**ABSTRACTS + BIOS**

**Art Culture & Wellbeing: Agora**

Radhika Goswami

Having studied social anthropology and in my practice as a theatre practitioner, I believe that stories of people have the ability to leave a mark, create a new schema in our minds; stories old and new. They can inspire us, teach us, motivate us and break us. In this context our bodies become vital to the depiction and understanding of these various narratives. It is instrumental is representing ideas, opinions and ideologies of the society and community. Likewise, it is the vehicle of resistance, dissent and change against the status quo in the cycle of violence.

Thus, in this presentation I would like to highlight a few selected works from AGORA including

1. Brief introduction to my practice in Theatre
2. Our two stage performances from AGORA- Sentenced and Performed Pieces. Both pieces use multiple mediums of storytelling including spoken word, physical theatre, dance and music.
3. Our Podcast – Living with the river and share circle- All EARS! to discuss the scope of work while working with experiential themes and auditory mediums of communication that has immense potential for imagination and insights.
4. Our recent work with Phakama, London- the collaboration saw a seamless interaction between Sattriya and LORE (Language of Resilient Expression) in an interactive environment.
5. Our long-term engagement with a local school in Guwahati to bring theatre into the classrooms at early childhood.
6. Lastly, bring into focus the previous, current and future facilitation projects we have carried out with various communities in the grassroots through workshops, street theatre etc.

*Radhika is an Art and Culture Facilitator at AGORA. Agora is an eclectic arts space that aims to promote and facilitate well-being through art and culture and bring about positive and holistic development. Radhika completed an MA in Social Anthropology at SOAS, London. She has worked as a research fellow at the Foundation for Social Transformation, Guwahati, Assam and has a Manual on Theatre Techniques in Conflict Transformation in Adolescents in Guwahati, Assam. Radhika’s focus is working with indigenous performance arts and how they relate/ can be related to social function within a community.*

**Sensory storytelling, and employment of non-verbal means in storytelling: Physical Storytelling with Applications in the Creative Dialogues Project**

Steve Harvey and E Connor Kelly

Physical Storytelling (PS) (Kelly, 2006, Harvey & Kelly, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020a,b, 2022a,b) is a multimodal creative improvisation practice that has been used in individual, family, and group psychotherapy, supervision, arts based research, and as a community performance ritual. In this practice, a group leader facilitates a participant in telling a personally relevant life story. A small number of dancer/s are then selected to create a movement improvisation using the physical impulses they are experiencing in the present moment rather than try to develop a mime of the narrative story. Vocal music improvisation can be added when possible. The intent of the resulting movement/vocal episode is to have this expression become an abstract moving metaphor of the initial story. Throughout PS, the group watching is asked to express their experiences using spontaneous art, poetry, and discussion in response to the initial movement and vocal music improvisations. The resulting collaborative metaphors facilitate an expression of relevant nonverbal experiences of the participants. PS is particularly helpful with events that are difficult or too complex to process verbally and/or when participants do not share a common primary language.

The Creative Dialogues Project (Harvey, et. all, 2020a, b, 2022) is an ongoing international project that incorporates PS online utilizing Zoom with participants from several diverse countries and cultures to develop a communication of personal experience during the current COVID health crisis. Often the participants do not share a common primary language.

In this session, we will present a short video and some arts/poetry responses to illustrate this process and discuss the emerging common themes of empathy and resilience.

*Steve Harvey, PhD, BC-DMT, RPT/S, RDT, is currently working as a psychologist in schools and is an adjunct faculty member in the Clinical Psychology Dept.at the University of Guam. Before becoming involved in mental health Steve was active in improvisational dramatic/dance performance. He is registered with the American Dance, Drama, and Play Therapy Associations and is an active contributor to the integration of expressive modalities. With his wife, Connor Kelly, he is leading an ongoing arts-based inquiry addressing the emotional communication of tragedy across the Pacific Islands and among different countries during the current COVID health crisis.*

