

Asia-Pacific CHANNELS





Cast of the film
Kabaligtaran Ng Gunaw
(*Undoing the End of the World*), by Ronelson Yadao and director Jerrold Tarog, which premiered on the digital platform of the Cultural Centre of the Philippines.
Photo: Pong Ignacio

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World Dance Alliance
Asia-Pacific

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Cover: *Hideout*, choreographed by Wen-jinn Luo, performed by Scarecrow Contemporary Dance Company, Taiwan.
Photo: Shi-fan Tsai.

'Hollow' for NAFA Third Space in Singapore, by student choreographer Brandon Tan Wen Kai. Photo: Bernie Ng



Executive reports

The Executive Board of the World Dance Alliance Asia Pacific (WDAAP) is elected by the membership every two years at the Annual General Meeting, which is held in a different country each year and is hosted by the local WDA chapter. The Executive Board consists of the President, the Vice President, the Secretary, the Treasurer and four regional Vice Presidents, who represent the interests of their regions: East Asia, South-East Asia, South Asia and the Pacific. Members with a specific interest in the affairs of one of these regions should contact the designated Vice President. If members wish to contribute to issues within their own countries, they should contact their Chapter heads.



President's report

by Urmimala Sarkar Munsri

Let me begin with a hope for healing and bringing back joy and confidence to the world. The part of the world I belong to – India – is now completely helpless under a tsunami of the second wave of Covid-19. In what may be seen as a once in a lifetime emergency, we are seeing vulnerability and sorrow on one hand and tremendous resilience, caring and community support on the other hand. Civil society is trying to make up for all the systemic failures.

Pina Bausch had once said, "Dance; dance - otherwise we are lost". But dancers have not had an easy time surviving in these terrible times. This last year has been one of hyperenergised and anxious relationship with our own bodies – trying to understand what it is saying, feeling, how it is functioning and resisting the unknown enemy named Covid-19. We as dancers have been anxious about this particular machine that we take very seriously and also strive to control with skill, dedication and practice.

We have also seen extraordinary amounts of violence: efforts to suppress and marginalise voices and bodies on the basis of colour, creed, language, caste and all possible discriminatory tactics. Such a time is a reminder to become a community, to share kindness and empathy, to move together – as we understand more clearly than ever before that nothing in the world is disconnected anymore. It only is a matter of time before some new mutated variety of virus from one end of the world reaches the other corners of the world. Temporally and spatially we are connected – whether we want to be or not.

World Dance Alliance has always highlighted the need for connections and has worked on connecting dancers researchers and enthusiasts from all corners of the world. In these times it becomes even more essential to hold hands across geographies, differences and trainings. Let's fill this coming year with dance of empathy

and togetherness. This is a wake-up call!

I am happy to announce that WDAAP has taken its long time friend and well-wisher choreographer-scholar Sashar Zarif from Canada up on his suggestion of creating a benefit event for emerging dancers from the worst affected areas of Asia and the Pacific. The event will showcase a documentary made by Sashar and his team of collaborators from India and Bangladesh. We shall soon be announcing the details of the programme and the schedule for showing it on a web platform. We shall also come to the global community of dancers, dance scholars, critics, and enthusiasts for contributions towards creating a benefit fund for emerging dancers. Please watch out for further announcements on our WDAAP Facebook page for details.

Regarding the creating of the documentary Sashar writes, "I had the privilege of being the director of the WDAAP's Choreolab 2019 in Cox's Bazaar. I had the pleasure of working with 19 wonderful artists, vibrant souls, during this Choreolab. We all bonded with each other, learned and unlearned and formed a family. I am ever grateful for this experience and so are the others. I believe that these challenging times are not meant to be lived alone. The heartbreaking reality of life, the cruelty of man, and the politics of survival have joined hands and brought out world to where it is today. As an artist I refuse to give in to this flow and I know that I am not alone. I have made a video essay from our process and I would like to premier it online as a benefit event and have the proceeds go to the dance artists from India and Bangladesh. This is the least I can do. And I want to thank WDAAP again for embracing this idea. As Rumi says: 'The moon stays bright when it doesn't avoid the night'".

Looking forward to waking up in a better world soon. Meanwhile, stay well, friends, and stay safe.



Vice President's report

by Stella Lau

For a year and a half, the world has been going through waves of COVID-19, the worst pandemic of recent human history which is severely impacting the lives of every individual. In this 'new normal', our colleagues and friends of the Asia-Pacific region demonstrate their resilience and perseverance in finding new ways to continue their creative practices. In less affected regions, dance activities, performances and festivals are presented in a physical format with limited audience capacity; whereas in some places, everything has to turn to digital or online platforms including the 22nd Hong Kong Dance Awards and Australian Dance Awards.

Given the travel ban across most of the region, the International Young Choreography Project was postponed to next year.

Nonetheless, this adverse situation gave rise to a unique opportunity for dance makers, performers and educators to come up with new initiatives and projects including the launch of the first online dance magazine in Bangladesh, *The Center Stage*, and the shifting of focus towards writing and documentation of dance by MyDance Alliance in Malaysia.

Despite the circumstances, I am pleased to announce that the planning for the WDA Global Summit 2022 has resumed. It will constitute one of the major programmes of the inaugural SWEAT – Hong Kong International Dance Workshop Festival, 13 -25 June 2022. The two-week event is co-presented by the Hong Kong Dance Alliance and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, with generous support from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. Please look out for a call for participation in the Global Summit soon. For now, please keep safe and well.

SWEAT

SWEAT
HONG KONG
INTERNATIONAL
DANCE WORKSHOP
FESTIVAL

Sunil Kothari at the WDAAP 2005 Annual General Meeting event in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
Photo: Julie Dyson.



Obituary for Sunil Kothari

Sunil Kothari was WDAAP Vice President for South Asia from 2001 to 2008, and Vice President of the India country chapter from 2008 until his passing.

Lament for a Critical Loss to Dance by Sadanand Menon

Writing a short obit for dear friend Sunil Kothari soon after he passed away in December 2020, I had begun my tribute like this: 'Rambha, Urvashi, Menaka and Thilottama [the mythical and 'divinely proportioned' beauties who dance in Swarga, the celestial durbar of the King of the Devas/gods] better watch out. A distinguished, 88 year-old dance critic has just landed in their Indra Sabha.'

Dr. Sunil Kothari, among Independent India's early dance historians and scholars, passed away in a Delhi hospital consequent upon a cardiac seizure. He had returned home after recovering from a Covid-19 episode, but was hospitalised again within a week and passed away on 27 December. He had just turned 88 on 20 December.

With almost two dozen books to his credit on Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Sattriya, Chhau and contemporary dance as well as on personalities like Rukmini Devi Arundale and Uday Shankar, Sunil Kothari belonged to a select group of post-Independence scholars like Kapila Vatsyayan, Mohan Khokar and Anjali Mehr who set the ball rolling for dance scholarship in the region.

Born in Bhoiwada, a low middle class

area in lower Parel in Mumbai, he grew up in a family steeped in the rituals and recitations of the Vaishnav [followers of Hindu god Vishnu] sampradaya. Once, when he was aged about six, he travelled with his parents to the Sreenathji [Krishna] temple at Nathdwara. His mother would daily recite the Yamunashtakam and offered to reward him one paisa [the most basic unit of

currency] for each of the eight Sanskrit shlokas, if he learnt them by heart. Little Sunil expressed delight at the thought that eight paise would make him 'rich'. Upon which, his mother exclaimed in mock horror, "Murkh (Fool), I'm giving you 'vidya daan' not 'dhan daan'!" [The gift of knowledge as against of wealth]. From that time his interest in both Sanskrit language and poetry was triggered, which lasted a lifetime.

In an elaborate proposal, around 2009, for a Bellagio Residency to write his autobiography, he described his early years:

"Belonging, as I do, to a mercantile community which has no traditions of dance nor any love for performing or plastic arts, taking a decision to start researching in an area like dance was considered suicidal. I had to fight my middle class background and its conservative values which put security and monetary profits above all else. I had to convince my brothers – as my father had died when I was eight years old – that I would not starve and would manage to live a decent life.

"This personal history is important and relevant in dance studies as few know the risk one has had to take in life to pursue the art of dance in India. One must not forget that the stigma of learning dance and performing in public persisted even after India achieved independence [in 1947] and to pursue a career in dance, for young men and women then, was unthinkable. It also applied to those who ventured to pursue careers as dance scholars, historians, writers or critics. The stigma persisted, even though male dancers practiced dance forms like Kathakali, Manipuri and Kathak. Educated

young men being associated with dance even as writers was considered infra dig.

"I was taking private classes in Bharatanatyam and Kathak from the time I was eleven. Even though my eldest brother had engaged a dance teacher for me, he did not wish me to pursue it. Dance was alright as a hobby, but to perform in public was to invite censure and earn a bad name. No, boys do not need to dance. They can be chartered accountants, engineers, share brokers, businessmen. But boys becoming dancers! No way.

"My decision had, indeed, upset my brothers and, at a very young age, I left my house and moved to a friend's place. It was a painful decision. In India, the strong family bonds are difficult to sever. A joint Hindu family expects even the young ones to support the family. Times have changed now, but during those years I knew that I had to take a decision which would change my life.

"I propose to share with dancers and dance loving public the vicissitudes I had to go through in order to pursue dance. And about the rewards of one's conviction. There are no memoirs or autobiographies in India so far as a dance historian, scholar, author and a critic is concerned. When I look back I feel humbled and realize that to assert one's self and to realize one's own instincts, one has to sacrifice a lot and continue hard work."

Sunil has narrated the story of how one day, studying for his Chartered Accountancy in Bombay, he bumped into Gujarati poet, artist and designer Pradumna Tana in a library, as he was flipping through the pages of the renowned Indian arts magazine *Marg*. It was a special issue dedicated to dance and it immediately caught Sunil's attention. They got talking. Sunil remembered reading Pradumna's poems in the influential Gujarati literary magazine *Kumar*. And Pradumna, in turn, spoke of *Marg*'s legendary founder-editor, the progressive and influential writer, Mulk Raj Anand.

It did not take long for Sunil to be absorbed in the circle of poets who were part of *Kumar* and get to meet Mulk who, observing Sunil's interest in dance, suggested he begin writing on it. But, he said, not only would he need to learn some of the forms but also pursue it academically.

This took Sunil on a journey to the dance department of M.S. University, Baroda, where he was to be deeply influenced by the dance scholar Mohan Khokar, a professor there. And Khokar drilled into his

consciousness the idea of the importance of a personal archive of dance material to help him in his research and writing. He also alerted Sunil to the upcoming 1958 All India Dance Seminar, scheduled at the Vigyan Bhavan, in Delhi.

It was this dense encounter with these three personalities in the few months of 1957-58 that were to prove decisive for Sunil and pull him conclusively into the orbit of dance. It was a trajectory he revelled in. The CA was dropped by the wayside and he established himself as the dance critic of the *Times of India*, under the editorship of the great Sham Lal. He also had a daytime job as a lecturer at Sydenham College of Commerce, Bombay, where he persuaded the administration to give him space to conduct a 'dance appreciation' session once a week. This was the beginning of an important phase in Sunil's career as he got to meet divas and giants of the dance world and introduce them to receptive audiences who were eager – at that stage in the 1960s and '70s – to familiarize themselves with 'Indian culture'. This was a project he was to extend later in the newly started Bombay Doordarshan [State TV] too.

Sunil wrote in his 2009 Bellagio proposal: "The decades from 1950 onwards offered me several opportunities to play an important role in advancing the cause of little known forms then, like Odissi, Kuchipudi and the Sattriya dances..."

"What an exciting period it was, discovering dance forms in remote villages of India. For example, Seraikella, a small princely state before India achieved independence, preserved the tradition of a masked dance form known as Chhau. The royal family supported the form and its best exponents were the princes of the royal family. And precious little was known about it.

"When I went to Seraikella village in April 1966, the dance used to take place in the palace compound for four nights of a specific Bengali New Year festival. During my stay, I discovered that, in the 1930s, the Royal troupe of Seraikella Chhau dancers had toured Europe and performed in London, Rome and other European cities. And even the great leader Mahatma Gandhi had visited Seraikella and attended a performance. One does not associate Gandhi with watching dance. [Later, I found that Gandhi had sent a letter blessing Uday Shankar when he got married. I got this letter from his wife Amala Shankar when I curated

a national exhibition on The Life and Times of Uday Shankar in 2000-2001 for Uday Shankar's centenary celebrations]. Such surprises and mementoes have enriched my work on dance.

"The Chhau Dances of India', based on my field work and researches, was published in 1968 by Dr Mulk Raj Anand as a special issue of *Marg*. This was for the first time that a systematic documentation of the body movements and kinetic phrases of a centuries-old dance form in a remote village – completely different from classical dance forms – was brought to the notice of dancers, scholars and official bodies like the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi. Also, another prominent poet and scholar, Jiwan Pani, collaborated with me to write on a variation of the form known as Mayurbhanj Chhau, which is performed without masks. We were not even aware that we were breaking fresh ground in dance research here. *Marg* holds an international reputation and editing an entire issue on Chhau dances propelled me into the public domain as a serious scholar, writer and author."

Sunil's foray as the *ToI* dance critic was colourful as he got under the hair of many a powerful dancer, some of whom even took him to court for negative reviews. On one occasion, matters reached such a head that legendary cartoonist R.K. Laxman drew a front-page pocket cartoon in the *Times of India* advising the dancer to continue with dance and let the critic do his job.

