

What moves YOU!

Anthony Heidweiller – June 17, 2024

Nederlands Dans Theater

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Welcome

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for joining us. I am Prince Credell, policy advisor for Netherlands Dance Theater (NDT) and an educational project officer for NDT Education.

This evening, I am honored to introduce our keynote speaker and the presentation, What moves YOU! I am doubly happy to have been a small part of this process. Anthony, our honored guest, is currently an acting co-director of the [Amsterdam Academy of Theater and Dance](#), and we at NDT had the pleasure of collaborating with him 3 years ago before this impressive building, Amare, was completed. In February 2021, he piloted [Maq ik Binnenen Kommen](#), in collaboration with Amare - a project designed to bring local residents and the organizations housed here in closer contact. Soon after, in October that same year, I had the pleasure of working along his side to launch the NDT Bookclub, which later transitioned into the [NDT Forum on Anti-Discrimination \(NDTFAD\)](#).

I am happy to re-welcome him into our space to share his stories and insights about contemporary society and the arts which he has dedicated much of his career to exploring among other things. Before I pass the mic - the keynote will be about 45 minutes and then followed by questions from the audience.

Please help me warmly welcome Mr. Anthony Heidweiller.

[Video 0 - Anthony Heidweiller participatieprojecten II:](#)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTCtFuailmk>

0:44-1:55, 4:03-6:28

What moves You!

"I'm not interested in **how** people move; I'm interested in what **makes** them move." ...
These words were spoken in 2007 by Pina Bausch.

Video 1 - Bausch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q22Zdh8w4q4>

0:00-0:54

Dear people,

Thank you for taking the time to be here tonight. Great to meet you here.
Prince Credell, Emily Molnar, Willemijn Maas: thank you very much for the invitation.
Before we start let us stand still that yesterday afternoon Arthur Sonnen past away.
Arthur Sonnen was the theater programmer of the Holland Festival from 1979-1991 within this period he invited artists like [Heiner Müller](#), [George Tabori](#) en [Ariane Mnouchkine](#) to the Netherlands. He was also the founder of the Dutch-Flemish Theater Festival. He was a member of the team with whom I wrote this keynote until last Friday we had contact in preparation of today. I dedicate this Keynote to Arthur.

Prologue

I'm not interested in **how** people move; I'm interested in what **makes** them move."

How striking, how essential: these words of Pina Bausch.

In a world dominated by images, one-liners, a ready-made opinion, an impulsive point of view: this polarizing world in which historical perspective seems most of the time irrelevant.

What makes you move in a world that is in transition with its climate crisis, socio-economical crisis, cultural crisis.

What makes you move to find the balance between the European artistic quality standards and the artistic and cultural traditions of indigenous peoples? What makes you move finding a balance between desire and reality?

What can you do, as an artist to develop your own insights, your own point of view?

What do you need, to do that? To move away from the extremes because you trust the nuance.

Where can we find a space for doubts, trust, a space to make mistakes so we can grow.

We seem to have forgotten that there is a space.

A space we thought was too unclear, too soft, too vague.

A space for contemplation, for doubt, nuance, trust, spirituality.

This space so often forgotten in the world of today is called the space of the middle.

The philosopher Hannah Arendt labels the school as this middle space or, in her words, this in-between space. According to her, a school exists primarily as an intermediate space – namely between the family and the 'big' society. For Arendt, the coexistence in the school and what occurs in the classes and groups is like a table of the world. With this approach, Arendt makes room for the school and the educational departments in large institutions to work on the basis of the professionalism of the teachers and education staff, in a certain 'shelter', free from political and economic pressure.

Looking back on my student days, there was only the focus on security, on the right to exist, on **how** to survive instead of **what** actually was the urgency.

My Journey

Encounter 1 – DANCE

My earliest memory of dance is about my grandfather. The highlight of grandfather's birthday was the moment he went dancing. A moment that we, as children and grandchildren, were all waiting for. The older grandfather became, the more beautiful and impressive his steps became, and the more you realized that dancing was a form of deep pleasure for him. In his last years, realizing that all his movements were linked to dance, even getting out of his chair with great difficulty or his way of eating: everything was imbued with a sense of rhythm. At the same time, there was this overcome by shame for my Surinamese grandfather because his physical expressions in dancing also had a sexual connotation. Grandfather could twirl his hips wonderfully and make all kinds of moaning noises while dancing passionately. Actually, grandfather, as the son of an enslaved person, told his entire life story and that of his ancestors with his dance moves.