*E. Connor Kelly, MA, BC-DMT, LPC, DTAA (Prof DMT) is currently a professional teaching fellow in the Dance/Movement Therapy program at the University of Auckland. She supervises and mentors DMTs and students throughout Australasia. Connor has been well prepared for working online prior to the pandemic by providing online sessions in her practice since 2014, due to her living and working mainly from Guam. This grew into her creating online Authentic Movement studies in 2017 followed by also developing her Physical Storytelling sessions. She is very involved with the Dance Therapy Association of Australasia and is the current president of this organization.*

**How to tell the story of a body’s memories?:**

**Journey of a practice-based patient-as-researcher**

Eugenia S. Kim

From a young age, I have always struggled to express myself verbally in a clear manner to medical practitioners and non-patients about my lived experiences with multiple chronic health conditions. Adopting some of the medical science jargon and parroting it back would prove useful for getting routine treatment, but those same technical terms were inadequate for trying to help others understand the sensation of what my mind and body was experiencing.

Since 2005, I have been creating various forms of movement illness narratives to depict aspects of the symptoms and feelings that I experience while coping with my conditions. My artistic research-practice has evolved for almost twenty years from traditional dance works for the stage into more abstract multimedia works using digital and virtual technology. This presentation focuses on the choreographic process and digital transformation of movement for my two most recent works, Lithium Hindsight 360 (2019) and Radiant Soma (2021). The first work was based on my personal physical experience of bipolar disorder combined with descriptions from medical works. The second work unintentionally captures the chronic pain and fatigue experienced due to fibromyalgia but presented in a spiritual context. Both works are examples of very abstract forms of storytelling in that they are non-linear experiences, “remix” data, and emphasize the sensation or feeling of the symptoms rather than present a sequence of events. This abstract approach was a deliberate attempt to strip away the social assumptions and stigma associated with both medical conditions using technologies such as virtual reality and laser projection.

I will conclude the presentation by describing how these works inform my latest work-in-progress, which uses metaverse gaming platforms to present embodied archives of movement reflecting the intersection of chronic pain and neurodivergence, and the new opportunities for sharing narratives that are provided through this approach.

*Eugenia S. Kim is a Korean-American transdisciplinary creator and researcher who uses movement and multimedia technology to create narratives. She holds a PhD in Creative Media (City University of Hong Kong), MS in Information Science (University at Albany), and BS in Electronic Media, Arts and Communications (RPI). Her doctoral research proposed the use of dance and somatic movement practices, motion capture and virtual reality (VR) for creating illness narratives about bipolar disorder. Dr. Kim has presented her artistic research at international conferences such as EVA London, ISEA, MOCO, and OZCHI. She is currently on the editorial team for the Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices; an artist with the Augmented Materiality Lab (HK); and a fellow with the Artengine collective. Her latest collaboration with the Augmented Materiality Lab, Radiant Soma, will be exhibited during the SIGGRAPH 2022 Art Gallery.*

**Sensory storytelling, and employment of non-verbal means in storytelling.**

Caitlin Pilbeam

In this presentation, I would like to think about how we can capture sensory narratives and engage in sensorial storytelling in research. Sensory arts therapies (e.g. music, art, dance, performance) involve a diverse range of embodied, relational, material, and aesthetic practices. Literature demonstrates these to have perceived and measurable positive impacts on health and wellbeing. Yet there remains space to further explore how these practices are experienced, made meaningful, and shared. Here, I draw on anthropological and sensory ethnographic insights to help decentre both the Western notion of the five senses and a reliance on spoken data (i.e. what people say). I share some of my own experiences of end of life and mental health research to illustrate what can be offered in researching with the senses (Pink, 2015); attending as a researcher with and to the body (Csordas, 1993); and moving with research participants (Ingold, 2010). Further, I consider intersections with creative (e.g. arts-based) methods, which expand the understanding of what constitutes ‘data,’ and participant-made materials in making the ineffable tangible.