Sunil's larger biography of acquiring a Ph.D. in dance from M.S. University, Baroda, a teaching stint at Rabindra Bharati University in Kolkata, being part of the founder academicians at the School of Arts and Aesthetics at JNU, his Sangeet Natak Akademi award and, later, the SNA Fellowship, his Padma Shri, his Lifetime Achievement Award of the Dance Critics Association, New York, and his cupboard-full of awards for his contribution to dance and dance writing is generally well known. So too his flamboyance and his gregariousness which found him moving with ease in the circles of performance, visual art and progressive film makers.

Less known are the hours and hours he spent tending to ailing senior dancers and gurus. His tender and caring ways and cheerful spirit endeared him to many. He had the admirable ability of extending himself to help people in different situations.

One of the heroes of new Indian cinema, Kumar Shahani, recalls how,

when researching (along with dancer/choreographer Chandralekha) the appropriate form for the concluding segment of his path-breaking film *Maya Darpan* [1972], it was Sunil who recommended the Mayurbhanj Chhau. The Seraikella form was well known, while the iconic filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak had already worked with the Purulia Chhau form. Thus it was that Kumar, cinematographer K.K. Mahajan and Chandra – who was to choreograph the segment – travelled to Baripada, Orissa, and filmed the electrifying 5-minute climax to the film, with 24 Chhau dancers, which also exposed Mayurbhanj Chhau to the world.

My own first meeting with Sunil happened (as far as I can remember) in 1979 in the then Madras [now Chennai], when he came to release the first edition of his *Marg* book on Bharatanatyam. I had been living and working with Chandra then for some four years. She had voluntarily withdrawn from the performance scene for decades then and was quite self-effacing, taking care not to attract attention at dance events.

However, it was at Sunil's book release event in 1979 that I realized her standing as a 'dancer'. In the charged atmosphere at the Krishna Gana Sabha with all the divas in attendance, Chandra was completely at home as everyone greeted her with great affection. I also witnessed the sheer respect and adulation Sunil had for her. During those days and subsequently for many years, Sunil always stayed at our home and the conversations went late into the night. Chandra discussed many of her critical ideas on dance with Sunil though, it was very clear, his romance with dance was of a different order and, at that time, he had pretty little clue of what she was talking about, even if he believed in her totally.

It was during that time that I learnt about their meeting for the first time in Mumbai in the late 1950s. Chandra was on the verge of pulling out of the performance scene, even as Sunil was about to make an entry as a dance critic and scholar. I'm not sure if he ever wrote a 'review' of her performance till the 1984 East-West Dance Encounter in Bombay – when Chandra made a spectacular re-entry into the world of performance after almost a quarter of a century. But I had heard that when Sunil took Chandra home to introduce her to his mother, she didn't waste any time and, much to everyone's amusement, promptly certified Chandra as her prospective daughter-in-law.

Chandra's closest friends in Mumbai were

free spirits much younger to her like the lawyer Indra Jaising and the musician Asha Puthli. Very soon Sunil had become a part of that triad as the 'fourth sakhi'.

Sunil was also part of the extremely creative network of Gujarati poets/writers /artists who wrote in *Kumar* and *Vrischik* magazines – Suresh Joshi, Pradumna Tana, Rasik Shah, Gulam Sheik, Bhupen Khakhar and Susheel Jhaveri. They often had adda-like get-togethers – reading, reciting, discussing, arguing – gatherings of great conviviality and friendships that lasted forever.

Much later, in 1987 too, it was Sunil who helped Chandra and the celebrated Malayalam filmmaker Aravindan to connect with dance gurus like the Kuchipudi maestro Vedantam Satyanaryana Sarma, in Eluru village in Andhra, or go to Raghurajpur in Orissa to film the Gotipua dancers for the 30-minute short film *Sahaja* on male dancers who perform female roles. The film was the concluding segment of the massive exhibition *Stree* that Chandra conceptualised for the Festival of India in the USSR.

Right from the time I knew Sunil, there was a sense of amusement when he was around. He was a jovial figure, full of juicy bits about other people's lives, even as he showed great curiosity in your own. Nothing could be kept 'private' when he was around; he had no compunction in picking up and reading any letter or diary lying around or peeking into cupboards and drawers. His head was like a filing cabinet full of both important and trivial information. He would disregard any irritation you showed at such intrusion into your privacy and would try to placate you by giving a hilariously convincing performance mimicking most classical dancers one knew. He also had a rib-tickling, erotic and seductive kathputli [string puppet] performance of '*saiyyan teri godi mein genda ban jaoongi*'.

Chandra imposed all sorts of restrictions on him. One was that he would not discuss gossip from the dance world in front of her. Another was that he would not mention 'food' in the middle of any serious



conversation. [Sunil, with his ulcer problem, needed regularity in food and Chandra's house was the most irregular in that respect. Every time, towards midnight, poor Sunil announced he was hungry, Chandra would snap, 'Don't be vulgar, Sunil!']. Third was that he would not make more than three calls on the phone. In those days, Sunil was notorious for making 50 calls in an hour-long sitting at the landline – including national and international trunk calls. Two visits from Sunil and you would find a sudden Himalayan surge in your phone bill.

There was this story of the day, in 1977, he got his PhD from MSU, Baroda. He was in Bombay. Chandra too happened to be in Bombay, staying at filmmaker Hrishikesh Mukherjee's house. Sunil went across to share the good news with them. It got late and so he slept over. But the whole evening he had been itching to get to the phone and announce his doctorate to all his friends. However, like Chandra, Hrishi-da too had put an embargo on Sunil using the phone. Alert to this, Sunil woke up at 5 am and quietly tiptoed towards the phone in the living room. Bhombhol, one of Hrishi's 13 dogs, saw a shadow creeping suspiciously in the dark and lunged at it. Sunil's shriek woke the whole house. He had been bitten at the ankle. He was despatched in Hrishi's car to the hospital for his jabs. When he got back, Hrishi refused to show any sympathy and said, "It's all your fault only". But Sunil was more affected by the fact that Chandra, in between peals of laughter, managed to blurt out, "Sunil, at last, you have got your 'dogtorate'!"

Chandra's return to performance at the 1984 East-West Encounter excited Sunil greatly. For him, his 'teen deviyan' [three

L-R: Sunil Kothari, , Adrienne Kaeppler, Urmimala Sarkar and Mohd. Anis Md. Nor, at the 2011 Asia Pacific International Dance Conference and WDAAP AGM event in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Photo: Julie Dyson

goddesses] were making history. He went about chanting the three names – 'Mrinalini (Sarabhai), Kumudini (Lakhia), Chandra'. But it was evident that he had no words to describe what Chandra was doing. Her work could not be accommodated in his 'reviewer's' vocabulary. The few attempts he made were a disaster. Very soon, by 1986 or so, Chandra was to make the extraordinary request to him not to write about her or her work. So, in fact, in the next 20 years [during which Chandra choreographed 10 major productions], there are hardly any pieces by Sunil on her work. However, he did speak about her and, in the past decade and more, was extensively showing a few video clips of her work as he gave talk after loosely constructed talk on her.

All this was surprising, considering he loved Chandra dearly and was often present when Chandra performed in India and abroad. In fact, both were invitees to virtually every major symposium on Indian dance in India and abroad, where Chandra's work was discussed as well as performed. Yet, it was clear that, beyond superficialities, Sunil was unable to enter her work.

But there were specific qualities of Sunil that Chandra found endearing. Of course, there was the pure devotion he had. There was also a tender side to him. Around the time towards the end of the 1990s when Chandra had her first cardiac episode, her constant friend the artist/designer Dashrath Patel, along with me and some of her dancers, used to hover around her at the hospital as well as at home – but Chandra announced that whenever she was unwell, she wanted only Sunil to be around, because "only he understands how to do *seva* (care-giving)". This was, of course, very true. I have personally seen the way he took care of gurus like Kelucharan Mahapatra and Vempati Chinna Satyam when they were unwell and these were object lessons in total selfless dedication.

In his autobiography proposal, one could sense a definite plan. He had written:

"I was invited by the British Council, in the late 1960s, to visit UK, see the classical ballets, modern dance, interact with dancers and critics, visit institutions like the Royal Ballet, see performances and learn about the dance traditions of the West.

"It opened a new chapter in my life as a dance scholar, historian and a critic. And gave me an opportunity to watch ballets at Covent Garden, Sadler's Wells and other theatres, meet legendary dancers like Margot

Fonteyn and choreographers like Marie Rambert, Robert Helpmann and Ninette de Valois, who headed the Academy of Royal Ballet. And, of course, meeting ballet critics like Arnold Haskell, Fernau Hall, William Peters and the legendary author Cyril Beaumont, whose publication, *A Complete Book of Ballet*, one treasures. For the first time, I saw Bolshoi ballets during a weeklong 1969 season, and interviewed Galina Ulanova and Maya Plisetskaya.

"It also gave me an opportunity to understand and appreciate Western dance. From UK, I toured throughout Europe and, after a year, visited New York on the occasion of Ted Shawn's 80th birthday at Dance Collection, Lincoln Centre, and met the critics Walter Terry, Walter Sorell, the legendary dancers Martha Graham, Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov, and saw American ballets and modern dance. These European/US tours were repeated every two or three years, providing me the opportunity to give lecture-demonstrations on Indian dance, even as I soaked in the world of international dance. I was, perhaps, the only Indian dance critic who had such opportunities which were to be crucial for my developing interest in dance studies".

It is another matter that Sunil was not awarded the residency and he was eventually able to complete only a reduced version of his biography in his mother tongue, Gujarati, with much assistance from his friend, the playwright Naushil Mehta. The English version he was writing remained still born and will surely have to be regarded as a loss to contemporary Indian dance history.

One of his invaluable aids in structuring and constructing his own narrative as well as that of the history of Indian dance and dancers was his personal archive of dance memorabilia spanning the early decades of the 20th century, right till the present. In the later years of his life, as the collection became unwieldy, Sunil tried enthusing various organisations and institutions to integrate his material in their projects. By turns, the Sanskriti Foundation, Rabindra Bharati, IGNCA, and Hyderabad University expressed interest, but then were unable to accept it. Even though dance scholarship and university dance departments have grown exponentially in the past two decades, there has been inexplicable hesitancy to benefit from his sweeping collection.

One wishes the World Dance Alliance Asia-Pacific, of which Sunil was a part since its inception and also served as its

vice-president, would have initiated specific projects to house such precious material of dance history in the region. Many personal archives of dancers, dance teachers/gurus and scholars/writers go abegging every year for want of proper and appropriate housing and preservation. The discipline suffers from the lack of dynamic initiatives from either State or private agencies. At the same time, very few academic programs in dance strive to integrate research into contemporary history in their framework.

After Sunil's passing away it seemed like the 40-odd cartons full of dance photographs, books, DVDs, reviews, program notes, letters and other material in his personal archives would be orphaned. However, some quick action from a group of his friends and well-wishers, including leading Indian artist and professor Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, artist Vivan Sundaram and Dr. Harsha Hegde, who looked after Sunil with great devotion during his last days, has now ensured that the Dance Studies department of the School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU, headed by Prof. Urmimala Sarkar, will invest in the archive after preliminary sorting and evaluation.

Ultimately, the contribution of Sunil Kothari and his seven decades of romance with dance can be understood as that of a field unifier. We do not look for a theorist or analyst in him, nor even for someone who consolidated his information of the past to anticipate new directions in Indian dance. His historical narrative of forms like Bharatanatyam or Odissi suffered from many gaps. He shied away from hot debates like those around hereditary dancers in India (the Devadasis or Maharis). He had no opinion to express on the upper caste appropriation of dance. He had no critique of the tedious and tawdry mythological content of the classical forms. He hardly ever questioned the clone-like dollification of the performer on stage.

Yet, he was like one of those early pioneers who stepped out into uncharted territory and provided a preliminary pathway to reach what is now an oft beaten track. Sunil's legwork plotted the post-Independence cartography of dance in India, which enabled the mapping of its definitive geography. The thousand-odd reviews and articles he wrote set a tone and tenor for those who followed in the field. He had many proteges and imitators who he promoted in several locations in the print media.

But as he found newspaper after newspaper withdrawing from coverage of

the arts, leading to the loss of his review columns by the year 2000, he was nimble enough to reinvent himself and slip into the academic space, globetrotting with his packet of DVDs and delivering illustrated lectures on demand.

His series of books, in collaboration with *Marg*, initiated an era of coffee-table books on Indian dances, with an anthology of serious articles by scholars of the respective form. Today, the books are a fairly good window to existing practices in the field and have served as reference guides for many.

Yet, one has always wished for Sunil to moult out of his surface skin and attempt a deeper reflection on the dance field. He was capable of it, and was not averse to articulating it in private but, in public, was too accepting of the basic infrastructural, pedagogic and organisational flaws in classical Indian dance practice. Even worse, he condoned many of the hypocrisies and hierarchies within the social context in which these dances flourished. Increasingly, over the past few years, when pushed, he would readily accept that he was, himself, a part of the pathology, the problem, within the dance world. Ironically, this coincided with the period when he was being ceaselessly felicitated by the dance world across India, as well as internationally. At 85, clutching a walking stick, he was negotiating airports in wheelchairs and clocking up air miles at a pace that would have produced vertigo in a 25-year-old.

