Laura Navndrup Black

HOW TO BEGIN?

article

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By Laura Navndrup Black

Imagine a dance studio. The distinct faint smell of dance vinyl taped to the floor, high ceilings, empty space begging to be filled with actions and meanings. Imagine a dancer entering the space. Perhaps dropping personal belongings at the side, taking a sip from a water bottle, changing into comfier pants, walking onto the linoleum in bare feet or socks, effortlessly and silently laying down, stretching, warming up the body through a semi set, semi subconscious routine of familiar, soft movements. Such a loaded space, such a loaded presence.

pointing, working, double mirroring

PART I – pointing

"But he's not wearing any clothes!" Michael Taussig (2003) reminds us of the child in Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale, who points and blurts out the public secret for all to hear. The emperor is naked. The child, says Taussig, is not only able to point out what the adult does not know or knows not to know, they can do so without consequence, because the adult perceives their position as one of ethical immaturity. The child is particularly prone to uttering such revelations as they understand what public secrets hold the most power, what is worth pointing to, and will often take pleasure in this activity.

The notion that the child is a worthwhile collaborator who can contribute radically to the artistic process in other ways than adult artists can was the foundational premise in the practice-driven research enquiry (KUV): *Imagining (the Imagination of) the Other*[1]. In this enquiry, I collaborated with young and adult dancers, interrogating the child-adult relation as aesthetic subject. We worked over a period of a year and a half in different constellations, starting from the questions: "what does the adult want to know about the child,

1) The project was carried out at the Danish National School of Performing Arts with support from the Danish Ministry of Culture

what does the child want to know about the adult, and which choreographic questions must we propose to find out?"

The dancers in the project are aged 7 to 61, with half the group identifying as child or young person, the other half as adults. They all have some experience with dance, some practice a lot, all the adults work as professional dancers. Several intense rounds of work took place over the course of two years. The first work cycle lasted about a week and included three adults and three young people, the second work cycle employed three children and the same three adults, followed by a week with only the adults. Then a round of work with six adults and six children and young people, of which half of the adults and one of the children were new to the work. Each work cycle culminated in a sharing, growing in ambition from inviting friends and family of the dancers in the first rounds, to a public presentation in the last.

The constellation of dancers was somewhat coincidental, concerning the children and young people. I sent out an invitation through a local youth dance company, some of the young dancers passed it on to others and so forth, and those who were interested and able to partake, did so without any prior selection process. The adults where selected based on their individual artistic interests and knowledge, which I felt could support the work process/research in differing ways. The children were recruited through various contacts of mine who know a bit about what the work entails, and recommended children they thought would enjoy partaking. The work is paid for all, although the adults – who are professional dancers – receive a higher amount than the children and young people.

I should add that this is not work for anyone. It does not try to persuade anyone to join. It is not community dance, its aim is not social, neither is it located in a specific community or locality. The enquiry attempts to establish or unearth artistic methods, that do not favour one set of knowledges over another, and the proposal rejects the modern notion of expressive dance along with the exhaustive kinaesthetic exploration that often follows. As such, it seeks an alternative to dominating discourses that dictate what dance activities children and young people have access to. This is professional work inviting

professional adult dancers as well as people who are children[2] and young people to join.

Now, if an ability to point our attention to secrets that the adult has learned to not notice makes the child a desirable collaborator in the artistic process, then the question is what a particular artistic process or work environment offers for the child to point to. Surely it cannot be my proposal, an adult steeped in traditions of dance and performance.

Taussig (2002) describes the adult-child relation as a figure of eight, an infinite and ongoing process of mutual projection between child and adult, back and forth, confirming and reconfirming and reconfirming and reconfirming what we believe the other to be interested in. I believe that the adult's imagination of the child's imagination as aesthetic subject could hold the key for understanding both the fascination of the supposedly unknowing, innocent and sometimes unpredictable child we often see on stage (Germano 2018; Orozco 2010) and the kind of material we propose in community art for children, which too often despite the artist's best intentions — my best intentions — ends up guiding a supposedly open-ended process towards a rather predictable outcome. This inquiry attempts to meddle with, perhaps to infiltrate and occasionally expose, our imagination of the o/Other through continuous choreographic questioning; to muddle up, obstruct, reconfigure this figure of eight.