*Dr Caitlin Pilbeam is a medical anthropologist passionate about holistic wellbeing and different forms of healing, and is also a lifelong music teacher and singer. She has a special interest in the use of diverse qualitative methods in health research. Caitlin has sought interdisciplinary research experience spanning death and dying, home and hospital care, global health, mental health, policy, and music, and has received awards for public engagement. After completing her DPhil at the University of Oxford and a fellowship from the Foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness, Caitlin has recently joined the Social Foundations of Medicine group at the Australian National University. She is excited to continue developing interdisciplinary collaborations, translate research findings for public audiences in innovative ways, and contribute to real-world impact in health and care.*

**Imagining Bodies and Creative Practice**

Ellie Nixon

Despite a recent explosion of philosophical interest in the imagination, its workings in contemporary performance practice leave much to be explored. This paper traces key historical debates surrounding the nature and role of the imagination in Western philosophical thought, which have led to its embedded historic association with our inner life and its primary role as an activity of the individual mind. Imagination as an ‘in-the-head’ activity continues to permeate and inform our understandings of imagination and imagining. Discovering the roots of these inherited ideas might enable us to release our grip on outworn or divisive interpretations in order to make way for new, expansive modes of imagination that foreground a more balanced connection between the embodied subject and the world.

As such, this paper proposes a mode of relating to the world that takes us out of our habitual selves, projecting a frame of reference for the imagining body that is more open than closed, an approach to creative practice that is inherently evolving and relational in nature; whilst acknowledging the value of our individual and unique cultural diversity of experience. In adopting this approach, imagining as a method of inquiry takes on a new and material relevance in processes of creation and by extension, its potential impact on wellbeing.

*Ellie Nixon, Director of Film and Performing Arts at Norwich University of the Arts, is a theatre director, actor and teacher with over thirty years extensive experience in Europe, Scandinavia and South America. Her research explores embodied approaches to contemporary performance practice and performer training. Drawing on a range of interdisciplinary perspectives, material engagement theory and environmental humanities, Ellie seeks to articulate the projective interplay between the sensate imagining body and the material world as a dynamic force for creative practice. She is currently writing a monograph titled Imagining Bodies and Performer Training: The Legacy of Jacques Lecoq and Gaston Bachelard, as part of the Perspectives on Performer Training Book Series (Routledge).*

**Embodied Mindfulness for D/deaf and hearing performers: developing an accessible training that supports sensory storytelling, embodied imagination and wellbeing.**

Laura Haughey

This paper will outline an approach to performance training for D/deaf and hearing performers which emphasises sensory storytelling and explores the intersections between mindfulness and performance. With Equal Voices Arts (<http://www.equalvoicesarts.com>), a Deaf and hearing theatre company based in Aotearoa New Zealand, I am developing accessible performance training methods which draw on embodied mindfulness practices to cultivate qualities that are beneficial for both professional performance and personal well-being: present- centred awareness, relational awareness and embodied awareness. I will outline the performance context and the ethical foundations within which Equal Voices Arts works, introduce my current European Commission-funded project, ‘Embodied Mindfulness for Performers’, and discuss the role of embodied imagination in one of our key practices - the Inner Resource - and the consequent benefits to wellbeing.

*Laura is an award winning theatre maker and researcher. For the past 8 years Laura*

*has been based in Aotearoa New Zealand, where she recently convened the Theatre Studies programme at the University of Waikato. Laura is the artistic director for the Deaf and hearing theatre company Equal Voices Arts (www.equalvoicesarts.com). Her research is in the areas of inclusive theatre practice, psychophysical performance training, the intersections between mindfulness and performance and the development of accessible embodied mindfulness based practices, both for professional performance needs and for general wellbeing. She examines, explores and creates sites of cross cultural and cross linguistic exchange, devising original theatre productions that are accessible to both D/deaf and hearing audiences. What binds her work in these research areas is a focus on how to improve psychophysical fluency for diverse performers to better communicate on stage to diverse audiences.*

*Laura has recently been awarded a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship from the*

*European Commission to work with the University of Huddersfield.*

**Micro-workshop: Embodied experiences of healthcare encounters**

Kate Massey-Chase

This session includes a short participatory workshop (delivered virtually, via Zoom), which offers delegates the opportunity to consider their own embodied experiences of health care encounters. I will start by giving a brief introduction to my own research into how the textural qualities of creative encounters might provide an avenue to explore relational dynamics in mental health care. I will then deliver a short creative writing exercise that allows participants to consider their own sensorial, embodied experiences of health care interactions. In doing so, I hope to offer a moment of creative reflection, where delegates situate themselves within the broader conceptual discourses of the discursive ideas prompted by the symposium.