These awards he received towards the end of his life were a fairly good sign of the impact that his frail figure and sunny temperament had made on the world of dance and the late realization of this fact by the dance establishment. But, by the end, he was tired of all the false allure of this tinsel world and many were the evenings in Chennai when he would voluntarily forego a dance performance (an unheard-of lapse in Sunil's life) to have a drink with an entirely non-dance crowd of friends.

While the passing away of this critic can be interpreted as a critical loss to Indian dance, one can now imagine our feisty scholar ensconced in a critic's paradise, where he can even tick off the celestial apsaras.



Sunil Kothari in New Delhi, 2009. Photo: Julie Dyson

Sadanand Menon has been writing on the arts for over four decades. During those years, he also collaborated closely with the legendary Indian choreographer Chandralekha and was the lights designer of all her contemporary dance productions. He lives and works from Chennai, India.



WDAAP Conference report

by Yunyu Wang

2020 WDAAP/TDRS Conference

26-27 December 2020
Tsoying High School, Kaohsiung, Taiwan
"Navigating Location, Negotiating Identity"

WDA-Taiwan successfully conducted the International Dance Conference in December 2020, in partnership with the Taiwan Dance Research Society (TDRS). Over 100 people attended, following Covid-19 regulations set by the government of Taiwan, with masks worn throughout, even during masterclasses, except for meals which were eaten outside with social distancing.

At this conference, we explored dance and its relationship to identity with its many ramifications, focusing on the currents and flows involved in navigating location in and outside of relationships to the nation and to the global.

Tsoying High School, the conference site, has been the long-term office site for WDAAP-Taiwan since 1995. The campus has six professional dance studios used for masterclasses; a 150-seat theater for the showcase performance; and five conference rooms for scholarly presentations.

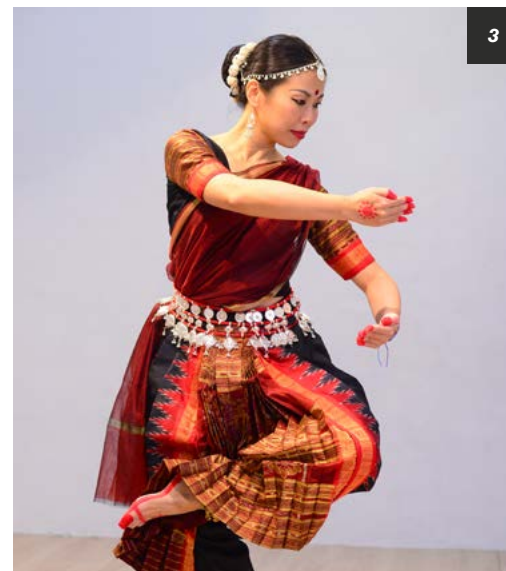
Conference attendees enjoyed:

- 58 scholarly papers, thanks to WDAAP President Urmimala Sarkar Munsu and A.P. Rajaram, co-chair of WDAAP Research & Documentation, who helped to select the international scholars who presented

their research on video, and 28 local presenters selected by Taiwan Dance Research Society;

- Ten masterclasses, organised by Suling Chou, head of WDAAP-Taiwan
- Showcases, thanks to Shiu-Ching Yu, chair of WDAAP Creation & Presentation Network, who organised two onsite performances with 16 dances;
- The Dance Film Program showing 8 works submitted by artists from India, Bangladesh, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and the USA, who were unable to attend on site.

We were delighted to be able to organise a face-to-face gathering, despite the pandemic. Hope to see you all at our next WDA Summit in June 2022 in Hong Kong.



1. Conference participants at the opening event.
2. Event participants taking a masterclass.

1. Conference registration in the lobby of Tsoying High School.
2. Shugi Cheng, who led a masterclass in taichi.
3. Yuting Huang who conducted a masterclass in Indian classical dance.
4. A lecture on Day 1 of the event.
5. The opening event. All images on this spread courtesy of Yunyu Wang.

Network reports

The World Dance Alliance works through four Networks, based on specific areas of interest and embracing the mandate of the organisation. Each network has a chairperson and co-chair who coordinate activities to advance the issues raised by these special interest groups. Network Chairs initiate and drive the work of special interest groups within the WDAAP and provide two reports annually on their activities for *Asia-Pacific Channels*.

About the networks

The Research and Documentation Network supports and initiates projects that engage contemporary insights into dance as a vibrant part of diverse scholarly and artistic conversations. The network regularly publishes journals, books and conference proceedings and encourages members to participate in writing, editing and reviewing for these publications. It also encourages publications in differing formats and languages whilst maintaining English as the lingua franca for communication. Individual projects proposed by members addressing the heritage and future of dance, to include ideas for implementation, are encouraged and supported through this network.

The Education and Training Network provides a forum for professional exchange to improve dance curriculum content and delivery, and opportunities for sharing information and resources.

The Creation and Presentation Network provides opportunities for choreographic development, presentation, networking and cultural exchange. It includes choreographers, dancers, designers, composers, filmmakers and other collaborators.

The Support and Development Network focuses on dance-based activities in terms of management, promotion, distribution, advocacy, policy and funding, through members who practice in these areas. It equally encompasses members who are concerned with the social and physical well being of dance such as health professionals, somatic practitioners, community facilitators and legal advisors. In all these aspects communication networks—professional and social—are an important driver for dance sustainability.

A still from *Kabaligtaran ng Gunaw*, a dance film choreographed by Ronelson Yadao, directed by Jerrold Tarog, in the Philippines. Photo: Pong Ignacio

Education & Training Network report

By Sarah Knox, chair

Over the past year we have become increasingly more skilled at communicating with speed via various technologies. However as I look back over numerous Channels publications I am struck by the ongoing calls for deeper connection and methodical networking processes throughout the WDA. While we may now be 'professionals' at meeting on Zoom and sharing our achievements on Instagram now, more than ever, especially with our still limited ability to travel, relationships and networks are essential to the ongoing maintenance and growth of a thriving international dance education community.

Here, I pick up on two previously mentioned goals for the immediate future of WDA AP Education and Training network. First, is the creation of an

Education and Training network database. The aim of establishing a membership for Education and Training Network is to build relationships and strengthen the community, gather and disseminate information, share resources and networks, and ascertain who is interested in activities and events. It would be wonderful to have a key Education and Training Network contact in each Asia Pacific country. I am particularly keen to hear from people located in the Pacific. If you could like to be added to the database please fill out the form at <https://forms.gle/L5ymNim77ayKMinm9>

Secondly, I am keen to work with someone! It would be wonderful to have a co-chair to collaborate with and dream up some new initiatives to keep the Education and Training network flourishing. If you are interested please email me and tell me a little about yourself sarah.knox@auckland.ac.nz



Bashkhar's Arts Academy in "Restaging of Past Gems Initiative", *People Get Connected 2.0*, 10 January 2021, Victoria Theatre, Singapore. Photo: Lijesh Photography

Research & Documentation Network report

by Anja Ali-Haapala and A.P. Rajaram, co-chairs

Journal of Emerging Dance Scholarship (JEDS)

We are pleased to announce that Volume VIII of JEDS has been published (<https://www.jedsonline.net/2020-jeds-volume-viii/>). This volume is the second to be edited by a team of early career researchers: Priyanka Basu, Ilana Morgan and Julie Mulvihill, with A.P. Rajaram as the Submissions Coordinator.

A fascinating range of topics are explored: *Unlocking the Body: Approaching Odissi Dance through Somatics* by Huang Yu-Ting, *Body Image and 'Ship Life' in Female Cruise Ship Performers: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis* by Jenna Chin, *Them:Me:Us Exploring the Synergies Between Collaborative Choreography and Democracy* by Joanna Cook, *Duet with Camera: From Passion to Pedagogical Practice* by Sumedha Bhattacharyya.

This volume also includes a dance note on the 2019 WDA ChoreoLab at the Ocean Dance Festival written by Sashar Zarif entitled *Dancing 'Life': Unlearning to Learn*. The editors have added video introductions to each article, an exciting new element to the journal format that makes the most of the digital platform and recently-acquired Zoom savvy. Congratulations to the authors and editors!

The editors are now calling for submissions to Volume IX of JEDS, due 1 August 2021. See the official call for submissions for information on page 38 of this edition of *Channels*.

Network

We are currently focusing on ways in which the Research and Documentation (R&D) Network might (1) better facilitate dialogue between members and (2) more seamlessly integrate new members into the network. WDAAP conferences provide rich opportunities for exchange but there is limited WDA infrastructure that enables these exchanges to continue between conferences. We feel that it is in the interests of the R&D Network and its members to develop a communication channel that more regularly connects members as a group and enables members to speak to each other.

The benefits of such communication could include greater sharing of information and opportunities, developing WDAAP projects, promotion of members' publications and events, as well as being a channel in which newcomers might get a feel for members' areas of expertise and find their place in the group. Therefore, we are exploring online platforms that offer:

- Two-way communications, so that all members can communicate to the network.
- Exclusive access to members, to promote WDA membership.
- Self-service functionality, so that members can opt in/out and customise their interaction with the platform.

We are interested in hearing members' feedback on this proposal and encourage you to contact us with your ideas:

A.P. Rajaram: raj.knootfm@gmail.com

Anja Ali-Haapala: anja@ali-haapala.com.au



Chapter reports

Countries or defined geographical areas within a regional centre may become Chapter members, providing information and coordinating the dance activities within their boundaries. They are important points in regional and global communication and networking. These Chapters propose and implement projects that address not only the general goals of WDA and WDA Asia Pacific, but also the specific needs of the local dance community.

Chapters

Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand.

Countries with representatives but no formalised Chapters: East Timor and Papua New Guinea.

Artists performing at
Bangladesh Shilpakala
Academy on 7 March 2021
in a work choreographed
by Amit Chowdhury.
Photo: Md Sokot Molla

Aotearoa New Zealand report

by Sheryl Lowe

The Royal Family NZ
Tour at Napier Municipal
Theatre on 28 April 2021.

Photo: Rachel Soh



2021 has seen a cautious yet grateful continuation of live performance in Aotearoa New Zealand, with renewed creative energy evident across all dance platforms and unabated enthusiasm for cross-collaboration between genres and art forms.

New Zealand has been most fortunate in that its pandemic experience to date has been less severe than in many other parts of the world. Arts festivals throughout the country were able to proceed this year, for the most part, unimpeded. While Auckland Arts Festival in March was briefly interrupted by the city's short move to Alert Level 2, most postponed performances were able to be restaged a few weeks later. Our capital city Wellington came alive in February and March with the New Zealand Fringe Festival, The Performance Arcade, What if the City Was a Theatre, and two-day street festival CubaDupa – all offering an abundance of dance works for audiences to enjoy both inside theatres and outdoors throughout the city. Down South, Wanaka's Festival of Colour and Dunedin Arts Festival presented dance programmes featuring top NZ companies including the Royal New Zealand Ballet, Java Dance Theatre, BalletCollective Aotearoa, and Movement of the Human.

After last year's portentous cancellation of Borderline Arts Ensemble's *Strasbourg 1518* at the start of Aotearoa's first Covid-19 lockdown, this work exploring one of history's most fascinating mass movements – the dancing plague of 1518 – was re-premiered at Auckland Arts Festival in March 2021. Created by choreographer Lucy Marinkovich and musician Lucien Johnston,

performers included one of Aotearoa's most distinguished dance artists Michael Parmenter.

Internationally renowned hip hop dance company The Royal Family (created by superstar choreographer Parris Goebel MNZM) wowed New Zealand audiences through April-May with its first ever nationwide tour, covering ten centres to sold out audiences, accompanied by a series of equally popular youth workshops.

Our national ballet company The Royal New Zealand Ballet (RNZB) offered a packed performance programme during the first half of 2021 complemented by a range of educational and accessible offerings. The company's regional touring programme *Tutus on Tour* returned to Aotearoa's smaller theatres, combining a selection of classics with newer pieces – Sarah Foster-Sproull's *Ultra Folly* and Andrea Schermoly's *Within Without*. A new collaborative work Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* was also presented in association with The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra; and two new works were premiered for Wanaka's Festival of Colour – *Ultra Violet* choreographed by Loughlan Prior, and *The Autumn Ball* by Sarah Foster-Sproull. To top off the first half of the year the company has re-staged and completed a nationwide tour of *Giselle* – an acclaimed signature joint production by former RNZB Artistic Director Ethan Stiefel and Johan Kobborg.

YouthDance Education Trust (YET) presented their annual International Dance Day (IDD) celebration event at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa at the

beginning of May. For the past 21 years YET has curated a highly diverse annual programme of free dance workshops and performances for community participation and enjoyment. As last year's IDD activities had to be staged via Zoom, there was much excitement in having the programme back live at Te Papa. The event this year brought a record cross section of community participants together to explore and share in the common language of dance.

Award-winning show *Meremere*, featuring dancer/performer Rodney Bell, returned on national tour during April and May. Bell is internationally renowned for his physically integrated and inclusive dance performances. The multimedia performance piece – an autobiographical multidisciplinary, life affirming survival story – was developed in 2016 in collaboration with director Malia Johnston's performance design company Movement of the Human (MOTH). Through his art Bell works as an advocate and provocator for stronger integration and as a voice for people with diverse requirements and backgrounds.

New Zealand's newest professional dance company BalletCollective Aotearoa was launched last year, established by former Royal New Zealand Ballet's Turid Revfeim. After a succession of Covid-19 postponements, they finally debuted their inaugural season *Subtle Dances* at the Auckland Arts Festival in April – a trio of new work created by three New Zealand choreographers: Cameron McMillan, Loughlan Prior and Sarah Knox. This was immediately followed by an impressive ten-city national tour of *Transfigured Night*, a new work by Loughlan Prior choreographed to Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* in collaboration with the New Zealand String Quartet.