PART II – working

Mimetic behaviour starts the moment we enter the studio. Or way before, when the project is proposed and one agrees to partake and starts imagining what could happen but let us leave that aside for now and start at the studio door. In collaborations between people who have an established dance practice and feel at home in a studio setting, the space is inhabited in a deeply knowledgable way. Our dancer in the beginning is addressing things that are genuinely important, for adult and young persons alike, when preparing

2) I first encountered the phrase 'people we call children' in the Assitej/Theater FUNDUS workshop lecture "The Child as Activist" by Adele Senior (2022), and found it wonderfully thought provoking in all its simplicity.

oneself for the possibility of moving, of dancing, of making. The dancer is warming up sensorially, kinetically, relationally and intellectually for what may appear through the work. And since, in our case, what is to come is yet to be known, the dancer must ready herself, we must ready ourselves, in a way that makes us agile enough, aware enough, to engage. But in this case, we cannot warm up like that, through habit. I worry that it would favour those for whom this is everyday practice and that if we did, then what already exists would dominate our shared discourse, spoiling the delicate moment that is a beginning. Questions arise. How to find a shared beginning when we do not know what the work is yet? How to prepare for something to emerge, how to step into shared practical speculation, how to begin?

This is how we begin (noticing our imagination of others' imagination); we gather in a circle, each with three pieces of paper and a pen. We pair up. I ask the group to place the pen on the paper and draw the face of the person in front of them, in one continuous line, keeping their eyes fixed on the person's face. When they have finished, I ask them to write down 3 questions for the person across. Then I ask that the person who asked the question also answers it on behalf of the other. Once this is done, they share their projections of each other, but I ask that they do not discuss the answers. Whether the answers correspond to the other's idea of themselves is not of our concern. We will work from the assumption that other people's idea of you is as real as your own, I tell them.

And this is how we begin (to project our imagination of ourselves and of others onto ourselves); before the dancers get onto the floor, I ask them to stay where they are, but imagine themselves somewhere else. I ask them to imagine it as clearly as they can. And then to go there. We repeat this during several rounds, imagining first, then executing the imagined journey, adding a body that is organised differently to standing, then adding moving to the chosen position in another way than walking. Over time, we gradually complicate the task, to include imagining that you are someone else in the room, that you are half or double your age, etc.

Observing the dancers warm up became an important source for me to practically understand what it could mean to muddle up the relation between

the dancers, usually coupled up child and adult. In my notes recalling the warm up, I write:

I need you

> The dancers are working on a warm up task in pairs, crossing the floor. The leader uses the distance between their hand and the floor to indicate the turning up or down of a particular parameter influencing the movement quality of the follower, such as speed, volume, muscle tension, etc. By chance, one group works as a trio, with S and C following A's lead. At one point, A needs to take off her sweater, and rather than take a break S and C stay with the task, still following the command of her hand. A's momentary confusion sparks an idea for me, a development of the task that shifts it from an accessible and inclusive warm up exercise to one that (also) more directly responds to the core of this enquiry. So next time we warm up, we expand the task and move into following any body part – or body parts – on one's partner, effectively allowing the 'follower' to choose both what determines the turning up and down of a parameter and what that parameter is. For example, one may choose to let the distance between one's partner's feet indicate how fast or slow one moves. The partner is the leader, but has no idea of the task the follower has set themselves and therefore must figure out how to lead as they go along. This task renders the leader the unknowing partner, yet still requires the 'leader' to guide and care for the experience of the follower.[3]

From here on, we – adult and young choreographers alike – take turns proposing ways to know something about someone else and suggest it to the group as a choreographic practice. We create a bank of questions. The young people and children write down questions for the adults and vice versa. Then in mixed groups, the dancers choose a question they would like to work on and together search for ways to know something about the other through

3) Extracts from my fields notes. Dancers' names are replaced by their initial. The agreement with the dancers is that they are visible and accredited in material relating to the research and performance. I have not deemed it necessary for the reader to identify each dancer's individual contributions.

choreography. The format of their proposals is not fixed, sometimes they propose a performance situation, sometimes they ask the other group to join a score, etc. Through these proposals, I and we come to learn what this research is – and what it is not. In the first work cycles every day is structured like this; we warm up, then we conjure up.

Chairs

> One group has devised a system of movement that places the audience – me and the other groups – on chairs scattered in the space. The dancers change between dancing/performing and sitting/audiencing. I notice how extremely different it is for an adult to watch a young person perform. It is such a simple situation put together beautifully within a group that treat each other as equals and with the utmost respect, and yet, it feels odd when a young person allows/invites an adult's gaze, but not odd the other way around. Or more precisely, it feels odd to observe an adult observe a young person.

Every morning of the first work cycle, I begin the day by sharing with the group what I noticed the day before in a brief visual presentation. I want to be as transparent as possible towards the group and share where the research is heading in my mind. These presentations make it clear that we cannot foresee when something useful occurs. We cannot produce or think our way to insight, but we can establish situations where we can sense it. Sense where something is at stake.