The NDT has occupied an important place in my life for decades. In the early eighties I started visiting the performances of the NDT. Here I found inspiration and comfort because I somehow saw myself reflected in the people on stage. How much I would have liked to stand between them, how much I would have liked to be part of this beautiful family. During one of these visits, something bigger happened, I was captivated by a song and a dance. It was a moment that has stayed with me to this day. It was the compelling choreography of Jiri Kylian's *Dream Dances* to music by Luciano Berio. I couldn't get enough of it! The musical basis consisted of orchestral versions of Berio's *Folk Songs* from 1964. In this song cycle, the spirit of the music was represented in a series of generalized pure dance vignettes, in which disintegration and destruction of cultures and the principles of locomotion played important roles. All poignant songs, but I eagerly looked forward to the last part of this cycle, the *Azerbaijan Love Song*. It's an old song that Berio found by chance, it has a catchy melody that touched me every time. The joy splashed from

all sides, you could see that in the dancers, you could hear it in the orchestra and you could hear it in the singing voice.

[Video 2 - Dream Dances, J. Kylian \(Azerbaijan Love Song, I received footage via NDT\)](#)

21:55-24:35

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxngZg-BRUg> (excerpt Introdans)

0:00-0:22

I imagined in the last song that if I would sing it as well as dance it, I would have attained ultimate freedom and ultimate happiness at that moment. It was during that period that I sought my freedom in dance and singing to get out of my isolation from my disability. For a large part of my life, I was held hostage by my stuttering. But it was much more than that, the ballet also showed who I was, what my roots were. The *Azerbaijan Love Song* became a Surinamese love song.

In the end, the singing won out over the dance, I went to the conservatory.

Encounter 2 – BREATH

Studying at the conservatory yielded something crucial, something that apparently has nothing to do with creativity or artistry, but becoming aware of breathing.

Breathing – let's think about that for a moment. How do we deal with our breath?

Taking care of your breathing is fickle, and to some extent elusive.

At first, the breath can feel like an impossible encounter. How many times has the breath let you fall, caused pain and sorrow. Rejected you. Did you run away from it? Did your breath take you away? Did you realize it was not about results or solutions? Were you able to discover and embrace all the organs that are responsible for your breathing?

Discovering your breathing is a process in which you are confronted with things that are really difficult and beautiful at the same time. Again a beautiful example of finding the balance.

We breathe much more often these days than we used to.

We are usually not aware of it, but we breathe about 25,000 times a day, which is about 17 times per minute. 100 years ago, it was about 10 times per minute.

Tibetan monks breathe 5 to 6 times a minute.

If you were able to teach yourself to breathe 6 times a minute? What would happen to you? How would you listen, how would you feel, how would you observe.

A breathing technique that is particularly inspiring, is the so-called Tummo breathing. The word Tummo means inner fire. Tummo breathing is a breathing technique originating from Tibet. It is still practiced by

Tibetan monks in particular. The Tummo breathing not only creates awareness mentally but also physically. The Tummo breathing warms the body in such a way that monks in Tibet can meditate in the snow without getting cold. This breathing technique has more than just a spiritual purpose and can also provide healing that keeps you connected to yourself, to your fellow man and to the earth.

[Video 3 - Tummo: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UCZmOOZj-w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UCZmOOZj-w)

0:00-0:39

The Bajau, a people who live on the Southeast Asian seas, have a very special breathing technique.

They spend almost 60 percent of their days in the sea, looking for food. The diving abilities of these sea nomads are miraculous. They can dive up to 70 meters deep and last up to 13 minutes underwater. For at least 1,000 years, the Bajau have lived this way. Now, scientific [research](#) shows that their bodies have adapted just as miraculously to their lifestyle. The Bajau have become less human and more sea-creatures.

[Video 4 - Bajau: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_FUIHngPqQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_FUIHngPqQ)

3:57-7:35

Meeting 3 - INNOVATORIUM

In the 1990s I worked on Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* at Dutch National Opera. The director was Peter Sellars. Before the first rehearsal started, he spoke to all of us and said: 'Right now 30,000 people are dying because of no food and water'. He gave a fantastic speech and ended with the legendary words: 'And that is why I want to make this piece'.

And that was the first time for me that I realized that urgency, real urgency, from the bottom of your heart, is the most crucial component to create.

[Video 5 - Sellars: https://youtu.be/4iY3MBjT_wA?si=qaT5sL7KmYvy57NY](https://youtu.be/4iY3MBjT_wA?si=qaT5sL7KmYvy57NY)

The inspiration of Peter Sellars was the start of my own innovatorium. With my own company finally being able to build a bridge between dance and song, between movement and voice. Making many more connections by creating a festival to promote the dialogue between science, art and politics. This was the basic idea for various festivals and many, many participation- and education projects.