Contemporary dance company Footnote New Zealand Dance also had a busy start to the year, with performances in NZ Fringe Festival, CubaDupa, What if the City was a Theatre, as well as their annual three-week choreographic lab, before embarking on a 14 centre national tour of postponed season *The Movement* – a quadruple bill with works by choreographers Jeremy Beck, Forest Vicky Kapo, Amber Liberté, Ooshcon and Jahra Wasasala.

Pacific Dance New Zealand presented an eclectic line-up for the 2021 Pacific Dance Festival in Auckland throughout June. The programme featured works by award-winning choreographer Tupua Tigafua,

Lomina Araitia, Desiree Soo-Choon, Litara Allen, Ankaramy Fepuleai, Chas Samoa and The New Zealand School of Dance, along with a fashion extravaganza and Pacific jazz.

And finally, Māori contemporary dance company Atamira celebrated their 21st Anniversary with *Te Wheke*, a new full-length dance work representing the legacy of the many artists who have contributed to the company over the years, which premiered in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch in June.

In these times of extreme uncertainty, we remain hopeful that the second half of 2021 will deliver New Zealand audiences as much live dance action as we have been privileged to experience to date this year. Our thoughts are very much with those in regions less fortunate than ourselves.

Rodney Bell and Chloe Loftus performing *The Air Between Us* at CubaDupa, in Wellington, New Zealand, on 28 March 2021. Photo: Kirstie Baxter, DANZ



Australia report

by Julie Dyson

Daniel Riley, newly appointed artistic director of Australian Dance Theatre. Photo: Robert Crispe



Despite some small occasional Covid-19 outbreaks, theatres and other performance venues are now reopening to full capacity, always with the caveat of immediate lockdown should more serious outbreaks occur.

This year has seen exciting performances at the Sydney Festival in January, the Perth Festival in February, and the Adelaide Festival in March. Audience numbers were still limited, but these festivals proved to be a lifeline for Australian dance artists and companies who were commissioned in the absence of big international shows.

Large-scale musicals have also returned to the stage, including *Hamilton* and the *Harry Potter* musicals, providing employment for the many dancers, performers and support staff who had lost their jobs in 2020. Fortunately, the Government's JobKeeper program had kept permanent company employees on the payroll, but many other casual dancers and support staff did not qualify, creating much hardship in an arts industry that is still recovering.

Ausdance National and the State & Territory Ausdance network continued to work collaboratively on helping the studio sector in particular to navigate the many different Covid-safe regulations introduced by various governments. The studio sector is still being impacted by occasional snap closures as small outbreaks of Covid-19 occur, with dance one of the first activities to be 'silenced' in emergencies.

In March the Ausdance National board held its first face-to-face meeting since its election in December 2019, working through a revision of its Vision, Mission & Aims and identifying its priorities as an entirely

voluntary organisation. The board was joined by State & Territory network representatives via Zoom for a few hours, where projects were shared, ideas and processes discussed, with all contributing greatly to understanding a current industry overview.

The Australian Dance Awards were presented for the first time online on 8 December 2020, celebrating achievement across 12 categories. The four presenters were David McAllister AM, then artistic director of The Australian Ballet; Wesley Enoch AM, then artistic director of the Sydney Festival; Ella Havelka, former First Nations dancer with The Australian Ballet; and Lucy Durack, singer, dancer and actor.

The Awards were sponsored by Designfront (the ADAs' designer), Harlequin Floors and Aon Insurance. Small watch parties (where allowed) were convened by Ausdances across the country, and trophies were presented to winners in each State and Territory by Ausdance directors or chairs. With an online presentation, many artists from around Australia and in other countries were able to watch the Awards for the first time – the event can still be viewed here on [YouTube](#).

The ADAs this year will be very different, celebrating innovation, inspiration and determination to work through lockdowns, changing regulations and loss of income and audiences. The 12 categories will be reduced to five or six, with no obvious 'winners' but a celebration of all who contributed to a challenging year.

Australian Dance Theatre (ADT) has announced the appointment of Wiradjuri man Daniel Riley as its new artistic director,

the first Indigenous leader of a major non-Indigenous dance company.

The founding artistic director of ADT, Elizabeth Dalman, said: 'He is a wonderful performer, a talented choreographer and already has a great vision for the company. ADT has a long tradition as a revolutionary company pushing boundaries and presenting innovative and exciting works. Daniel plans to champion diversity and develop the company's cross- and inter-cultural potentials. From the very beginning we set out to be a company exploring our Australian identity, our Australian artistic expression and cultural diversity, so I feel this is a strong continuation of the original aims of the company.'

The Australia Council has announced the addition of eight performing arts companies to the [National Performing Arts Partnership Framework](#). The new entrants complement the existing 30 Partnership Organisations, which focus on increasing original Australian work, expanding access to arts in regional and remote communities and driving greater collaboration.

The new entrants to the Framework include two dance companies, Dancenorth (Townsville, Queensland) and the Indigenous company Marrugeku (Broome, WA). The other new companies are Artback NT (Darwin, NT), Back to Back Theatre (Geelong, Victoria), Griffin Theatre Company (Sydney, NSW), Ilbjerri (Melbourne, Victoria), Terrapin Puppet Theatre (Hobart, Tasmania), and Windmill (Adelaide, SA).

Inclusion in the Framework provides funding stability, enabling these organisations to continue to deliver innovative and exciting performances to audiences across Australia.

[A New Approach](#), an independent think tank funded by three philanthropic trusts, has produced an important discussion paper, entitled [Imagining 2030: Preparing for a National Arts, Culture and Creativity \(NACC\) Plan](#).

This is seen as a practical way for the Federal Government to facilitate more coherent and effective public and private investments across these industries, as well as legislative, regulatory and policy settings. It will assist with the cultural and creative industries' recovery, while supporting employment and economic growth.

The purpose of this Analysis paper is to help the various stakeholders of a NACC Plan prepare to be part of its development. The participation of all stakeholders into

the development of a Plan — including consumer and investor groups, the three levels of government, businesses, philanthropists, industry representatives, peak bodies and the general public — will give it the greatest likelihood of buy-in and success.

Several dance people have been acknowledged in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours List, including writer, researcher and archivist Lee Christofis, who has been made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM), and David McAllister, former principal artist and artistic director of the Australian Ballet, who received the highest honour, the Companion of the Order of Australia (AC). Performer, choreographer and mentor Chrissie Parrott was also made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the New Year's Honours List announced at the beginning of the year.

Finally, one of Australia & New Zealand's greatest dance artists, choreographer and dance filmmaker Sue Healey, was the 2021 recipient of the [Australia Council Award for Dance](#) in March. Sue's large-scale investigations into cross cultural collaborations in Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan have extended global understanding and appreciation for Australian contemporary dance, and of course, of New Zealand dance. The [interview with Sue](#) is by Jeff Khan, artistic director of the Performance Space in Sydney.

Ausdance and our many members throughout Australia stand with those of our friends and colleagues in the World Dance Alliance who have been so badly affected by the pandemic as it continues to take a terrible toll in countries across the globe.

Choreographer and dance filmmaker Sue Healey, who received the 2021 Australia Council Award for Dance. Photo: Wendell Teodoro



Bangladesh report

by Zuairiyah Mouli

Artists performing at Bangladesh International Convention Centre on 7 March 2021, in a work choreographed by Ariful Islam Arnab. Photo: Seikh Mehedi Morshed



Bangladesh has marked its 50th year of independence this 26 March 2021. The whole nation was celebrating in style. After a break of almost a year, studios and rehearsal floors got life back as dancers returned full of energy while maintaining all the Covid-19 safety precautions. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Government of Bangladesh, along with other organizations arranged several programs all around the nation. The main attraction was the Golden Jubilee from 17 to 16 March 2021 which was held in the National Parade Ground, Dhaka. In these ten days, ten dance productions choreographed by leading choreographers of Bangladesh were staged. The themes of these productions were either about the history of independence or were tributes to the Father of the Nation, Bangabondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Along with the national dance companies, internationally recognized dance companies from India, Nepal, and China also performed. These programs were followed by music, parades, fireworks and visits by heads of state of neighboring countries.

Before that, from January 2021, Goethe-Institut of Bangladesh supported an interesting initiative of a four-month long Virtual Dance Residency Program – Dancing Adda mentored by German choreographer Tomas Bunker. Five young choreographers from Bangladesh – Sudeshna Swayamprabha, Tahnun Ahmedy, Ariful Islam Arnab, Anandita Khan and Yasin Arafat

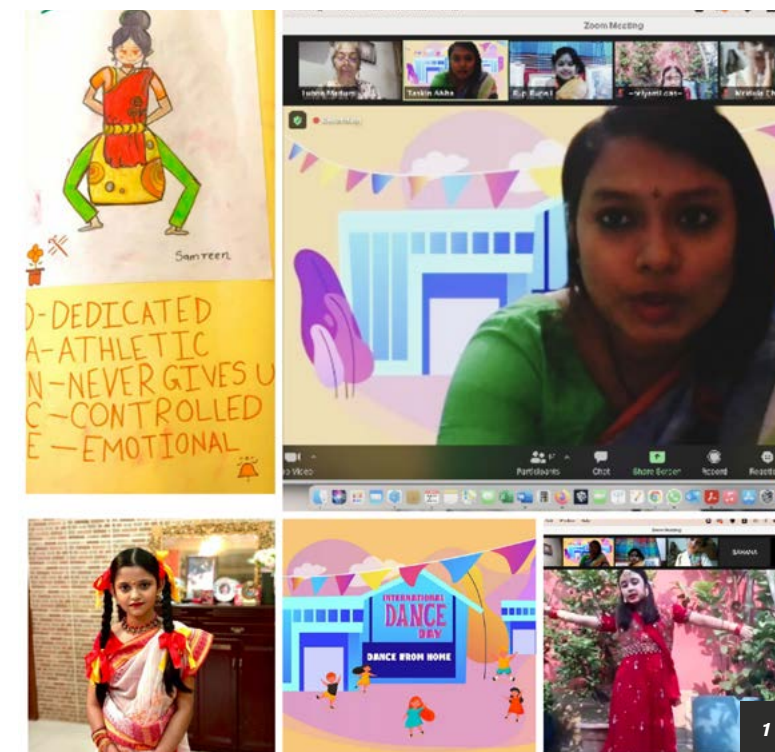
– participated in this residency. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is no certainty when dancers will be back on stage. This initiative was taken to motivate the dancers so that they don't put a stop to their learning and creative process. This residency helped them to be engaged with dance and gave them an incentive to learn, create and upgrade their knowledge. 'Continuing this residency virtually was not easy', said one participant Anandita Khan, 'The participants and the mentor himself struggled a lot to make this residency successful as it was a long-term commitment that was happening online. But with everyone's co-operation we made it.'

Also, four young and promising dance artists – Tahnun Ahmedy, Moumita Roy Jaya, Sharif Masnun Samir and Rubasha Mariyama Khan – took a unique initiative to launch the first online dance magazine of Bangladesh, The Center Stage (<https://thecenterstagebd.com/home/>), in January. Every week they publish an article regarding a different aspect of dance. The team believes that, 'Through this magazine, the artists of our country will get to know about the culture of the other parts of the world. Also, the artists of different parts of the world will be aware of the practice of our native culture. Our sole purpose is to increase the theoretical knowledge and spiritual connection towards dance.'

Like last year, Bangladesh had to celebrate

International Dance Day through online events as the second wave of Covid-19 hit the nation after March 2021. Different dance schools and organizations arranged online events to celebrate the day. Kolpotoru Dance School organized an event where young students of Kolpotoru not only prepared dance compositions by themselves but also spoke or made paintings to express what dance means to them. Indra Gandhi Cultural Centre, High Commission of India, Dhaka organized an online dance event to mark the day where prominent Indian classical performers and ICCR Alumni from Bangladesh – Amit Chowdhury, Hasan Ishtiaque Imran, Moumita Jaya and Maria Farih Upama – performed and shared their thoughts about dance and the crisis the country is going through. Bhabna, Dhriti Nartanalaya and many individual artists also posted their videos to mark the day. Dancers are also planning online events to celebrate the birth ceremony of Nobel Laureate Poet Rabindranath Tagore on 9 May.

Just when everything was coming back to normal, Bangladesh's second Covid-19 wave peaked. This time it was more severe than last year as record numbers of people were affected and the death rate was higher. Dancers are facing economic uncertainty. This will have a long-term impact both individually and collectively. It is true that artists live with uncertainty all the time but Covid-19 has made it more uncertain, affecting the mental health of the artists. Uncertainty makes us doubt things we usually don't question. Artists with teaching jobs have quickly adapted to the online



teaching environment but freelance artists are facing a challenging phase. Online classes and virtual platforms are by no means a replacement for in-studio classes and stage performances but we are part of an industry which reinvents itself as a result of unprecedented obstacles. So dancers are collectively adapting to keep-up their motivation, the passion of creation and remaining hopeful that we will be stronger coming out of this crisis.