*Dr. Kate Massey-Chase is a Lecturer in Performance at Plymouth Marjon University, where she leads a new MA in Arts, Health and Wellbeing (launching in 2023). She also teaches on Marjon’s English degree. She recently completed her AHRC-funded PhD at the University of Exeter, researching how applied theatre praxis could support young people in the transition between Child & Adolescent and Adult Mental Health Services. Kate also works as a freelance creative arts practitioner, across a range of educational and community settings. She also enjoys performing some of her own spoken word pieces at local festivals.*

**Coping with Lockdown Anxiety: Journaling, Cameras, and Improvisation**

Dr Dionysia Bouzioti, University of Leeds

The rapid spread of the Covid-19 pandemic caused practical ramifications to the training and making processes of Medea Inside (2021), a multi-award practice-based research project conducted at the University of Leeds, School of PCI. Among the key aims of the study was to explore the embodiment of psychophysical imprisonment in Greek tragedy as experienced by performers. The digitalisation of the process during the pandemic offered fertile ground for the exploration of isolation. The project employed medical phenomenology drawing on Leder’s Absent Body (1990) and psychophysical training to examine the participants’ lived experience. The ensemble was trained and directed remotely via digital platforms. The improvisational exercise Three Gestures combined journaling and physical articulation of the written material. The participants’ solo improvisations were documented on cameras(self-filming) set up in their domestic spaces. During the virtual workshops, it was observed that the intervention of journaling as a creative process and the use of cameras had a positive effect on the subjects’ mental health. Its incorporation was beneficial in managing anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and depressive dispositions (Adams, 1993; Baikie and Wilhelm, 2005; Mogk et al., 2006; Pavlacic et al., 2019; Reinhold et al., 2018; Thompson, 2004). Moreover, the research subjects admitted that performing feelings from their journals in the presence of a camera added unknown emotional dimensions to their performing experience. In some cases, where mental and physical suffering was experienced, the movement was utilised to reflect and express personal embodied traumas emerging during the lockdown. The presentation will illustrate how the physical articulation of documented suffering in Medea Inside acted as a form of healing through body narratives.

*Dr Dionysia Bouzioti is an emerging theatre and film director. Her doctoral thesis Embodying Greek Tragedy: Phenomenological Explorations of the Suffering Body in Theory and Practice was awarded the University Research Scholarship (2017-2021) from the University of Leeds. Dionysia’s research outputs have been presented at academic conferences in Athens and the UK. Her practice and artistic work have received several grants (CePRA, 2018; RDA, 2019; University Research Scholarship) and awards (Milan Gold Awards; London’s Falcon Film Festival; Budapest Film Festival, Out of Chaos Competition supported by BADA and the Center for Hellenic Studies at Harvard University). Dionysia is an accredited HE educator (AFHEA, 2020) and has been training young actors and dancers using psychophysical approaches and phenomenology since 2015. Her work intersects with the postdramatic and her most recent productions include Prometheus Immobile (2018), Bacchae in Absentia (2019) and the multi-award dance film Medea Inside (2021).*

**From Kathak to ‘two balla’: *One day releasing stories of pain***

Adam Strickson, Kali Chandrasegaram, Balbir Singh

This will look at the narrative of an ‘Unmasking Pain’ project day, which took place on the 10th July 2022 at the University of Durham, a session with a Parkinson’s group led by Balbir Singh <https://www.balbirsinghdance.co.uk/explore/balbir-singh/>, Adam Strickson and dancers from Balbir Singh Dance Company, documented by Malcolm Johnson. This session was part of the pilot project, Unmasking Pain (May 2022 to Dec 2022) led by Balbir Singh Dance Company in Leeds, Durham and Huddersfield, working in collaboration with artists, producers, scientists. ‘Unmasking Pain’ explores the place of the arts in expressing and managing long term physical pain. In Durham, the company is collaborating with Dr Paul Chazot of the Wolfson Research Institute for Health and Wellbeing and Pain Management.