Young/Future >< Adult/Past

> We are doing the morning presentation. Using a big book with ordered images and text bites from the day before, I draw out observations and present some of the things it sparked in my wonderings and thinking. We begin every day like this. When I ask them 'what else', what I missed, G points out something she noticed when reading through the many questions the adults had written down for the young people and vice versa, when

> answering to the task 'What would you like to know about the Other?' she noticed that the young people's questions for the adults were predominantly pointing towards their past, whereas the adults' questions for the young people largely concerned their future, effectively placing our imagination of each other in time. It is a keen observation.

Everything I propose in these early stages of the research, I do on a hunch, and I believe the same is true for the dancers. I do not know whether a certain proposal will be right for the process, whether it will lead somewhere or not. For instance, we spend some time moving, dancing, performing with and against music. It is not useful in a generative way, but introduces dance as a viable and welcome material. Oftentimes, the dancers' observations support my trust in my intuitive decision making by noticing patterns of logic in our doing, that I had proposed without noticing.

Time travel

> G notices that we start the day by projecting forwards, imagining the future, and end each day by looking backwards, imagining the past. An important part of the warm up is a guided task where I ask participants to imagine an action in meticulous detail, before actually performing it. And when we finish, I ask the participants to travel through the happenings of the day, from beginning to now, picking one particularly vivid memory to share with me and the group. It is a clever observation, I hadn't even noticed the time travelling aspects of this opening and closing, it just felt like the thing to do.

In this way, the enquiry slowly takes shape, finds its form. Fleeting action reveals potentials and directions, and sometimes exposes what does not belong in the universe we are creating.

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Look at me like this

> The three young dancers have asked me to join them in studio 2 where they are working on their version of a choreography assembled from the work we have done together during the week. During their choreography, they line up at the back of the room. A loud poppy aggressive song plays in the background, the dancers fix their eyes at the front of the space, and, as the voice of the female singer sets in, they slowly and elegantly hunch down, get onto all fours and crawl like wild exuberant tigers all the way to the front. They get to standing, eyes still locked, confrontative, before casually moving on to another part of the choreography. I feel slightly uncomfortable with this – to me – sensual imagery. I am the only adult in the room and it is my project. I would never ask young people to move like this. They cannot move like this, if the movement is instigated by an adult. They cannot move like this to fulfil an adult's imagination of them. They cannot move like this to fulfil an adult's imagination of their image. I know where the movement comes from, namely a task two of them made up with one of the adults. I remember overhearing the suggestion of the tiger movement, so I know it comes from them, from the young people themselves. This is what they have chosen to do and this is how they have chosen to be seen.

The young people point, and I dismiss it. The tiger crawl aspires to a regime of movement that belongs outside of the process – or *my* sense of it. It seems that the pointing I seek from the children and young people is not towards ideas that lie outside of the realm of my own imagination, or even outside of this room. When looking at the work and way of working that is slowly taking shape, the pointing child from the Emperor's New Clothes, the truth sayer, the not so innocent revealer of public secrets (Taussig 2003) is replaced by a child who is *working*. Working on a par with the adults, proposing choreographic approaches that, in tangible and intangible ways, articulates and challenges the adult-child relation that is already present. As we slowly build the internal logic of this particular choreographic situation, we need proposals within which we can work.

This is it

> It is our last work day together in the first work cycle. After much deliberation I and we have decided that we will do a sharing for family and friends. First, I thought this necessary not so much for the work process itself, but for ethical reasons. Although the work room was in principle open throughout, I thought it necessary to give parents or guardians of the young people an explicit invitation to encounter the work their child had been so intensely engaged with for a full week and a bit. Then the idea of separating the group, so that the adults prepared one version of a choreographic structure encompassing elements from our work that they felt were most pertinent, and the young persons another version, presented itself, giving me a chance to see what each group would point to as important in relation to the young person-adult relation and to the imagination of someone else's imagination. It is during the sharing of the adult's version of the work presentation that I notice K, the child of one of the dancers joining the performers on the floor. She has been present all day, and is helpfully taking lots of photographs, documenting the day for me. K is about 6 or 7 years old. Now she sits on stage in front of an audience member, drawing their portrait whilst looking only at her subject, as she has observed the performers do. Her focus on the task and the power she wields over the audience gaze is mesmerising to me. In this moment I feel
>
> and know that *this is it*.