1. An online event organized by Kolpotoru Dance School to celebrate International Dance Day on 29 April 2021.

2. Team Dhriti Nartanalaya performing on 26 March 2021 at the National Parade Ground, Dhaka, directed by Warda Rihab, with guest choreographer Prasanna Saikia. Photo credit: Asiatic Events

Hong Kong report

by Tobie Chan

Dancers (R-L) Hua Chi Yu and He Yong Ning rehearsing with masks on for Hong Kong Dance Company and Yabin Studio's *The Moon Opera*, one of the first few live productions since the re-opening of performance venues in February 2021. Photo: Mak@MOON9IMAGE; courtesy of Hong Kong Dance Company



In view of the drastically reduced live performances in 2020, the Hong Kong Dance Alliance decided to postpone the 23rd Hong Kong Dance Awards to 2022 – which will be covering works presented over the years 2020 and 2021. To reflect the trend of online presentations, there will be a new artistic category to recognize outstanding achievement in this area. It is hoped that even when the pandemic is over, technology could still continue to play a vital role in unleashing creativity of the dance sector.

While adapting to the 'new normal', positive news came around the time of the Lunar New Year as the pandemic situation was gradually under control. Performance venues have been allowed to re-open to live

audiences since mid-February – though with the condition that the audience size must not exceed half of the original capacity (later relaxed to 75%) and audiences must adhere to strict anti-epidemic measures.

Despite the difficulties, the dance sector had tried every effort to make live performances possible again. The Hong Kong Dance Company was among the first to present a major production, followed by City Contemporary Dance Company (CCDC) staging its first live performance under the leadership of their new Artistic Director, Yuri Ng, together with some small and medium-sized companies which have put on a number of stage performances since the re-opening. Two widely acclaimed local choreographers, Rebecca Wong Pik-kei and Joseph Lee, presented their full-length works at sold-out performances in Tai Kwun.

It was worth noting that some, like the Hong Kong Arts Festival, opted for a hybrid model to present both online and on-site productions, while some others, such as the Hong Kong Ballet, moved ahead with their online appearance as video shooting and corresponding preparation work had already been in progress. The varied ways of handling the volatile situation has perfectly demonstrated the resilience, determination and dedication of the dance sector to resume the provision of arts,

A dance sector gathering organized by the Hong Kong Dance Alliance.

Photo: Hong Kong Dance Alliance



Audience adhering to anti-epidemic measures at the performance of *Days are Numbered* by City Contemporary Dance Company on 9 April 2021 at Shouson Theatre, Hong Kong Arts Centre. Photo provided by CCDC

which is particularly essential during these challenging times.

In May, the Hong Kong Dance Alliance organised a dance sector gathering with Daniel Yeung, the Chairman of the Dance Art Form Group of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, as the host. Given the adverse impact of the ongoing pandemic, he initiated a grant targeted at dance educators and artists, especially those who had their classes and performances cancelled in the past year. Instead of aiming to resolve pressing needs, the grant enables them to record and archive their work in the areas of teaching and artistic creation to benefit their career and industry development. During the gathering, participants learnt about the obstacles and issues faced by their fellows.

Possible solutions were explored and Daniel would continue to garner resources and assistance for the dance sector through various means.

The Hong Kong Dance Alliance is going to bring back its very own DanceHub: Lecture Series to share professional knowledge with artists and administrators to hone entrepreneurial skills for career and business development. 'New Force in Motion' Series, which provides a platform for local emerging choreographers, will return in September with high hopes following the cancellation of last year's edition. Let's keep our fingers crossed that the hard work of these young talents will pay off with their families and supporters get to watch them live inside the theatre.



Dancer Amber Lewis at the shooting of five(by) six's *Handelwerk* for Hong Kong Ballet's online showing of turn(it)out festival. Photo: Conrad Dy-Liacco; courtesy of Hong Kong Ballet

India report

by Urmimala
Sarkar Munsî

Young girls dancing for
tourists in Jaisalmer,
Rajasthan. Photo: Urmimala
Sarkar Munsî



Decolonization as an ongoing theme

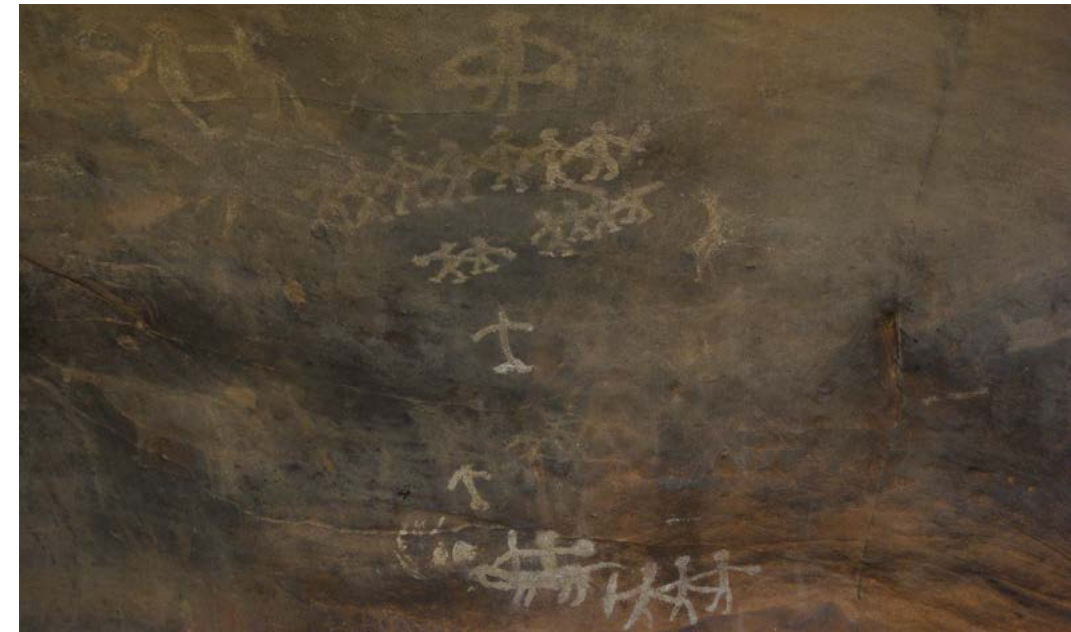
Amidst the tragedy of the Covid-19 pandemic, a long-due consolidation of resistance against established narratives of Indian dance history has taken off in full force. Most of us in the Indian dance community are now aware of a process of “decolonization” – a term brought into critical dance history through the discourses of the Indian diaspora. Those who seek to decolonize dance history are posing these questions as a way to challenge the inertia and the lack of awareness about the exploitative power, control and hierarchies within the Indian dance community that have been unquestioningly accepted with meek docility by dancers. At this juncture, the term “decolonization” is a new buzz word all over the dance world – a word that would “save” the world of Indian dance.

The process of decolonization is a political as well as a psychic rebellion against structures of power, domination and representation (Fanon, 1967). In the context of Indian dance, post-independence cultural policies and patriarchal socialization consolidated through caste and class oppressions and problematic processes of social reforms are all to be blamed for the current malaise. But precisely because of this, decolonization cannot have the same universalized argument and resistance

cannot take the same form all over India. In other words, the process of decolonization cannot be the same for communities that have faced very different but nonetheless vicious dispossession. At this point highlighting the case of one dance form or region as the only case of dispossession worthy of discussion is not the way to go. That we must resist patriarchy as well as caste and class hierarchies and exploitations – current and historical – is undeniable. But resistance has to be engaged and grounded, keeping the particularities of exploitation in mind – not just a token endeavour for personal gain or otherwise.

For people who have been dancing both within community practices and in the contemporary proscenium spaces and also those who are researching closer to the ground, it is on one hand a very timely effort. But it is disturbing to see that once again the lead is in the hands of some high caste individuals, in tenured (or otherwise secure) academic positions in the US and UK universities, who are regulating much of the discourse from afar at their convenience. In the process, another form of hierarchy is being created between those forms which have an academic saviour and those which do not.

The other more dangerous phenomenon unfolding in front of our eyes is the fact that now, in the name of the discourse on decolonization there is an all-out fight



Wall art showing a group
of dancers in Bhim
Bhetka, Madhya Pradesh.
Photo: Urmimala Sarkar
Munsî

and polarization being encouraged and in fact forced on social media platforms. There women dancers from hereditary communities, and the dancers who are now seen as intruders are pitched against each other in a recurring and visible debate that often degenerates into name-calling instead of a encouraging a healthy historiographical challenge. Are we then falling into the same trap of proving heredity and belonging and agency, somewhat like the citizenship debates want us to do through political impositions?

This recent tussle is also completely removing focus from the overall political context and complexities of hyper-Hinduization of dance forms through pushed and manipulative patronage of local forms like Chhau, Yakshagana, Gotipua, as well as less discussed/researched classical dances such as Sattriya, Manipuri and Kathak. Many scholars in Western universities are not aware of, or do not have an interest in, the changing patterns of patronage practices and the choices being made by dancers to survive or thrive in this changing political economy, whereby dancing to the tune of the majoritarian politics is forced through patronage processes. The current discourses choose to highlight decolonization, even while rendering India's current fascist moment invisible – as if all problems in the Indian dance context can be solved through this particular path shown by the current discourse on decolonization. This

is deeply troubling.

These well-meaning rescue projects have had both unanticipated and heart-breaking outcomes. Young dancers are staying away from the dance sphere that they see as a toxic space of blame and counter-blame. While taking tokenistic sides in the fight for/against hereditary rights, dignity and recognition, we as Indian dancers and academics have to keep in mind that through this process we, the once-colonized, are once again relegated to the role of in-fighting around dance history while the “new” scholarship in “critical” dance studies is left as a more advanced terrain of scholarship for Western academic institutions. It is time to understand that this is a form of neo-colonization, whereby we again shall be letting the white world decide what we think or write, and once again the intermediaries shall be the brown academics who have the ability to traverse both the worlds through their academic positions.

Surely we would like the new generation to have freedom to choose their engagement with the vastly varied landscape of dance and traverse it with dignity, happiness and awareness? Acknowledging the ground, the training and the history is of course essential, but it also important is to encourage dancers who have taken contemporary dance as their specialization – where they might want to create their own philosophy and vocabulary of acknowledgement as well as dancing.

Indonesia report

by Michael HB Raditya

A performance for the celebration of World Dance Day at the Indonesian Institute of Cultural Arts, Tanah Papua (ISBI Tanah Papua) in April 2021.



Indonesian Dance After the First Year of Covid-19

What happened after the first year of Covid-19? What was changed with our dance? What was changed with our dance ecosystem? What was altered with the form of expression in dance? What was changed with the artistic and aesthetic form of our dance? Did the first year of Covid-19 change our dance? How do the dance communities in Indonesia negotiate the changes?

In the previous reports in 2020, we explained how Indonesian dance faced Covid-19. The dance community in Indonesia made a lot of efforts, such as moving to the online or virtual mode with online performances, online discussions, online festivals, and so on; and the offline mode with live shows and discussions with limited audiences; as well as the hybrid mode, using both online and offline modes for performances, discussions, or

festivals. This effort shows the power of the Indonesian dance community, which survived by working out new strategies.

This year, the Indonesian dance community builds on its experiences from last year, such as in the realm of digital performances. One notable moment of digital performance was the celebration of World Dance Day. Various campuses celebrated World Dance Day on 29 April 2021, Indonesian Institute of the Arts Surakarta with its event themed "Resting is a Moment of Honestly"; "UNNES Menari (Dancing UNNES)" by State University of Semarang; "Dance vs. Covid-19" by the Indonesian Institute of Cultural Arts, Tanah Papua; and 212 Dance Festival by the Student Group of Indonesia Art and Culture Institute of Bandung.

Indonesian dancers held other digital performances in various regions, such as the MenTari Festival, which showed ten works of West Sumatran choreographers on 17-18 April 2021; Creative Dance Festival (Festival Tari Kreasi) 2021 by Aceh Culture and Tourism Office (Disbudpar) on March 23-24, 2021; Seudati Dance Festival by Disbudpar on 4-5 April 2021; the Mask Dance Festival 2021 in Malang, and so on.

In addition to digital performances, we noted that another essential thing in the first half of this second year is the dance incubator. At the end of last year, Sasikirana KoreoLab and Dance Camp held a new program adapted to the pandemic era, named Dokumen.Tari. This program was intended to record the thoughts, life realities, and ideas of dance actors in Indonesia through photo essays, life narratives, and

documentary films. This program started in September 2020, while the second and third series were held in January and July 2021. This initiative is interesting because of Sasikirana's efforts to incubate choreographers virtually.

Thus, after the first year of Covid-19, Indonesian dance society has realized several modalities to hold performances, incubators, and workshops. Every modality has possibilities and challenges. Dance adapted well after the first year of Covid-19.

WDA Indonesia's Plan

Due to Covid-19, WDA Indonesia did not carry out as many activities as in previous years, either in discussions or dance presentations. On that basis, in this report WDA Indonesia notes the dance activities of fellow choreographers, dancers, and dance event organizers, to show the development and trajectory of Indonesian dance.

However, this year WDA Indonesia is hard at work in its effort to publish a dance book translated from the dissertation of the head of WDA Indonesia, Sal Murgiyanto. He graduated from the Department of Performance Studies, Graduate School of Arts and Science, New York University. His dissertation in 1991 was titled "Moving Between Unity and Diversity: Four Indonesian Choreographers." WDA Indonesia has taken the initiative to publish a translation of this dissertation written 30 years ago.