Part 1

A short, improvised dance and music performance from Kali Chandrasegaram <https://www.balbirsinghdance.co.uk/explore/kali-chandrasegaram/> and Adam Strickson, exploring Kali’s experience of physical pain, introduced by Balbir Singh.

Part 2.

In a short paper, with accompanying photo narrative, Adam Strickson, the musician and visual artist for the ‘Unmasking Pain’ Durham session, will look at the connection between different sensory experiences explored during the day, including the short dance performance exploring the dancer’s experience of pain presented as Part 1, pastel drawing, creative writing and physical play with supportive equipment and the release of the ‘stories’ of pain from the participants. It will examine how these practices released deep individual reflections on the pain of the individuals involved and how the different arts forms used, and the combination of presentational and participatory work, complemented each other in order to create a holistic approach to the exploration of pain through individuals’ life stories, taking them into both physical action and discussion. The talk will examine the use of words, movement, colour, shape, line and props in releasing the memories of the participants, leading to their own reflective analyses of their experiences of pain.

Link to an introduction to the work at the University of Durham: <https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/wolfson/about-us/news/unmasking-pain/>

***Adam Strickson*** *is Senior Teaching Fellow in Theatre and Writing in the School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds. Adam specialises in the making and use of masks and giant puppets and is lead artist for 6 million+ https://www.6millionplus.org/ After working with Horse and Bamboo Theatre, Adam co-founded Chol Theatre, taking intercultural work from Batley to the fishing villages of Bangladesh from 1989 to 2002. In 2010, he founded Wingbeats, a music-theatre company for the Cultural Olympiad in Yorkshire. Since 2015, for 6 million +, he has directed ‘The Weeping Sisters’, a procession of giant puppets and music that commemorates different genocides.*

***Kali Chandrasegaram*** *trained at The Temple of Fine Arts, Malaysia in Bharata Natyam, Odissi and Kathak and studied Dance Performance at Middlesex University in London, training in Western Contemporary Dance. Kali has been employed for seven years as an Artist in Residence and Events Coordinator for Kadam Dance in Bedfordshire, and also has a rich career as a freelance dancer and choreographer, that features collaborations with Balbir Singh Dance Company Spare Tyre, Company of Elders (Sadlers Wells), RADA, ShivaNova, Foundation for Indian Performing Art(FIPA), Walk the Plank, and Tara Arts. Kali has led dance workshops in schools for all ages and abilities and in communities of different ethnic origins; in libraries of small towns; for older people in care homes; dance and disability; dance and dementia and dance for refugees.*

***Balbir Singh*** *is the artistic director of the Balbir Singh Company. Balbir studied dance at Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) as well as Kathak. BSDC was founded in 1998 and since then it has grown to be a leading dance company that specialises in blending contemporary western dance and classical Indian Kathak. The company is supported by Arts Council as part of the National Portfolio and tours internationally. BSDC was commissioned to create a piece for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad.* [*Synchronised*](https://www.balbirsinghdance.co.uk/the-work/synchronised/)*, was water-based work performed in a swimming pool with synchronised swimmers joining the company’s dancers and musicians.*

**Can music help us research health?**

Victoria Hume

I have written hours of music about health and medicine as a way to understand and communicate other people’s experience. There have been wellbeing benefits inherent to this process for the people I have worked with, but there are also risks in relation to who is telling the story and how. This talk is an opportunity to give my perspective on the practicalities, implications and pitfalls of this kind of work, and to ask whether there is any space for music and composition in expanding our knowledge and improving our treatment of health.

*Victoria Hume has been writing and releasing music since 2009. She was shortlisted for the inaugural Medicine Unboxed prize in 2014 for a song-cycle about ICU delirium, and has a masters in Music & Health Communication from the University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg) based on a second long work about delirium. She was commissioned by the Durham Institute of Medical Humanities to create new music with people who have experienced voice-hearing; and she has written for three choirs set up to support people with chronic respiratory disease. She is also Exec Director of the Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance and has a long history of work with creative health more broadly, including 15 years as an arts manager in NHS Trusts.*

**Film, storytelling, mental health: a case study of the facing the mind project**

Mani Sharpe

Composed of a series of six online sessions that ran from June to August 2020, ‘Facing the Mind’ was a project developed through collaboration between the University of Leeds (North England) and the Third Sector, with the specific aim of improving the well-being of a small group of participants, recruited from the local community, through audio-visual storytelling. In their original plans, the organizers hoped to achieve this aim by harnessing the power of two methodologies. One of these was creative practice, with the team planning to design a range of multimedia activities in which participants would be invited to partake, as the project developed. The second, and less conventional, way in which the organisers hoped to achieve their aim was through academic discussions, rooted broadly in the discipline of film studies, and specifically in research on cinematic imaginings of the face.