The arts then and now

About three hundred years ago, Europe fell under the spell of the Enlightenment. To put it bluntly: God and the King were declared dead. Artists built their own palaces and churches: theatres, concert halls, art academies, museums. In those few centuries, European art developed into a dominant elitist stronghold, with its own rules, laws and quality standards with global influence.

For many in Europe, the Enlightenment was proof of man's superiority. The European man, of course. Because the rest of humanity was seen as animals that you could use for your own profit.

Now, centuries later, this sense of superiority is still very visible in the art world.

In 2021, the book *Culture Is Bad For You* was published in which authors Orian Brook, Dave O'Brien and Mark Taylor give a razor-sharp description of the inequalities in the creative industry today. They explored how jobs in the arts and the consumption of culture are affected by economic, racial, and gender inequality, shaping the cultural world in which we all live. To finally conclude that we should describe the arts as a profession as one of the most conservative.

Culture is bad for you!!

And now, of course, the question is what we can or are going to do about it. Is inclusive policy in the Netherlands the solution? It is absolutely

necessary, but how do we do it without resorting to opportunistic solutions? How do we increase our historical knowledge so that we can really make adequate policy?

Justice and reciprocity

Can we approach the concept of inclusion in a different way. It implies too much that **I can belong to you** instead of **us making something new together**. It has a passive connotation. The concept of diversity that, unnoticed, emphasizes even more strongly who is superior by inviting the other. Unless, of course, we dare to take the step with diversity to no longer look at the outside but to really look the other person in the eye

and really listen to the other. In theory, inclusion should mean that the system will fundamentally change, but organizations don't change overnight. To what extent is the expression inclusion still actually associated with something positive? It's being used for a cosmetic change and that's not enough.

Let's talk about justice and reciprocity, because that is what it is all about in the end. In reciprocity, two people acknowledge each other in a real dialogue, they give and take, they listen and speak. Justice is about right and upright action, about reparation of injustice and fair distribution. And that justice comes from the reciprocity of dialogue.

Because what is it really about? Do we want more people with a colonial and migrant past in our sector, art and science, or is it about letting the light critically and independently shine on our often bloody and cruel history shine. And that through this confrontation we create a deeper awareness of the role of the European in this history.

Regenerative thinking

What moves me?

In recent years, I have increasingly linked this question from a historical awareness to: where am I in life? What motivates me now?

More and more, I felt the space, the inner-space, to put into practice a vision that I have cherished for decades, namely **regenerative thinking**.

The origin of the word regeneration is rebirth.

As a non-destructive growth, in which restorative progress is central.

If we choose well-being over prosperity. Those who regenerate, who create the space to recuperate themselves, leave mental fatigue and physical exhaustion behind. And feel reborn.

Regenerative recovery includes all techniques in which you are not physically active: proper breathing or relaxation methods such as meditation.

Crucial in this process is that you consciously build in rest phases during the course of the day. If we deny ourselves these recovery phases, sooner or later it will lead to exhaustion, burnout or long-term, even chronic pain. Not things we want to strive for. Regenerative thinking starts with the question: What does the world need? And what do people need to contribute to that? How can we think together about alternative systems that do not cause damage, but restore the earth?

From this realization, we can no longer rob the earth of its life. In my opinion, it is time to live on the basis of reciprocity, on the basis of animism. Both concepts originate from the life of indigenous peoples.

The Web of Life

In the world of the arts, we see a growing interest in nature, in the earth and, above all, in the cultures of the original inhabitants of the continents colonized by the Europeans.

A historical delving into centuries-old indigenous economics and philosophy can give us insight into returning or taking the next step towards the original meaning of a sustainable life. Namely: being kind to each other, taking care of each other and having respect for all life.

Can this help us to use energy, raw materials and food in a different way?

When you look at the world through regenerative glasses, the distinction between man and nature disappears. It helps us to see ourselves again as one of the many parts of the web of life, rather than the human being high up on the pyramid.

This also demands something from us regarding the way we move and breathe in life. The moment we realize that we are part of nature again, we go back to reciprocity and animism.

In the regenerative world, there is space for the age-old traditions of indigenous peoples. The same indigenous peoples who have been for centuries been oppressed, exploited and rejected as 'savages' by the colonialists. Our transition to a regenerative world requires us to look and listen to their rich traditions and rituals, in which the relationship between humans and nature is central.