Something is at stake here that feels pertinent to our interrogation of the child-adult relation. A soft renegotiation of power between child performer and adult audience member. A particular way of looking at and being looked at. This moment becomes pivotal in the research, in terms of understanding the aesthetic potential of the work that is taking shape, and an underpinning structure (logic) that could support it.

K has not been part of the enquiry. She is simply a child who chooses impromptu to join the work and engages with a task so comprehensible that she was able to decipher it in the moment. The task allows her to enter the work, to work, to perform. From here on working task-based - meaning that no movements are set, nor are they 'improvised', but rather a result of the

performers engaging intensely in a given task - becomes a guideline for the work. As well as producing expressions that I am aesthetically confident in, this approach also solved a number of problems for us. For example, we found that repetition kills the intensity of the work when children are performing, and the task-based approach means we can work on something extremely specific whilst avoiding repetition of movement.

Practice not practicing

> You cannot practice or refine the work through repetition when children are involved. Repetition kills the aliveness, kills the possibility to work. The consequence is that the frame, the choreographic proposal must somehow carry the performance. This work is not about being creative or expressing oneself. We should not wear our own clothes. I am not interested in seeing who you are as a person. I am interested in seeing you work, and seeing how I as choreographer can make it okay to be looked at.

A good task allows all performers to *work*. To think through movement (Tversky 2019) rather than perform movement – the difference is delicate but palpable. The dancers are not asked to embody, nor to express. The tasks must be calibrated so the performers are constantly occupied and do not have effort left to concern themselves with the act of performing itself. The order of the tasks must be composed so one does not have to worry about what comes next. Crucially, the tasks must be equally challenging to both child, young person and adult, although not necessarily in the same way or for the same reason. And finally, the tasks must of course relate intensely to our shared enquiry into the child-adult relation. In this particular process, the answer to our question of how to begin also provides the answer of where to end up; with tasks that in various way proposes, disturbs and supports ways of looking at and being looked at, of imagining the imagination of the other.

Meeting an audience complicates

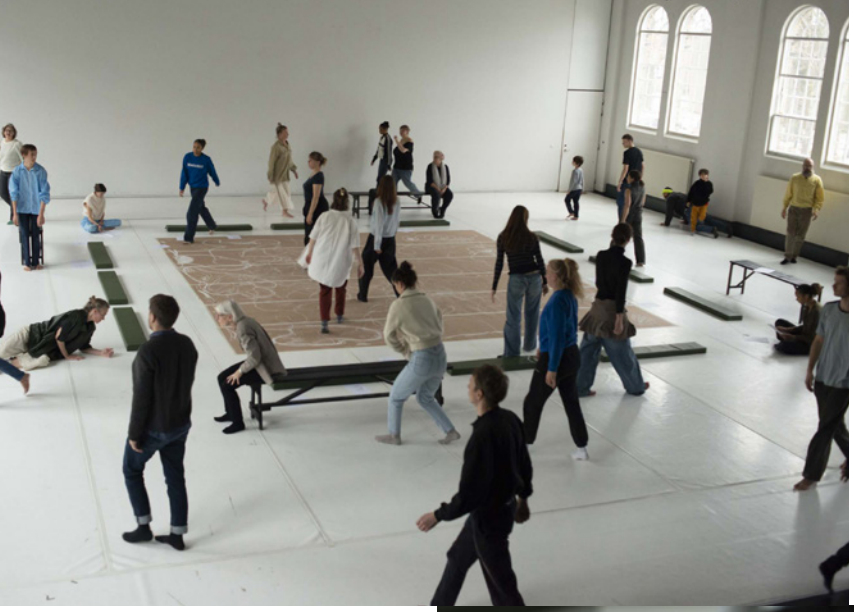
> In the last practice encounter, we invite the public in. We call what we do a performance. 15 tasks are organised in time and space for the dancers to work within. The gaze of the audience member brings out the fact that some of us are professional performers and others not. The contract between the adult professional dancer and the audience member is clear. The dancer allows the audience's gaze. It is the job and expertise of the trained performer to allow observation and the audience member's projections, to allow a myriad of stories projected onto themselves.

The contract between child or young performer and the audience is not clear. The child or young person does not have the training nor the maturity (they have not been an adult themselves, whereas the adult has been a child) to understand how the adult audience member may interpret or understand their actions and their presence in the work. This is exactly why this performance situation is needed. Because it complicates in a way that the collaboration and shared artistic search and research does not, or does to a much lesser degree.

The illusion of sameness across generations, which is embedded in the work process, cannot be withheld in front of an audience. Between the performers, yes, but it can, at most, strive to disturb and make visible to the audience member their own longings towards the child's imagination.