Taking the project as a case study, the objectives of this paper are twofold. Firstly, it will critically reflect on the interdisciplinary methodology deployed by the four individuals involved in the project, including: a lecturer in film; a multimedia artist; a mental health professional; and a digital media intern. Secondly, it will chronicle some of the many logistical, ethical, and pedagogical challenges faced by the Facing the Mind team in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a national lockdown at precisely the point at which the project was due to launch.

<https://facingthemind.leeds.ac.uk/>

*Dr. Mani Sharpe is a Lecturer in Film in the Centre for World Cinemas and Digital Cultures at the University of Leeds. He has published in journals such as Journal of European Studies, French Cultural Studies, Modern and Contemporary France, Studies in French Cinema and French Studies. His most recent work has focused on the poetics, politics, and ethics of the cinematic face.*

**Music as a boundary object: imagination as a key ingredient in arts for health and wellbeing.**

Professor Norma Daykin

The wellbeing benefits of creative engagement are not pre-given. Arts are not prescription drugs, rather their impacts are contingent on many factors or, following De Nora, their affordances need to be actively appropriated by participants. This paper draws on 15 years of research on arts and wellbeing in hospitals, prisons, community settings and within everyday creativity to examine the way in which wellbeing outcomes are mediated: by the effects of specific places and spaces, through discourses surrounding creativity, by the impact of stakeholder agendas and actions, artist facilitators’ creative practices, participants’ personal histories, group dynamics and social relations including gender and ethnicity. While a growing evidence base documents the impacts of arts engagement on wellbeing, less is understood about the processes that may mediate successful and unsuccessful outcomes, and there is a drive to identify key ingredients, ranging from those that stimulate physiological changes to those that foster positive identity, belonging, bonding and bridging.

Here I draw on social movement theory to explore boundary crossing as a mediator of arts and wellbeing outcomes, using imagination as a key ingredient. Artists can be viewed as boundary spanners who use sensory tools and imaginative processes to disrupt existing symbolic boundaries, foster new connections and forms of awareness, and mobilize resources to address challenges and bring about change. Successful boundary crossing can create affinities and build a sense of shared identity across different groups; it is essential to empower marginalised voices and to enable diverse stakeholders to cooperate and work effectively together. Boundary crossing can also fail. For example, weak artistic boundary objects can enhance the aesthetics of healthcare environments, adding superficial diversity whilst failing to challenge existing social relationships.

Here I examine the role of music as a boundary object in health and social care. Music’s interpretive flexibility renders it powerful as a boundary object but can also serve as a limitation. Successful boundary objects generate dialogue and new meanings, but they can also be dismissed as irrelevant if they don’t meet users’ needs. In boundary crossing, music doesn’t speak for itself but draws its meaning from specific contexts including personal and shared histories, identities, organizational practices and social conditions. Its success also depends on the ability of boundary spanners to navigate complex hierarchies and institutional relationships. I discuss the implications for research and practice in arts and wellbeing.

*Norma Daykin is Professor Emerita at UWE, Bristol. A social scientist, she is a leading international researcher in the field of arts, health and wellbeing. Her book, Arts, Health and Wellbeing: A Critical Perspective, was published by Routledge in 2019. Recently she has served as coresearcher on the AHRC funded Community Covid study and the ESRC funded What Works for Wellbeing Culture and Sport Evidence Review Programme. She led the Creative and Credible research programme investigating evaluation practice in the arts and health sector, served as an advisor the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry on Arts, Health and Wellbeing and is the lead author of Public Health England’s Arts, Health and Wellbeing Evaluation Framework*