Regenerative thinking offers a different perspective on the theme of discrimination, inequality and racism. From regenerative thinking, there is an interest in philosophies and thoughts of the original populations who lived in areas, appropriated by the European.

Studying history is crucial, the roots are given the opportunity to go deep into the earth to ensure a sustainable future. Thus, regeneration is also a process of **necessary** introspection, learning to listen to voices that have been suppressed for a long time.

There are many examples of thinkers and shamans who can show us the wisdom of art that falls outside the European art tradition. Art practices that are all in a direct relationship with the earth. Art practices that are based on the culture of experience and are far removed from the culture of representation.

In his book *The Falling Sky*, the shaman *Davi Kopenawa* describes the relationship between dance and mother earth, singing in relation to communication with the birds.

In March, the documentary *I am the river, the River is Me* premiered. The heroine is the Whanganui River in New Zealand, which was the first river in the world to be given the same rights as humans, after a 150-year legal battle by the Maori. The film shows how indigenous wisdom has become more urgent than ever as we confront our planet's climate crisis.

[Video 6 – I am the River, the River is Me: https://youtu.be/72Cai9dZEps](https://youtu.be/72Cai9dZEps)

0:00-2:27

Regenerative arts education

Laura Cull, lecturer at the Academy of Theatre and Dance and professor at the University of Amsterdam, invited Leanne Simpson as Artist in Residence this school year. Simpson, in her book *Dancing on our Turtles Back*, explores philosophies and avenues of regeneration, revival and a new emergence through the Nishnabeg language, creation stories, walks with elders and children, celebrations and protests, and meditations on these experiences.

Choreographer Jiri Kylián traveled in the 80ties to Australia to study Aboriginal culture and dance, rituals that are as prevalent today as they were thousands of years ago. Fascinated by the movements of these dancers, and especially by their stomping, Kylián interweaved this style resulting in unique and striking ballet.

[Video 7 - Stamping Grounds: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bf48bUuKTC4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bf48bUuKTC4)

9:40-11:17

Our ecological system is on the verge of collapse and social and economic inequality is widening worldwide.

Where does the artist stand?

As deputy director of the Academy of Theatre and Dance, I notice that various national and international consultation structures are looking for new ways to use **art education** in such a way that a future generation of artists can actively contribute to building bridges in the communities, contribute to social cohesion through the use of art and design, to promote a society that helps restore the environment, to apply new techniques to make our world more liveable. That we develop art and design that offers free space for people to contemplate, to enjoy, to marvel. Which can help society to reinvent itself.

Where do you stand as an artist in this world today? How can dance contribute to the many issues surrounding the socio-economic crisis, the cultural crisis and the climate crisis in our daily lives? What is the power of the movement? Do we still know what body language is? How well do we **take care of our bodies** when we don't know how to breathe anymore.

Today a message appeared that Dutch people live shorter lives in good health, **more often** have chronic conditions and 40 percent **of young people do not exercise enough**. To change this, health must become the starting point for all government policy, say 22 health funds. A manifesto to this effect is being presented today to outgoing Minister Dijkstra for Medical Care.

On October 7, 2023, the so-called Dance Educators Agreement was signed by all Dance in Education Schools in the Netherlands with the aim of ensuring that more children and young people start dancing and exercising for the coming decades. More importantly, dance should become a permanent part of the curriculum within as Hannah Atendt mentioned the inner-space.

A continuous learning trajectory

Regenerative art education is not: you snap your fingers and it's there. No, it is a change that will take several decades – a transformative movement. We will have to be able to see fixed ideas in a different perspective, for example the relationship between art and economic interest. We will have to give space to spirituality and rituals, in which the knowledge of indigenous cultures about their relationship with earth and nature is indispensable.

The development of a continuous learning trajectory for regenerative art education from primary and secondary education to MBO and HBO is essential.

Art education in the broadest sense is not only about finding the new generation of artists, it will and should also be about finding a new and future audience.

Also in view of the current political climate that will continue to exert a lot of influence on the functioning and presence of the arts for the foreseeable future, it is of the utmost importance to invest in generations that understand through education what art can do in society. The understanding of the social role of the arts, which is bigger than just the relationship between performer and audience.

In addition, we need to find the art teachers who can guide this process. This is an important challenge for art teacher training programmes in which the pursuit of Lifelong Development is paramount.

Artificial Intelligence

Part of the importance of a continuous learning trajectory for regenerative art education is the realisation that in 10 years' time, Artificial Intelligence will be part of our daily lives.

Historian Yuval Noah Harari is convinced of this.

AI generates stories without a heart.

AI is in fact a gigantic database with its own learning capacity.