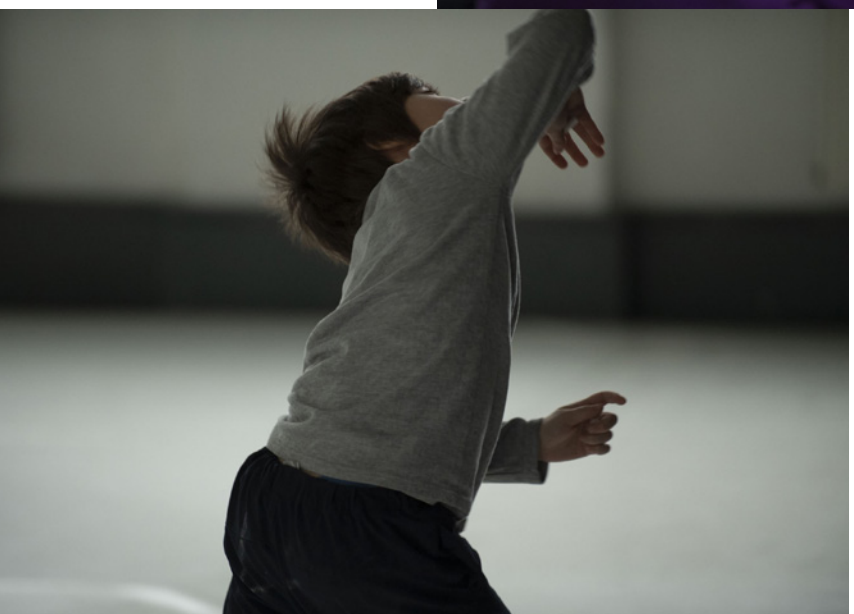
The construction of the piece employs several strategies that make being looked at (ethically) possible and ok for the performers. Much of this has to do with gaze. For instance, some of the tasks involve drawing on paper laid out on the floor, directing the dancer's gaze and attention downwards. In another section, the dancers work with closed eyes, occupying themselves with the double task of following a faint sound, whilst moving symmetrically around their spine, an approach to movement thought to calm the nervous system. Where the performers meet the gaze of the audience, the performers are always the knowers; they may be drawing the audience or verbally projecting their imagination of the audience member's imagination onto them.

The collective group of dancers who have partaken at different points of the enquiry are invited to meet in three shared workshops in order to perform in the final choreographic situation together. It becomes clear that

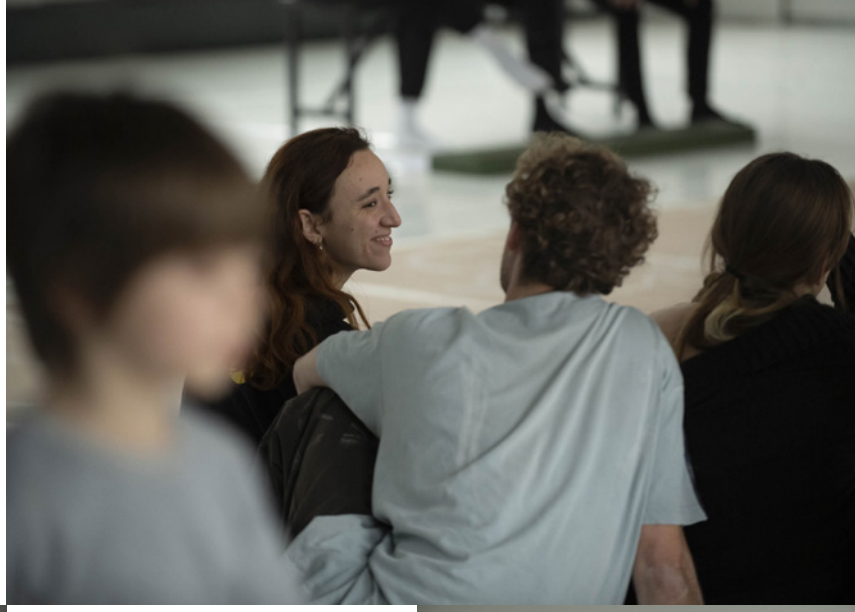


TASK: Imagine yourself w/ audience.
From a performance of *Imagining (the Imagination of) the Other* (Black 2023).
Photograph: Graham Adey.

