dancing, she holds a Bachelor of Dance Studies and a Master of Dance Studies from the University of Auckland. For the past two years, Kate has been dancing at Enbeat Dance Academy, training in Hip Hop grooves and house. Notably, Kate is also a member of the K-pop crew called 'Elit-is.' Her passion for dance and academic pursuits converge seamlessly, as she is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Auckland. Her research revolves around K-pop fan culture, exploring and understanding this global phenomenon.

Abstract

This research delves into the concept of coolness in K-pop, exploring its elusive and inherently uncertain nature. The research involves collaboration with five performers. The study employs diverse choreographic approaches in the solo performance "The Release Launch," comprising two versions: "The Making of Littlejohn" and "The Release Video." It examines coolness through categorisation, self-presentation, status, and persona, aiming to understand how choreography in a dance studio context can serve specific purposes. The research also delves into the norms and social identity influenced by popular culture, focusing on Instagram's role in shaping coolness perception. Methodologically, K-Cooling tests are employed, a series of

choreographic experiments framed by Ronell's testing framework. The choreographic approach draws inspiration from Pina Bausch's use of repetition and Meg Stuart's exploration of choreographic scores. The proposed choreography embodies a hybridised femininity, viewed through gender performativity, and integrates the girl crush concept. Additionally, the research addresses the norm of identity policing within the performance structure. Mark Harvey, Antje Budzanowski, and practitioners such as Yvonne Rainer, Claire Bishop, Helen Thomas, and Alexa Wilson have influenced this creative research. The study emphasises the potential role of universities in supporting students interested in engaging with K-pop, contributing to both the academic dance field and broader contexts, and examining how K-pop intersects with coolness, our lives, and various facets of our experiences.

Jeanette Mollenhauer - *How did we get here? And how can we fix this? Understanding dance histories, reconfiguring dance futures* [Paper]

Bio

Dr. Jeanette Mollenhauer received her PhD in 2017 from The Sydney Conservatorium of Music, The University of Sydney, for her research into dance practices in the Irish and Croatian communities. Apart from writing about Irish and Croatian dance, Jeanette has published about taxonomies of dance, Australian calisthenics and recreational folk dance. Her articles have appeared in *Dance Research Journal*, *Dance Chronicle*, *Dance Research*, *Research in Dance Education*, *History Australia* and *Journal of Intercultural Studies*. She is currently an Honorary Fellow (Dance) at The University of Melbourne, with her current project being "Teaching Dance in Diaspora".

Abstract

In this paper, I explore the conceptual history of "Australian dance" and the ways in which this entity has metamorphosed, guided by compartmentalising trends that have foregrounded certain genres while eschewing others. This historiographical review exposes various exclusionary linguistic strategies, including taxonomic diminution and referentially omitting "others" that, in turn, reveal authors' epistemological predispositions. Such taxonomic choices empower "aesthetic limitation" (Dixon Gottschild 2003: 19) which, in turn, fosters the development of "stock stories [that] rationalise and justify the status quo" (Bell 2016:109) including a hierarchy of dance featuring classical ballet as its apotheosis (Grau 1998). Emerging scholars and practitioners must, therefore, reckon with such transgressive histories and address their structural legacies. As a principal corrective, I argue for a reconceptualisation of "diversity", a popular term in academic and grey literature that, paradoxically, is not employed to its full potency: "diversity" is not sufficiently diverse. The benefits of a miscellany of genres should be promoted as a reasonable and equitable approach (Horrigan 2020) in Australian dance studies.

latua Richard Felagai Taito - *Navigating dance spirituality and theology through a Samoan context* [Paper]

Bio

latua Felagai Taito is a Aotearoa New Zealand-born Samoan who is a multidisciplinary artist who is a theatre trained actor, certified dancer, published poet, writer, tutor, guest lecturer, aspiring researcher and academic. latua is a Graduate Teaching Assistant at Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland tutoring Pacific music and dance and is a PhD student in Ngā Akoranga Kanikani | Dance Studies at Waipapa Taumata Rau.

Abstract

The research around dance spirituality or dance theology is important to me as a doctoral dance studies student. Due to the understanding of transcendental qualities and how it can be altered through different states of consciousness (Hanna, 1995). However, through active observation I realise that to bring my full authentic self (Samoan, Queer and Christian) in the space as well as engaging in spiritual multimodalities in tertiary institutions and systems is difficult (Felagai Taito, 2022; McMillan, 2018; Thomsen & Iosefo-Williams, 2021). As that type of knowledge system will not be viewed in a substantial way through a Western lens (Whaanga, 2018) and so through a creative practice lens, the will to decolonise the misconceptions of dance spirituality and theology becomes the crux of my work (Felagai Taito, 2021a; 2022). This paper will then propose how to navigate the misconceptions of dance spirituality and dance theology through a Samoan lens within a tertiary institution. As well as having an overarching Oceanic - Pacific lens of Epeli Hau'ofa's essay around empowerment (Hau'ofa, 1996) to re-indigenise the way we view these types of knowledge systems as there is a huge lack of underrepresentation of Pacific people in higher education (Bensemen et al., 2006) and in dance education too. This paper will also raise awareness of intangible cultural arts practices that becomes a methodology that connects dance spirituality and theology through the critical theory of vā. In which through a Samoan lens vā means a relational space and a reciprocal act of connecting (Wendt, 1996). And with vā being a philosophical guide to connect dance spirituality and theology, it will arguably allow new knowledge to potentially answer key issues around the significance between the intangible to the tangible within institutions, and highlighting my personal navigation around dance spirituality and theology through a Samoan lens.