We consider this dissertation vital because it articulates key Indonesian choreographers and their cultural backgrounds in creating



A digital dance performance at Seudati Festival sponsored by the Aceh Culture and Tourism Office on 4-5 April 2021.

contemporary dance. This dissertation investigates the development of dances in Indonesia through the works and careers of Bagong Kusudiardja (b. 1928), Huriyah Adam (1936-1971), Sardono W. Kusumo (b. 1945), and Retno Maruti (b. 1947). They are prominent choreographers whose works represent new directions in three regional dance styles: Java, West Sumatra, and East Kalimantan. These are representatives of the three major cultural groups in Indonesia — Hindu-Buddhist-influenced, Muslim-influenced, and indigenous Indonesian.

In 2021, this dissertation will be necessary for the young generation of Indonesian dance as it provides a historical overview and shows how contemporary dance originated in Indonesia. We hope the book will be published before 2021 ends.

A promotional image for the celebration of World Dance Day, themed 'Dance vs. Covid-19' at the Indonesian Institute of Cultural Arts, Tanah Papua (ISBI Tanah Papua) in April 2021.



A promotional image for an online performance to celebrate World Dance Day organised by Indonesian Institute of the Arts Surakarta.

Malaysia report

by Bilqis Hijjas

Screenshots from Dancebox May 2021, produced by Chai Vivan, filmed at the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre, and screened online through CloudTheatre, 29-30 May 2021.



Staging a live show in Malaysia in 2021 needs a lot of luck. As we swing between different degrees of lockdown, performance venues and dance studios are always the first to be shuttered, and the last to be opened. And yet, judging by the plethora of activities in our regular newsletter, Malaysian dancers are adapting with characteristic speed and flexibility.

MyDance Alliance has managed to carry out a number of online dance presentations: the site-specific events *Dancing in Place* at *Rimbun Dahan* (pre-recorded and edited dance films) and *Dancing in Place: Different Cities* (on Facebook live, from 6 locations across Malaysia), as well as the results of the Dance on Camera mentorship project (17 short dance films, 12 of which can be viewed on our new [YouTube channel](#)), and Dancebox May 2021 (8 dance works filmed on stage at Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre, and disseminated via the pay-per-view platform CloudTheatre). Some are free, some require tickets, some are training modules for emerging choreographers while some are showcases of more experienced practitioners, but all are steps on our journey learning to harness the Internet as a site for performance.

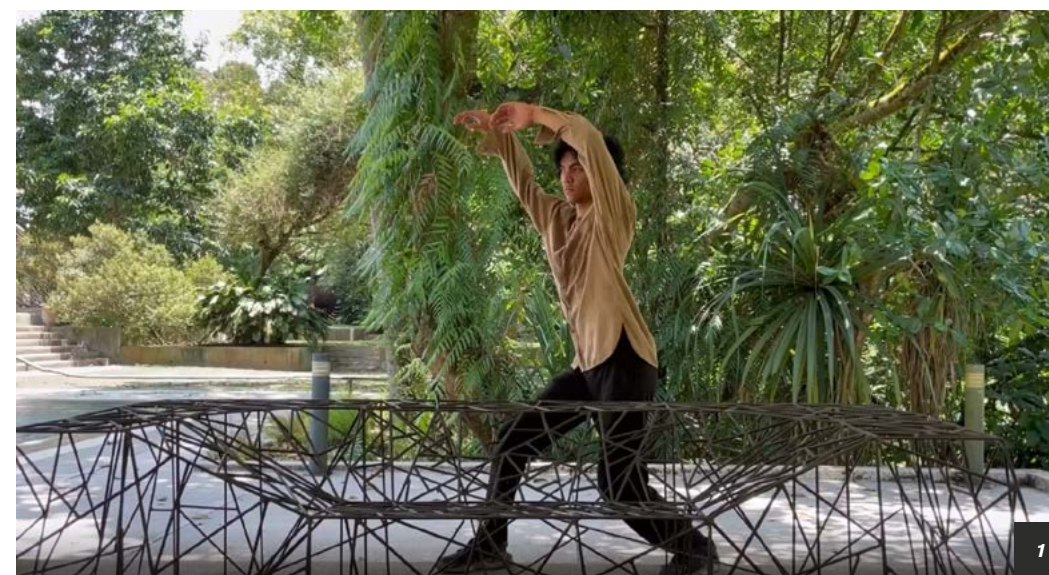
Our MyDance members have also been quick to set up their own platforms, and, more than a year into the pandemic, are building up a sizeable repertoire of online work. Check out Kwang Tung Dance

Company's *'Merentas Awan Series'*, now in its ninth edition of themed dance films and photo series. ASK Dance Company has also presented several major dance film productions: *Dikir Through the Lenses* and *Hymns of the Abandoned*.

The focus has shifted towards writing and documentation of dance, activities which can continue despite social distancing. MyDance interns have been working on the *MY Art Memory Project*, an online archive created by local arts collective Five Arts Centre, uploading decades' worth of local dance program books. Our online contemporary dance magazine *Langkah*, edited by David Lim, continues to release articles on creative practice written by dancers and choreographers, even one written by one of our interns.

Other local documentation projects of note are the radio interview series *"Everyone's a Critic"* by arts journalist Sharmilla Ganesan on BFM 89.9, which has brought critical attention to recent local dance films. Over in Slovakia, Malaysian dancer Jason Yap is flying the Malaysian flag high with his podcast series *"The Background Dancer"*, looking at dance-related professional roles aside from actually dancing.

We have been grateful for funding from CENDANA, the national Cultural Economy Development Agency, which has renewed its support for online endeavours and other adaptive modes. Our current funding comes



to an end in May 2021, but we are pleased to have other projects on the horizon, particularly a series of performances and workshops in partnership with Petaling Jaya Performing Arts Centre, a new private arts venue in the Klang Valley which launched this May. With a 686-seater proscenium theatre and a black box, and well-connected by public transport, PJPAC is a welcome addition to our performing arts ecosystem.

But some dancers, through marginalisation and lack of privilege, cannot take advantage of these new modes of practice. Our committee member Lau Beh Chin has been working with the local community of ethnic Chin refugees, some of whom fled Myanmar decades ago but are still denied access to work and government schooling. As renewed

fighting rages in Myanmar, it is doubly dangerous for Chin refugees to return home. Beh Chin has organised a series of art workshops for Chin children and teenagers, but due to lack of internet connectivity and few digital devices, it has been hard to reach them during lockdowns. Our interns have helped to record basic instructional dance videos, and Beh Chin has recruited school teachers to the refugee community to help disseminate videos to the group. If and when we return to live shows, she hopes to organise a group visit with the Chin young people to PJPAC, to take workshops and see shows. If you would like to support the costs of their food and transportation, please [donate to MyDance Alliance](#) using our PayPal facility.



1. Syamil Norzalahuddin in *'Akhirnya'*, a dance film choreographed by Iqram Azhar, for *Dancing in Place* at Rimbun Dahan.
2. *'Anhumal'*, performed and choreographed by Moch Jack Zhong, filmed by Kong Zi Lian, in *Dance on Camera: An Online Presentation of Dance and Video Making*.

Philippines report

by Erica Marquez-Jacinto

Stills from the dance film *Elementos* featured in *Fifth Wall*, choreographed by Madge Reyes. Photo: Sandra Zobel



In contrast to last year, 2021 forced Philippine dance artists to look at their relationship with dance. It was a conscious decision to resist lethargy and depression to continue to create and to hone skills when there was no audience to please. The pandemic gave options to move forward or move on. For those who chose to move forward, it was indeed an awakening metamorphosis. Those who remained rallied productively, aided by both government and private institutions that bombarded the community with opportunities. The focus was no longer to thrive, but to learn and succeed.

Education is Still Key

With the increase of Covid-19 patients and enhancement of lockdowns, limitations had grown. With no choice but to look into safer ways to tell stories with movement, practitioners must learn to embark on cross-genre disciplines targeting more generational interest.

The National Commission on Culture and the Arts' Dance XChange Project, headed by Shirley Halili-Cruz, held a virtual International Dance Conference from 16 to 19 February 2021, with objectives to remind artists that the pandemic should be about breaking borders. 4000 attended, with over twenty speakers from around the world discussing the preservation of dance,



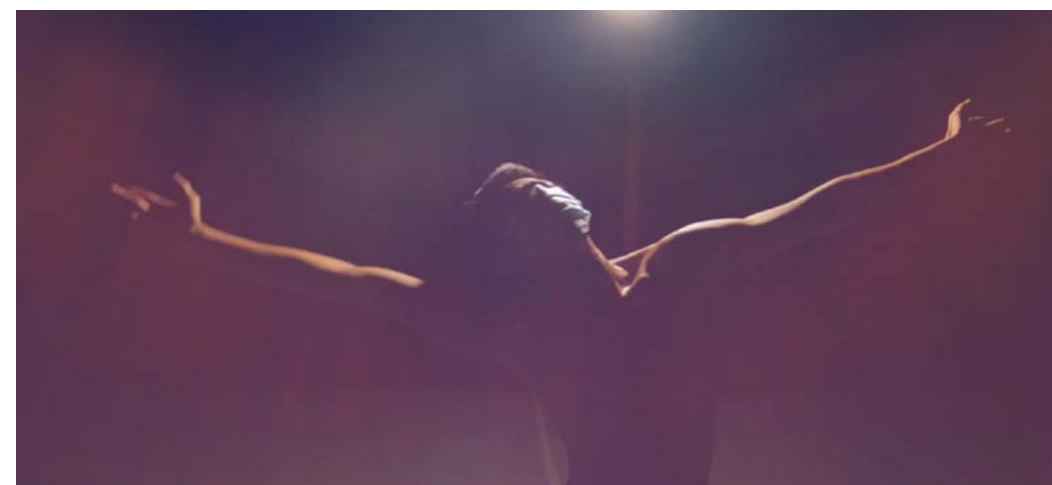
creating innovations, and enhancing skills in this new normal.

A group of artists led by Buboy Raquitico also believed in the need to adapt. As part of the Cultural Partnership Initiative (CPI) Program, which is operated by the Korea Foundation for International Culture Exchange (KOFICE), they carried out a youth workshop called Body Archive, with courses on therapeutic creative movement, video documentation, arts and environment, music and site-specific movement exploration. The remarkable facet of this endeavor was that dance was repurposed for advocacy and healing. The culminating activity was a dance film called *Sundayag*, which premiered on 21 March 2020.

Where is the Spotlight?

In the absence of live shows, dance turned digital.

The Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) revived the annual Pasinaya Open House Festival from 19 to 28 March 2021, in coordination with the CCP Dance Workshop, which provided free workshops in different genres. The CCP Open House Festival also launched Tuloy Po Kayo (Please Come In) last 28 March 2021, a virtual festival which included performances from the Artists of the CCP Dance Workshop. Pre-recorded were excerpts from *Le*



Still from the dance film *Ghostlight*, choreographed and performed by Erl Sorilla, directed by Joseph Morong.

Corsaire, restaged by Victor Ursabia, and Edna Vida's *Ensalada*.

Premiering on the CCP Digital platform were new works by Ronelson Yadao, who collaborated with director Jerrold Tarog for *Kabaligtaran ng Gunaw (Undoing the End of the World)*, a film about being an artist in these trying times, and Erl Sorilla's self-choreographed solo piece *Ghostlight*, directed by Joseph Morong, a beautiful lullaby comforting the heart of the troubled.

Ballet Philippines also premiered contemporary pieces that celebrated the Filipino from its new foreign leaders in their livestream. *Galvanized Houses*, choreographed by Mikhail Martynuk and E. Panfilov, hoped to feature the rich tapestries of the Filipino home in the context of the Filipino spirit, while Joseph Phillips choreographed *Limang Daan (Five Hundred)*.

Independent producer Rolby Lacaba, brought to life the Pampanga Ballet Festival, which offered free workshops on 27 and 28 February 2021, with a virtual gala featuring performances from schools and professionals.

The NCCA continued their Sayaw Pinoy episodes through their Dance Xchange Philippines Facebook page. In celebration of International Dance Day, they presented a two-day concert featuring thirty nine dance companies from all around the Philippines. Also for International Dance Day, nineteen independent artists staged a live show on the social media platform KUMU. Producer Rafflesia Bravo produced "Pulso (Pulse)" and the livestream ran for almost 4 hours. Notable performances include Rhosam Prudenciado Jr's contemporary solo performance against the digital projection of visual artist Annie Pacana.

Coming Soon

Likhaph founder Prudenciado and team will launch phase two of his community care projects including developmental seminars, mentorships, scholarships and online classes.

The Fifth Wall Festival, curated by dancer/filmmaker Madge Reyes, which proved that dance films can be varied in concept, treatment, and advocacy, will have a second run this year. Details are still being worked out but it is something to look forward to.

To Remain a Dancer

To create, to perform and to learn is indeed a precious gift in these times. While the pandemic limits spaces, it has also been an alternate source of freedom for many dancers, who now realize they are limitless. It is with high hopes that those who remain in the fold will continue to move forward with purpose.



Ballet Philippines choreographer Joseph Phillips and principal dancer Denise Parungao. Photo: Justin Bella Alonte

Singapore report

by Goh Jia Yin

Tipping Point by LASALLE School of Dance and Theatre, on 24 April at the Esplanade's Waterfront Outdoor Theatre. Photo: Kuang JingKai.



A state of languishing has been described by psychologists as the dominant emotion of 2021. The emotional long-haul of a prolonged pandemic has brought about a void, a sense of stagnation and weary indifference. This spells a need for the arts community to come together in solidarity to protect its well-being.