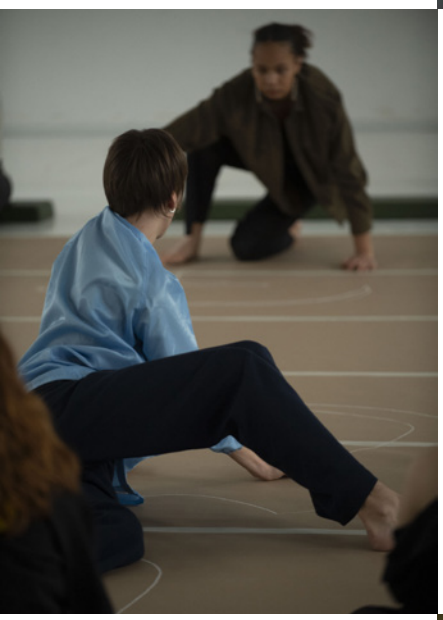
TASK: Draw audience.
From a performance of *Imagining (the Imagination of) the Other* (Black 2023).
Photograph: Graham Adey.



TASK: Everything everywhere.
From a performance of *Imagining (the Imagination of) the Other* (Black 2023).
Photograph: Graham Adey.



TASK: Gaze score w/ stories.
From a performance of *Imagining (the Imagination of) the Other* (Black 2023).
Photograph: Graham Adey.



TASK: Double mirroring – one duet.
From a performance of *Imagining (the Imagination of) the Other* (Black 2023).
Photograph: Graham Adey.
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TASK: Build paper floor.
From a performance of *Imagining (the Imagination of) the Other* (Black 2023).
Photograph: Graham Adey.
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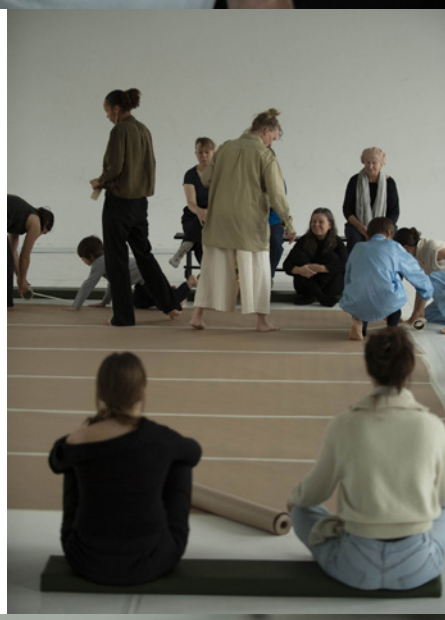

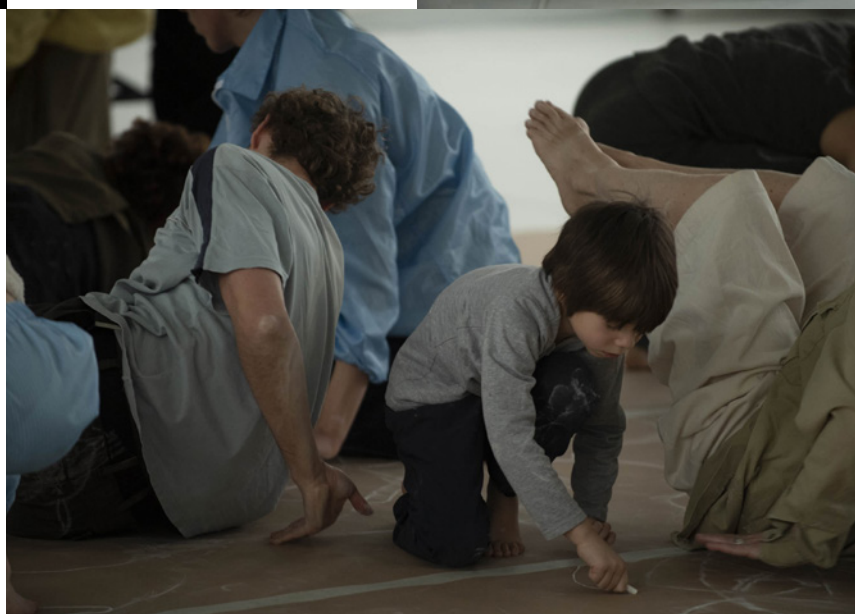

TASK: Duets – trace your partner.
From a performance of *Imagining (the Imagination of) the Other* (Black 2023).
Photograph: Graham Adey.

partaking in three workshops is enough to enter the universe of the proposal, and be able to *work* within it. Acquainting oneself with the tasks serve the dual purpose of introducing the underpinning logics and atmosphere of the work as well as the frames of the task. In this way, the performance that appears out of our research takes a form that is repeatable, a form which others can step into, working within task after task. The performance is later repeated with a largely new group of dancers.