Who entered that data, who is it about? And so what is the basis of the output, of the stories that **AI** can generate?

The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights is calling for greater awareness of the risks of algorithms in schools, following a study into their applications.

Harari emphasizes time and again the importance of communication, of dialogue because it is essential to tell stories and thus share multiple perspectives. We are stuck in the old stories and it is of utmost importance to build the new ones based on these old stories. People find their knowledge in stories and not through factual enumerations. Stories also contain those facts, but come to life because they are wrapped in emotions. Stories connect people, clarify goals and give meaning. You can sketch a new future with stories in which historical knowledge is expressed in balance between desire and reality.

Here I am

I myself once studied classical singing, but not to become an opera singer. I had heard that I might be able to tackle my stuttering through the classical vocal

technique. It was much more about communicating better, than about the specific desire to be on stage.

Learning to breathe, to get in touch with the body and thus to do a lot under great pressure, to stay calm, to keep listening and to keep growing.

It was the discovery to innovate instead of conserve.

As the quartermaster of regenerative art education, it is my goal to provide insight into why regenerative art education is important and what we can do to help. So that we can appropriately shape our aim to educate students who are an integral part of society after their studies. And students are better attuned to the roles that will be asked of them in the future as explorers, guides, advisors, programmers and connectors in order to contribute to the development of our society with creativity, artistry and innovation (the building blocks of the artist?). A contribution that is based on knowledge of the demand and the need.

Regenerative education, it seems like a complex concept, but it is simple at its core. The starting point is a sustainable future for all of us. We take the students through the importance of a regenerative economy and how that is also in the interest of the student and future artist.

Epilogue

The dance has much deeper roots and history than what developed between Les Ballet Russes and Pina Bausch. In the development of the dance, a good dash of regenerative input could lead to a broader meaning.

René Descartes' statement in 1650 that man is no longer part of nature laid the foundation for this feeling of superiority with the separation he made between body and mind, in which the spirit was valued higher than the body. From Descartes onwards, intellectual work is elevated above physical achievement.

The invention of capitalism helped to make the Western form of life superior to all other forms as well. Since then, the price of things has been more important than their value, which allows us to discover a revenue model in everything (including the arts). The how has become more important than the what.

The arts as we know them are in fact an invention of Western man. It is with great difficulty that the Europeans distance themselves from their feelings of superiority over the colored man and acknowledging proportionality in the perception of others than the Western white view of this, takes an awful lot of effort.

Many art forms that are emerging today not only oppose Western art conceptions, but have their own originals such as Hip Hop and Breakdance. As was the case with jazz. A regenerative approach to the arts ensures that true integration becomes possible.

These are my roots

The first 1000 days of my life, in the early sixties, were determined by a father and mother who both came from Suriname. Their grandparents were still enslaved. My parents decided to seek their fortune in the 'motherland'. Where they were confronted with 'not mattering' from day 1. Diplomas obtained with difficulty turned out to be worth nothing. They were displaced, humiliated and lost. In spite of everything, they retained their pride.

Their lives and those of our ancestors became an engine for my future: discipline, fitness, knowledge, survival!

*"I'm not interested in **how** people move; I'm interested in what **makes** them move."*

This requires wisdom, the power of the middle, content, depth, wisdom, perhaps even grayness. That is not easy or simple in our society, which is mainly focused on suffering as little pain as possible. But without pain, there is no development in life, no step towards the other, the new - no joy. According to philosopher and cultural critic Friedrich Nietzsche, the great pain, the prolonged, slow pain that takes time, is ultimately the ultimate liberator of the mind.

This story began by telling you about a mission: how to connect art to society.

Early in my youth, I was confronted with Us-Them thinking. What that way of thinking has brought about in particular is the intense polarization that prevails today. That you have to have an opinion on everything and everyone and preferably a point of view right away.

I was only able to survive this immense feeling of being torn at that time by staying away from the extremes and by focusing as much as possible on the center, or the middle space. In my work and with my stories, I was able to take others with me by thinking and acting from the middle space and seeking insight from there.

And so the middle space grew from a safe haven to a stable source of confidence, from agitated panting to a quiet respite.

The middle space became the place where you can learn to listen sincerely, to be interested in the other.

Develop your ability to nuance, rather than polarize.

Being an artist in the middle space, that requires empathy, patience, courage!

Becoming the artist who listens and who continues to connect art and society from the middle space in all directions.

As Hannah Arendt mentioned about the school: like sitting at the table of the world.

I like to close with that wonderful Buddhist expression I used before:

Trees that grow slowly get deep roots.

Thank you very much for your attention!