On 23 January 2021, Peter Gn organised *UPLIFT!* a dance e-seminar supported by WDA Singapore and the dance industry. It brought youth involved in dance, dance practitioners, and dance teachers under one virtual roof to examine how youth dance in Singapore could transform setbacks posed by the pandemic into creative opportunities and dynamic possibilities in 2021 and beyond. Moderated by WDA Singapore's president Dr Filomar Tariao and Peter Gn, the speakers at the event represented various dance sectors in Singapore — cultural and ethnic, contemporary dance, ballet, jazz, and street dance.

Another virtual collaboration spotlighting well-being was an international effort between Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), WDA Singapore, and several inclusive communities from Australia, Indonesia, Philippines and Singapore. Organised by Filomar Tariao, *A Life Well-Lived: Celebrating Wellness* was live-streamed on 30 April 2021. NAFA dancers performed alongside local partners from Quinn Special Needs Care Centre while elderly from Vanguard Healthcare and the Canossian School Choir sang and danced to some all-time favourite tunes. Overseas

partners from Sayaw Parkinson's Disease (Australia-Philippines) and Ulut Sentalu Indonesia Institute of the Arts showcased their own unique routines. The festivities were capped by a panel discussion between medical professionals and art therapy practitioners focusing on how movement and dance can improve the quality of life of people with Parkinson's Disease. This groundbreaking event showcased diverse talents in the Australasian region while promoting the value of the arts in wellness.

Since our last report, the Singapore government announced the country's move into its final phase of safe resumption of activities on 28 December 2020, and art performance venues have opened up with safety measures in place.

The pandemic has challenged and redefined learning, teaching and performance. A hybrid model of limited capacity live audience coupled with live streaming via online platforms has become the preferred mode of presentation to overcome Covid restrictions. The Singapore Youth Festival (SYF) conceived a physical SYF Arts Presentation in April this year at the University Cultural Centre, albeit with no public audience. Choreographies were also subject to restrictions such as limited dancers per work, a mandatory two-metre distance between unmasked dancers, prohibition of physical contact and touching of floor surfaces etc.

The pandemic has nudged a creative push toward the ingenious use of technology in art creation and presentation. T.H.E Dance

Company launched PheNoumenon 360°, an immersive Virtual-Reality (VR) experience, in December 2020, and continued to offer it via weekly pop-ups in T.H.E's home studio from January to March 2021. Conceived in collaboration with immersive technology partner Hiverlab, it recreated the company's live performance of its 2019 work of PheNoumenon. A scent developed in collaboration with local partner Jetaime Perfumery immersed audiences in a unique 4D experience.

Amidst the setbacks brought forth by the pandemic, there is renewed hope and optimism for the future with fresh support from the Singapore government, which announced a \$20-million boost to the Arts and Culture Resilience package to help arts freelancers and businesses tide over the pandemic. On March 3, a new university of the arts was also announced by the Ministry of Education, formed through a strategic alliance between Singapore's two arts institutions, LASALLE and NAFA. While both will remain as distinct institutions, degrees will be awarded in the name of the new university, envisioned as a champion of the arts, creativity and innovation for Singapore.

The annual M1 CONTACT Contemporary Dance Festival presented by T.H.E Dance Company also makes a physical comeback

WDA-AP Singapore Members Activities, January–June 2021

Bashkhar's Arts Academy

- *"Restaging of Past Gems Initiative"*, *People Get Connected 2.0*, 10 Jan, Victoria Theatre.
- Kalaa Utsavam (Indian Festival of Arts), *Marabu - The Forgotten Sentinels*, 19-21 Mar, Esplanade Theatre Studio.

Frontier Danceland

- "SIDES 2020", featuring *Apple Diary* by Chew Peishan and *B().I().O()* by Zhuo Zihao, 29 Jan-6 Feb, online.
- *"Dancers' Locker 2021"*, *Elemental Beings*, by Sammantha Yue, Ma YueRu, Mark Robles and Tan Xin Yen, 3-5 Jun, Aliwal Arts Centre Multipurpose Hall.

LASALLE School of Dance and Theatre

- *"In Youthful Company"*, *Tipping Point*, 24 April, Esplanade's Waterfront Outdoor Theatre.
- *The Measure of Me*, 16-17 Apr, LASALLE SIA Theatre.

NAFA School of Arts Management, Dance and Theatre

- *Launch of NAFA-UAL Degree Partnership*, *Barem* by Son Yu Joong, 7 Jan, NAFA Lee Foundation Theatre.
- *O BOLDLY: TEDxSingapore Live Streaming*, excerpt from *Barem (Hope)*, 20 Mar, online.
- Arts Alliance Pro-Tem Committee (PTC) Visit, excerpts from *Crossings*, NAFA studios.
- *Crossings 2021*, featuring works by Gillian Tan, Kenneth Tan, Shahrin Johry and Zhuo Zihao, 22-24 Apr, NAFA Lee Foundation Theatre.



this year. Its 11th edition, *Replugged*, aptly questions where a dance festival finds its place during times of unprecedented crisis, kickstarting the curative process by restoring our tools of communication, satiating the yearning for tactile intimacy and acknowledging that fragility and endurance coexist in the human body.

As long as dance institutions, studios and performing art venues remain open, the Singapore dance industry will continue to forge ahead, dancing, performing, creating and producing. This may very well be the antidote to languishing and maintaining our much needed mental hygiene in this long-drawn pandemic.

- *A Life Well-lived: Celebrating Wellness*, 30 Apr, [online](#).

Singapore Chinese Dance Theatre

- Upcoming event: *Chinese Dance Fiesta 2021*, with performances and masterclasses, featuring Madam Lim Moi Kim, 21-23 May, Singapore Chinese Dance Theatre.

Sri Warisan Som Said Performing Arts

- *Semarak Seni 6 Penjuru*, featuring works by Marina, Huda, Ira, Azhar, Neng and Zahidah, 7-8 Apr, Our Tampines Hub Festive Arts Theatre.

T.H.E Dance Company

- *Reawakening Cultural Memories*, restage of *As It Fades* (2011) by Kuik Swee Boon and *Crosstalk* (2012) by Wu Yi-San, 20 Jan, Our Tampines Hub Festive Arts Theatre.
- "Cultural Extravaganza 2021", *《盤》Pan*, 22-23 May, Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre (SCCC) Auditorium.
- *M1 CONTACT Contemporary Dance Festival (11th edition): Replugged*, 5 Jun-4 Jul.



Taiwan report

by Su-Ling Chou

Those Beautiful Times, choreographed by Kuo-Chuan Wang, danced by Kaohsiung City Ballet in March 2021 at the British Consulate at Takow, for 2021 Kaohsiung Spring Art Festival. Photo: Ren-Haur Liu



The Covid-19 pandemic has spread since January 2020 to the whole world. In Taiwan, the situation has been controlled very well in comparison with many countries in the West. Without performance groups or individuals from abroad, local artists have turned out to be the main performers around Taiwan. Taiwan audiences are lucky to have the chance to enjoy all kinds of stage presentations, while lots of theaters are still closed elsewhere around the world.

In 2020, "In Concert" on the meadow of Kaohsiung Arts Museum, one of the main concerts from Kaohsiung Arts Festival, was cancelled because of Covid-19. In April 2021, the concerts come back with two films *How to Train Your Dragon* and *The Age of Innocence*, with music played by Kaohsiung Symphony Orchestra. Sitting on the meadow of Kaohsiung Arts Museum, local people enjoyed the romantic outdoor atmosphere.

Following successful productions in 2020, Kaohsiung Arts Festival continued the 2021 Kaohsiung Spring Art Festival with site-specific dance over two weekends of March. They were Bourrée Studio's *mm Social Distance*, 20-21 March at Kaohsiung Arts

Museum; Solar Site Dance Theatre's *The Memory*, 20-21 March at Kaohsiung History Museum; 01 Dance Production's *The Last Dance*, 27 March at Hamasen Taiwan's Rail Transport; and Kaohsiung City Ballet's *Those Beautiful Times*, 27-28 March at the British Consulate at Takow.

The spring is also the time for the dance graduation concerts from universities and high schools for their final presentations after three or four years' training. Those young dance artists present dance concerts with various styles as well as individual characteristics that are different from the former generations.

It is a pity to announce that the 2021 International Young Choreography Project (IYCP) must be postponed due to the global pandemic. We will consider if IYCP can be held in 2022.

Seeing the state of many countries in the world, we in Taiwan feel we have been blessed. We are praying for our WDAAP member countries to recover soon from the pandemic. Even though you are in distant places, you know we are all together.



Those Beautiful Times, choreographed by Kuo-Chuan Wang, danced by Kaohsiung City Ballet in March 2021 at the British Consulate at Takow, for 2021 Kaohsiung Spring Art Festival. Photo: Ren-Haur Liu

WDA-AP Taiwan Members Activities, January-June 2021

Tso's Dance Association

- *21 Style X Mania*, 28-30 May at Dance Theater of Tsoying Senior High School, Kaohsiung City

Kaohsiung City Ballet

- *2021 Dance Shoe*, 23 January at Jhihshan Hall of Kaohsiung City Arts Center, Kaohsiung City, Taiwan, 30 January at Native Theater of International Hall of Tainan Municipal Cultural Center, Tainan City
- *Those Beautiful Times*, 27-28 March at The British Consulate at Takow, Kaohsiung City

Solar Site Dance Theater

- *Memory*, 20-21 March at Kaohsiung Museum of History, Kaohsiung City

Hsu Chen Wei Dance Company

- *Kidult*, 8-10 January at Experimental Theater, Taipei City
- *Deadline*, 16-18 April at Kaohsiung Experimental Theatre, Kaohsiung City

01 Dance

- *Duhkha*, 27 March at Hamasen Railway Park, Kaohsiung City

Horse

- *Primal Chaos Dance x Sound Improvisation*, 14 January, 24 February, 3 March, 7 April at Horse Studio, Taipei City
- *FreeSteps*, 25 April, 5 June at Shulin Arts Center, New Taipei City
- *90 minutes to easily understand what dance is*, 1 May, 3 June at Shulin Arts Center, New Taipei City

Sun-Shier Dance Theatre

- *Lost and Found*, 20 March at Taoyuan Public Performance Hall, Taoyuan City

Century Contemporary Dance Company

- *Dream Hatched Theater IV*, 8-9 May at Century Contemporary Dance Company, Taipei City

B. Dance

- *Dance with Sound*, 25 April at Banyan Plaza of National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts – Weiwaying, Kaohsiung City

Hung Dance

- *No. Me*, 4-6 June at Kaohsiung Experimental Theatre, Kaohsiung City

Bulareyaung Dance Company

- *2021TIFA – Not Afraid of the Sun and Rain*, 23-25 April at Cloud Gate Theater, New Taipei City
- *BDC Night*, 16 May at LIVE WAREHOUSE, Kaohsiung City

Scarecrow Contemporary Dance Company

- *Hide Out*, 27-28 March at May at Playhouse of National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts – Weiwaying, Kaohsiung City; 19-20 June at Playhouse of National Taichung Theater, Taichung City

Body EDT

- *U Project*, 5-7 February at Huashan Umay Theater, Taipei City
- *The waving goes into the body and mind*, 1 May at The Performance Hall in New Taipei City Art Center, New Taipei City; 10 June at Black Box of National Taichung Theater, Taichung City

Yu Dance

- *Herstory*, 19-20 June at La Chambre Claire, Taipei City

Hideout, choreographed by Wen-jinn Luo, performed by Scarecrow Contemporary Dance Company. Photo: Shi-fan Tsai.



2021 WDA Events

Call for Submissions

2021 Journal of Emerging Dance Scholarship

An international publication of the World Dance Alliance. (www.jedsonline.net)

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: 1 August 2021

PUBLICATION DATE: 1 December 2021

Guest Editors: Dr. Priyanka Basu, Dr. Ilana Morgan, Dr. Julie Mulvihill

Coordinator (Submissions): Dr. A.P. Rajaram

The World Dance Alliance (WDA) announces a call for original scholarly articles and performance reviews for Volume 9 of the Journal of Emerging Dance Scholarship (JEDS), from emerging scholars in the discipline of dance. Authors must be currently pursuing a graduate degree (M.A., M.F.A., Ph.D., or equivalent) or be within five years of having graduated (the degree does not need to be in dance, but the article must be focused on dance as an evolving discipline).

JEDS is published online (<https://www.jedsonline.net>) as an open access resource and linked through the World Dance Alliance websites (<http://www.wda-americas.com>, <http://www.wda-ap.org/> and <http://www.worlddancealliance.net/>). Articles and performance reviews are selected to ensure a diverse representation of global dance scholarship is included in each publication.

Each submitting author must show proof of

Detail of an image from photo project *Imkaan* (2017) by Sumedha Bhattacharyya, featuring Iranian underground dance artist Hediye Azma, which appeared in the article "Duet with Camera: From Passion to Pedagogical Practice" published in JEDS 2020 Volume VIII.



membership in World Dance Alliance before the article can be reviewed and edited. To join WDA Americas membership, please go to <http://www.wda-americas.net/> and join. For WDA Asia Pacific membership proof, please attach copy of receipt of the 2021 – 2022 receipt of membership payment made. Refer to the list of contact details at the end of this edition of Channels to join as a member of one of our country chapters.

The World Dance Alliance copyrights each issue of the journal as a collective work; individual authors retain rights to their individual works. Authors have the right to republish their work, but must give credit to the JEDS original publication.