PART III - double mirroring

After the last performance, I ordered the 15 tasks that make up the finished piece according to the underlying strategies of the tasks. I settled on the following categories (or figures): 'gaze', 'projected imaginings', 'double mirroring' and 'follower<->leader.' These figures became lenses through which to extrapolate and conjure up further thinking. Here, in Part III, I will focus on double mirroring as a physical spatial concept to *move with* as well as a potential motif to *think along with*. Double mirroring appeared in the research as an extension of mirroring, a generic score where two dancers mirror each other's movement as precisely as possible. Double mirroring is a more challenging version, where you mirror across two axes, instead of just one; the plane between you as well as through your own centre axis. Introduced as a simple warm up challenge, the task proved useful in this research for two reasons; first, the intense focus required to perform the task and the attention to ones partner is all consuming, and second, whether the dancers experienced the task as more or less challenging did not seem to rely on their previous experience with dance, thus creating a situation that shuns the usually given relation between child and adult, which dictates that the adult leads, or takes care of, the child, rarely the other way around (Black 2024; Edelman 2004).

Through the lens of double mirroring, loose thoughts regarding art and culture peeped into my consciousness. I kept noticing that in the Danish context that I find myself in, the terms are used loosely and often interchangeably, and I started thinking about how they impact or correspond to our thinking towards children and young people and their engagement with art and/or culture. Community artist, writer and researcher François Matarasso

writes that "Art and culture both express human values and meanings but art's difference lies in its self-consciousness. People express their culture in everything they do, mostly without thinking about or questioning it. Art requires self-awareness. (…) It is therefore always a conscious act related to the artist's own culture, with which it shares the purpose of meaning-making". (Matarasso 2019, 40) The figure of double mirroring neatly describes artistic approaches within which children and young people can contribute by critically engaging with existing culture, rather than simply mirroring it. Where they are necessary, not only as figures on stage or as learners, but as also as makers and facilitators of the audience's experience.

The saying goes that all children are artists. I shall not be the judge of that, but I will claim that it would be derogative to declare all creative articulations by children 'art'. Most of these creative contributions, I would argue, are cultural expressions, dominated by the child's immense capacity to notice what is appreciated by their surroundings, not least by the adults. Employing the figure of eight, if you will. In reality, we rarely approach children and young people as artists. Children are generally not expected to contribute to society in impactful ways. They are expected to learn and adapt to existing structures. The child or young person is first and foremost a learner, someone who engages with – and learns from – what already exists, so that they too can become carriers of existing culture, crucial in order to function in their respective communities.

Practices of choreography within youth dance groups focusing on talent development often fall in this category, producing work that is not self-conscious, but rather emulates - mirrors - (ideas of) professional practice in the field, in terms of preparation/training, production methods and performance outcome. When approached sensitively, this can produce effective learning environments, but comes at the risk of misguiding young aspiring dancers by presenting an idea of what constitutes professional practice that is out of sync with the work life most of them will encounter, should they choose to pursue a career in dance. These performances largely introduce a choreographic approach founded on the modern notion of expressive movement and encourage exhaustive kinetic exploration, perhaps simply because they must provide the dancers with physical and technical training as well

as performance experience at the same time. Perhaps such performances by young people would benefit from being understood and appreciated as cultural expressions or as demonstrations of acquired skills and creative invention. Such performances can indeed express meaning, the process can be explorative and allow the dancers to generate material, but if neither process nor output is self-aware, that is, looking at itself from the outside in relation to the situation in which the work is carried out and presented, then I would argue that it is not art.

Part of my mission here is exactly to elevate[4] children and young people's contributions to the realm of art. A challenging endeavour, because our perception of the child is so engrained. During the enquiry I made a concerted effort to address everyone in the room in a similar manner, yet when looking over the video documentation, I see that I use a noticeably softer voice when addressing the younger children directly. I think this is emblematic of a sense that the children are more vulnerable than the adults, although nothing in our process suggested this. Somehow in our eagerness to support the child or young person, in our eagerness to open up the artistic practice for more to join, we are missing something. Here is my gripe with the hit and run artist visits that many children and young people must contend with, and that I have done my fair share of; whereas the come as you are, bring what you have, contribute with what you can attitude is well intended and can be inclusive and offer opportunities for learning, it is not necessarily the same as taking someone seriously as contributor of meaning. I fear that it runs the risk of implying an anything goes attitude, that would otherwise not be acceptable in most artistic practices.

