

TURNED ON ITS HEAD

About us:

Everything we do as a dance company is designed to move, uplift & challenge people to see the world differently. Dance has an extraordinary ability to enable us to express emotions, ideas & stories without words. We aim to connect people across cultures & backgrounds, creating shared experiences that transcends language.

We specialise in early years dance, making projects and performances where children understand that their creative futures start now. Performers model improvisatory practices focused on interaction that feels like “love” leading to adults challenging the notion of children’s agency and their ability to create spontaneous, urgent, powerful and unique dance.

- We are the creators of national and international touring shows [Shiny \(2013-2016\)](#) and [\(2025\)](#), [Sponge \(2016-2018\)](#) and [The Delights \(2023-2026\)](#)
- Our research work with Dr Jools Page on the ‘[dance of reciprocity](#)’ was presented at International research conference ECEERA 2025 and has received 4.6k views in the past 18 months on YouTube.
- We led [People Dancing's Early Years Dance Network](#) (2017-2026), growing it to over 500 members and a yearly programme of online and in-person professional development opportunities in early years dance.
- One of 11 nationally commissioned arts organisations for the [Energiser project 2024-2027](#) research into co-creation, choreography and early years.
- Shortlisted for inclusion award by National Day Nurseries.

Audiences and participants tell us about the impact we have on their lives; joy, belonging, creative expression & well-being. We blend improvisation and choreography (play and performance) to not only tell our story but also the stories of those who enter our performance & co-creation spaces. We perform nationally and internationally and we are company in residence at Pen Green Children’s Centre and Research base in Corby.



We are creatively ambitious for each child we work with, to see their dances emerge and grow. We employ our unique ‘dance of reciprocity’ processes, which embraces outstanding early years pedagogical practices. We nurture relationships with parents, caregivers and early years practitioners to create opportunities for very young children to be masters of their own creativity, showcase their expression & centre their voices. It is in doing this that we explore what a more equitable society might look like, where all voices are valued and celebrated.

The project we invite you to apply for is a re-imagining of our seminal work Shiny.

shiny

2012-2014

The original show features two dancers who find themselves in a long-forgotten room. Through the course of the show, they find friendship, joy and treasures that turn from ordinary to extraordinary. The audience watch dance and discover throughout the show and are dazzled by all that glitters which unfolds before their very eyes.



Original show images Photo: Teresa O'Neill

The 2012-2014 show was set in the late 1930's/early 1940's with a score by Shostakovich peppered with Vivaldi and a few modern twists. The design has very much been influenced by that era also, evoking memories of the past.

We co-created the show with communities in Leicester/shire. Our work had the power to speak and connect with people from a range of backgrounds and circumstances, especially those who have never experienced dance before. We created the core ideas/themes for the show working with identified groups exploring dancing together through our unique brand of accessible workshops. We love to bring people together to celebrate dancing

What professionals say about Shiny:

"To witness strong evidence for theatre and dance being proactive in a community cohesion role was memorable. Parents, as well as their youngsters, were drawn into the beautiful music and dance. To see the very diverse community of Highfields, Leicester laughing and interacting was delightful.

Lucy Bani, Board of Trustees, The Spark Arts



"The performance seemed to grow according to the different audiences. This happened in an area of Leicester where there are many disadvantaged families. For many of them, working with Turned on its Head was their first experience, as adults, of working in a creative and interactive environment. It was down to the skill & expertise of the company members that made this a positive and inclusive experience for both adults & children. The company knows instinctively how to get the best out of their audiences & understand how they work."

Juliet Kirby, Children's Centre Teacher, Rowley Fields Children's Centre.

"Shiny has wit, charm and style. The show is so accessible, cheeky and such a joy!"

Kate Cross, Artistic Director of The Egg, Bath.

"Shiny is a rare show that reveals itself slowly, cleverly, and warmly. Well-choreographed and inviting, its structure reveals the artists' understanding of their audience, not least through its well-paced and inclusive playfulness."

Emma Gladstone, then Artistic Director, Dance Umbrella



Why this project is important to us:

Representation matters, especially in the early years when children are forming perceptions about their identity. Our families need work that reflects the complexity & richness of their lives & it is vital we address this inequality of representation. In Nov 2024 69% of our audience were from global majority families & our performing cast were all white European.

The project will be steered by our Cultural & Equity Advisory Group (CEAG)

The vision for our CEAG is:

- To engage in a process of dialogue with TOIH whereby they receive a combination of professional knowledge, cultural competence & lived experience along a show's journey from production planning-recruitment-creation & evaluation
- Decolonise the iconography, props, costume, movement & 'feel' of Shiny in order to offer a greater sense of familiarity & welcome to the global majority heritage children and families in the audience
- Develop and disseminate effective inclusion of GM artistic & audience voice in our work.



Our CEAG is convened and led by Louise Katerega, who is a dance specialist, creative producer and diversity consultant.

"It is hard to describe my joy at the prospect of being involved in vital experimental, anti-racist, cutting edge work with a company with whom I share such a long, mutually respectful relationship. What more powerful moment than the earliest years, and the most formative time of parenthood, to suggest to our future generations a more welcoming and equitable world?"

CEAG members:

Myrle Roach: Story Teller & Engagement Lead Made With Many

"This will be setting a standard that needs to be followed in all artforms. Turned On Its Head are making a pioneering step"

Jane Chan, Dance artist: kathak, ballet, contemporary, Chinese classical/folk dance

"Early years work in the UK remains largely Eurocentric, and does not yet fully reflect the growing diversities of our next generations. Turned On Its Head are spearheading and setting the standard for other artists & organisations through work that is: rich in artistry, grounded in social awareness, and deeply engaging."

Leyla Okhai, CEO and Director of Diverse Minds UK Ltd

"Co-production, finding & sharing voices are so vital. As someone who has worked in equity & inclusion I am hugely excited by the work, its dynamism & impact"

Paul Obinna Wilson-Eme: Cultural Comprehension Specialist

"By helping people reconnect with a fuller, more inclusive understanding of history [we] nurture a strong sense of identity, belonging, and emotional wellbeing from an early age.... [and] better equipped to navigate the world with compassion, respect, and resilience — essential foundations for both personal growth and strong family life".