If you have questions, or would like to make a submission please email the Coordinator (Submissions) Dr. A. P. Rajaram: JEDSsubmissions2020@gmail.com

Articles

Manuscripts should contribute innovative scholarship into contemporary or historical dance, research methodologies, critical choreographic analysis, ethnographic studies, pedagogical practices, or other topics opening insights into the field of dance studies. Research should be original and supported by outside resources. Research engaging participants must show compliance with Institutional Human Participants Review procedures.

All submissions are double blind peer reviewed. A maximum of eight articles will be selected for the publication. Articles are selected based on originality of research and the contributions each makes to the future of dance praxis (theory and practice).

Performance Reviews

All submissions are double blind peer reviewed. A maximum of six reviews shall be selected for each of the volumes. Performance reviews are included to encourage emerging scholars from diverse backgrounds of dance practice and research to contribute original reviews of dance/ dance-theatre/site specific performance/ community performance and other different genres. Performance reviews shall be selected on the basis of the photograph (at least 1 and at the most 3) and the quality of the critical performance analysis presented by the author.

Please refer to the JEDS website for more information about submissions: <https://www.jedsonline.net/2021-call-for-submissions/>

Building Resilience: A Covid Fundraising Benefit for Dance Makers in India & Bangladesh

Thursday 15 July 2021

Join us at World Dance Alliance Asia-Pacific for a special online video benefit to raise money for emerging dancers and choreographers in India and Bangladesh! The benefit will be streamed on YouTube, with donations through PayPal

The benefit will run for 1 hour, and will feature dance films and documentaries made with and by a group of dancers who participated in the Choreolab at Ocean Dance Festival in November 2019 in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, mentored and directed by Toronto-based artist Sashar Zarif.

About the Benefit

In these challenging times, dancers and choreographers in Bangladesh and India have undergone a particularly harsh struggle. Not only have they coped with loss of livelihood, but also with the huge anxiety and suffering that accompanied the recent wave of Covid illness and death across the subcontinent.

This fundraising benefit intends to bring attention to the situation of these dance artists, and to harness our network of dance lovers across the world to support their continued ability to survive and thrive in dance.

In preparation for this benefit, Sashar Zarif has worked with young people from the 2019 Choreolab in Bangladesh to create videos to share their current perspective, hopes and dreams for the future. Having a dance project to work on together has kept their spirits up and given them something to look forward to. With the proceeds of this benefit, we hope to support many more of their dance projects in future.

Our fundraising target is USD \$2000! Every little bit helps, so please give and share this event with others.

Go to [our website](https://www.jedsonline.net/2021-call-for-submissions/) for more information about this benefit, as well as times of sessions.



About the Proceeds from the Benefit

Funds collected from the benefit will be distributed to emerging choreographers from India and Bangladesh, to be used as seed grants to support small local dance projects, starting from USD \$150 per project.

All donations will be collected by MyDance Alliance, the Malaysian country chapter of World Dance Alliance Asia-Pacific, and held in trust for the organisation. Depending on the amount of money raised by the benefit, the Executive Committee of WDAAP will coordinate a process of open call for project applications, a panel of assessors, and the mechanism and timeline for disbursing the funds, as well as monitoring the project outcomes.

About the Choreolab at Ocean Dance Festival 2019

The first Ocean Dance Festival was held from 22 to 25 November 2019 in the seaside town of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, organised by Nrityajog, the Bangladesh chapter of World Dance Alliance. The event featured a scholarly conference, showcase performances, workshops, and more opportunities to meet, network and share experiences and connections.

As a lead-up to the event, dance artist Sashar Zarif mentored a 15-day Choreolab from 7 to 21 November, with emerging choreographers and dancers from Bangladesh, India and other WDAAP nations. The participants formed a tight-knit community as they learned and laughed together during this intense experience. For the opening day of the Ocean Dance Festival, they performed a short work they made in collaboration together, entitled *Chaand: The Reflection of a Wish*.

Participants of the Ocean Dance Festival choreolab in November 2019, on the beach at Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Photo: Sashar Zarif



Caraka Seni Dance Group performing for International Dance Day 2021 at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, in Wellington, New Zealand, on 2 May 2021. Photo: Garside Imaging, courtesy of Youthdance Education Trust

Partner Organisation Reports

In addition to its country chapters and internal networks, WDAAP furthers its vision and mission by working in partnership with other like-minded organisations throughout the world. We are proud to support their efforts, as we develop and strengthen networks for dance.

World Alliance for Arts Education

World Dance Alliance is one of the four key international arts education organisations that form the World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE). The WAAE aims to advance research, advocacy and networking for arts education globally.

Dance and the Child International

daCi promotes the growth and development of dance for children and young people internationally. WDA has partnered with daCi in several significant international events, notably the 2014 World Dance Congress / Global Summit in Adelaide, Australia

World Alliance for Arts Education report

by Ralph Buck

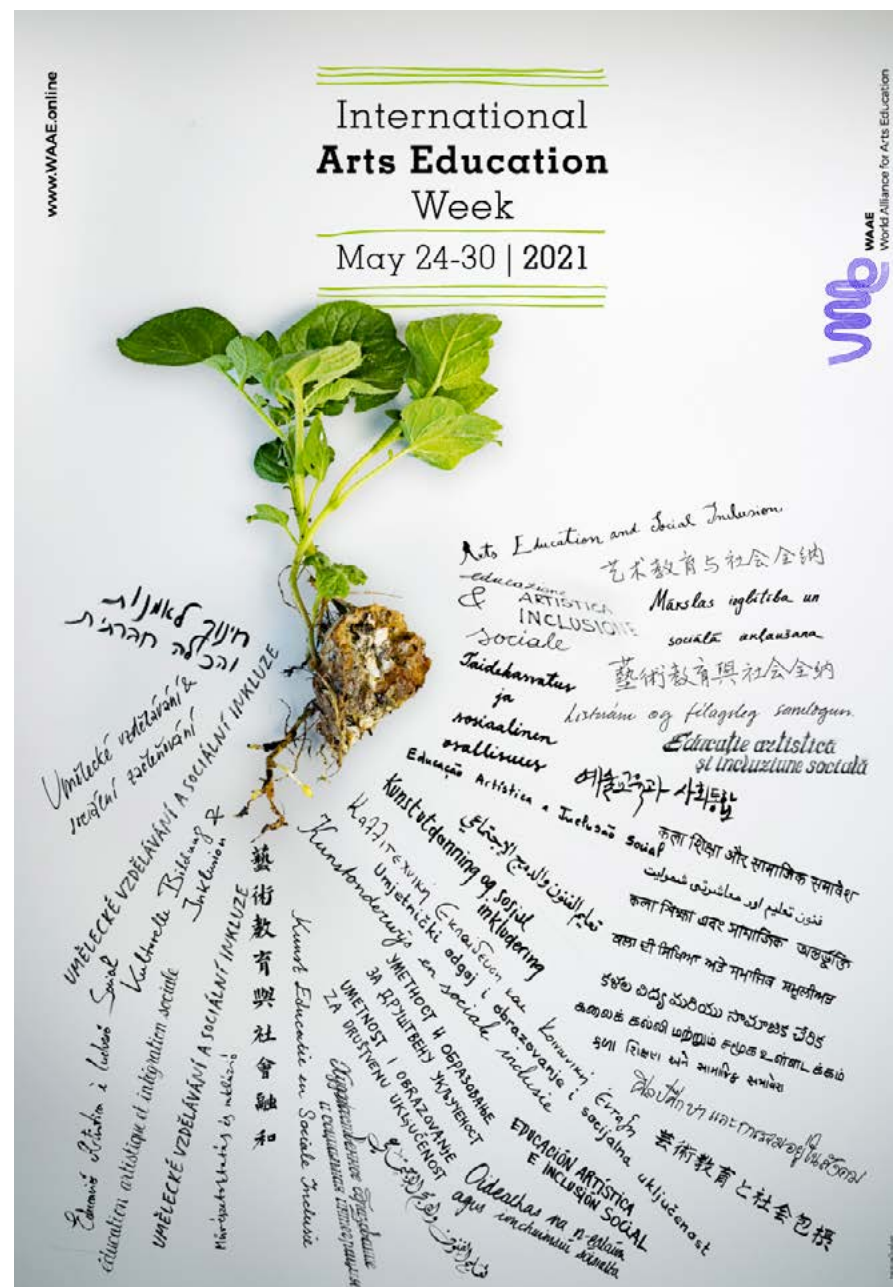
The World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE) is an alliance of peak international arts education organisations. The four organisations forming the Alliance are World Dance Alliance (WDA), International Drama/ Theatre and Education Association (IDEA), International Society for Music Education (ISME) and International Society of Education through Art (InSEA).

The current Executive Council of WAAE is:

- Emily Akuno (Chair) (ISME)
- Sanja Tasic (IDEA)
- Teresa Eca (InSEA)
- Ralph Buck (WDA)
- With Jeff Poulin of Creative Generation serving as Executive Officer.

We have recently met on 8 December 2020 and 1 March 2021 over Zoom. Our current focus is on the following:

- International Arts Education Week (IAEW) on 23-29 May 2021
- The theme for 2021 – Arts for Social Inclusion
- WAAE will host a series of daily webinars that follow the themes of:
 - a. Arts education and disabilities
 - b. Arts education and homelessness
 - c. Arts education and young people at risk
 - d. Arts education and mental well being
 - e. Arts education and migrant and marginal communities
- UNESCO will partner with WAAE in supporting the week.
- WAAE has partnered with Albane Buriel and Le Ateliers du Reve to deliver a MOOC titled “Arts Education, armed conflict and humanitarian aid”
- Creative Generation has continued to seek sponsorship funding from leading philanthropic organisations
- WAAE will partner with Florida University who will provide an on-line conference in 25-28 October 2021. Website: <https://assessment.ua.ufl.edu/conferences/world-alliance-for-arts-education-world-summit/>



daCi (dance and the Child international) Report

by Jeff Meiners,

As an important strategic partner, daCi worked with WDAAP to advocate for dance representation with the World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE). The collaboration has led to significant world dance congresses (Taiwan 2012, Australia 2018), research publications and important networking opportunities for members of both organisations.

daCi members have been active throughout the Covid-19 pandemic to maintain connections. Working with the Canadian organising committee, the next conference planned for Toronto is postponed with an exciting virtual conference planned and zoned live connections around the world for July 2022. Please check the website for the call for proposals: <https://daci.international/conferences/10-conferences/30-conference-2021-toronto-canada>

With the converging issues of racial justice via Black Lives Matter and the global pandemic, daCi leaders have responded to consider pathways for understanding and healing with examples and strategies to share intersecting and separate issues through the lens of dance educators who live and work world-wide. A special issue of the International Journal of Education and the Arts (IJEa) edited by daCi is planned.

Please see the Call for Papers and submit your 500-word abstract and author CV no later than 1 June 2021 to Susan R Koff: susan.koff@nyu.edu

New York-based Chair Susan Koff's new book is now available: Dance Education: A Redefinition

daCi Connect Events are currently underway for members to share activities locally and globally – see the daCi website: <https://daci.international/>

The daCi Executive Committee has also embarked upon important strategic planning activity including its relationship with UNESCO, CID and the WAAE for the next years and a face-to face European conference in 2024. Watch for news!

About the World Dance Alliance Asia Pacific

Our Mission

WDA serves as a primary voice for dance and dancers throughout the world, and encourages the exchange of ideas and the awareness of dance in all its forms. World Dance Alliance operates via its regional centres with an overarching Global Executive Committee, and a Secretary General, bringing the regions together in matters of policy and global projects. The current regional centres are

- WDA Americas
- WDA Asia Pacific
- WDA Europe (being re-formed)

WDA also has partnerships with other international organisations such as WAAE (World Alliance for Arts Education), International Dance Committee of International Theater Institute ITI /UNESCO (ITI), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), and daCi (dance and the Child international).

Our Goals

- To promote the recognition, development and mutual understanding of all forms of dance.
- To facilitate communication and exchange among dance individuals, institutions and organisations interested in dance.
- To provide a forum for discussion of matters relating to dance.
- To encourage and support the research, education, criticism, creation and performance of dance.
- To liaise, co-ordinate and participate in activities with other dance organisations in the world.

Our Founder

Carl Wolz

Our Background

This independent, non-profit, non-political organisation began as the Asia-Pacific Dance Alliance in Hong Kong in 1988. In 1990, the global body, World Dance Alliance (WDA), was founded at the Hong Kong International Dance Conference. In 1993, the name of the Asia-Pacific Center was changed to WDA Asia Pacific to reflect its relationship to the global body.

WDA Asia Pacific is one of the regional centres that make up WDA. The other is WDA Americas <<https://www.wda-americas.net/>>.

Membership

Open to any organisation or individual interested in furthering the objectives of the society.

Membership benefits

- Biannual newsletter *Channels*
- Annual regional assemblies
- Triennial global assemblies
- Participation in the WDA Asia Pacific Networks
- Discounts to certain member events
- Privileged access to WDA Americas services and activities
- Networking opportunities

Types of membership and annual subscription fees (subject to change)

- Chapter / Organisational US\$ 200
- Associate Organisational (to be advised)
- Associate Individual US\$ 20

To join

Contact your Chapter Head (contact list on back of this issue) for details on how to join the local chapter.

Visit our websites

www.worlddancealliance.org
www.wda-ap.org
www.facebook.com/WorldDanceAlliance/

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