For the dancer, double mirroring suggests a way of working that is always in response to something outside of oneself. Lurking in the shadow of the project's rejection of self-expression and movement language as key aesthetic drivers flows a soft undercurrent of dissent against the self-propelling individual striving to make their artistic mark in the world. Perhaps it is time to create opportunities for children and young people to engage with dance and choreography in ways that prompt more porous and responsive

4) Perhaps 'elevate' is a slip of the tongue - I do not wish to infer hierarchical difference between cultural and artistic endeavours. The point is that they are different.

relations with one's surroundings, momentarily shifting the focus away from the (definition and development of) self. Perhaps I was wrong when I stated that this is not community dance. Perhaps it is time to re-invent community dance, to (at least occasionally) stray from the strong hold of creative dance and dance as expression that dominate most dance activities directed at young people, and instead encourage shared speculative choreographic praxis that ask dancers to co-inhabit the complexity of the artistic proposal.

When we ended up with a repeatable performance structure, one that admits dancers who have not contributed to the enquiry, I was genuinely surprised. It seems that my own imagination of a good artistic child/adult collaboration is tainted by an idea that everyone's uniqueness must shine through. An idea that when people who are not professional artists are involved in the artistic process, then their personal traits, wants, needs and desires, sometimes even their everydayness, becomes the thing that they can contribute with and the thing that must come to the fore. A notion shared by Matarasso, who notes that professional artists "have a self-awareness born of a long cycle of expression, reception and reflection. (…) A non-professional artist has none of this experience or expertise. (…) But they do have things the non-professional artist has lost or may never have had. (…) They bring the questioning freshness of the beginner's mind. If they belong to social groups under-represented in cultural life, they have new ideas and insights" (Matarasso 2019, 91). I had not anticipated that this work, which sprung out of a shared process with these particular people, would instigate a performance situation where the dancers are replaceable. For all my good intentions of shunning self-expression as a pillar of logic, I too had somehow faintly anticipated that the singular voice of each dancer should dictate and shape the work. That the children and young people should point to something that adults could not. As we have seen, a different notion of what it means to contribute appeared in *Imagining (the Imagination of) the Other*, where adults, young people and children work alongside each other, exercising criticality (Rogoff 2007) by inhabiting the proposal (Black 2024) together.

I have come to understand this approach as fundamentally respectful in its refusal to simplify the artistic proposal in order to include people who are new to the art form. Accessibility simply will not suffice, when inviting

those who know from elsewhere into the work. *The work itself must change*. I believe that we can - and did - conjure up work that would not exist had there solely been adult dancers present. However, the biggest contribution from the children and young people did not come in the form of pointing. In the end, the singular voice of each dancer did not dictate the work. What the presence of the children and young people - coupled with an insistence on not only inviting difference, but also obliterating its importance - instigates is a shift of the entire logic and expression of the work.

In answer to the question of how to begin, my answer would be to (dare to) delve into the complexity of the work at hand, rather than simplify existing methods. To reject adapted, less complicated artistic proposals in a bid to include people with less experience with choreography and dance, and instead initiate ways of working that are equally challenging to the experienced dancer we met in the very beginning of this text and to people who have not yet lived long enough to muster as much experience with dance and choreography. This necessity to conjure up alternative logics, to let the work take other kinds of forms and create other kinds of encounters; this is what makes the child an apt collaborator.

You look at me, you touch me with your eyes.
You look at me, you see me, you see your idea of me, you see your idea of my imagination.
You like my imagination, the potential it holds.
You want to curl up inside it.

I am an emblem of the future, I am potential, I am hope.
I look at you. I wonder how old you are, where you come from.
I wonder about your past, what you were like as a child.
I wonder what you regret, what you would have done differently.
I would like to know if you are happy and why.[5]

5) Laura Navndrup Black (2023). Programme text for the performance *of Imagining (the Imagination of) the Other*, partially assembled from the young people and children's questions to the adults.

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Dancers who have contributed to the enquiry and performance of Imagining (the Imagination of) the Other: *Casper Albrektsen, Aline Combe, Ravnhild Arrhenius, Edit Hulda Brink Astrup, Carolina Bäckman, Camilla Collins, Georgia Kapodistria, Elna Johanne Kjøllmoen, Naja Krell Knudsen, Maxime Kroot, Charlie Møller, Frida Billeskov Olesen, Lill Ottignon, Paulina Rewucka, Camilla Stage, Kim Ava Høgh Stricker, Søren Linding Urup, Esther Wrobel, Lui Sigsgaard Wrobel, Annacelia Zulueta-Larsen.*

Peer reflection during the artistic process: *Alice Chauchat, Solveig Styve Holte, Gillie Kleiman, Deborah Dodd Macedo, Sarah Woods.*

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