

Testimonials DaCo 2023

Young creators, who are in the process of defining their movement language and expression, need this kind of support to nurture their skills, not only as creators but producers as well. These emerging talents had had the opportunity to work their ideas in a focused, professional context with paid dancers, space, and a clear timeline. They were also able to support each other by sharing their creative processes in addition to gaining insight from their mentors. Take away the stress and pressure to deliver a finished performance to a paying audience, this experience can safely allow creative juices to flow and bring each choreographer closer to their expressive signature that will consequently result in more experienced and practiced choreographers presenting their creations on stage in the near future.

Angela's vision and capacity to create a safe, inclusive, and unpretentious space for new creators to research, explore, and present works in process is invaluable for the Toronto dance community. I am eagerly looking forward to following this project very closely!

Keith Morino

Director of the contemporary dance program at Canada's National Ballet School

I have known Angela as a colleague over the past decade, and we share regular conversations about artistic practice - an on-going exchange that we both value deeply. Through the exceptional quality of her practice as an artist and educator, Angela has emerged as a crucial participant in the Toronto milieu. I am deeply encouraged by the strength and depth of her artistry and leadership and ardently hope that she will be able to marshal the resources to continue the important work she has undertaken with DaCo.

Peggy Baker

Choreographic Workshop facilitator at DaCo 2023

Through this residency, I've been empowered to trust my instincts to create work that truly feels authentic, generous, and touching. I don't remember a time during any of my creative endeavours (in ANY medium) in which I've been able to learn and effectively use the tools and relationships I've cultivated in a way that (I hope!) has been equally engaging and enjoyable for everyone involved. DaCo is a truly unique experience and I believe it is vital to the growth and development of young dance artists in Canada.

Ben King

Choreographer at DaCo 2023

I was very lucky to work with 4 beautiful dancers who helped shape so much of this craft: Bayley Wyatt, Eilish Shin-Culhane, Meghan McMartin and Jessica Germano. Big thank you to everyone who has touched this work and been in the rehearsal room! Thanks to Crescenzi DiCecco for the music and to Julianna Heft for your crochet abilities. And the biggest thanks to Angela for the opportunity to research this piece.

Alli Carry

Choreographer at DaCo 2023

The connections I made through DaCo this year will undoubtedly continue to bear fruit. As AD of Din of Shadows, I am always looking for dancers and choreographers for future shows, and the brilliant and professional Kayla Jeanson and Chrystal Tam are both high on my list. The names of other participants are also now in my head for future collaborations, including the other choreographers on the show, Alli Carry and Ben King. As the DaCo community continues to grow, I look forward to working with other alumni in years to come!

Quinn Jacobs

Composer-in-residence at DaCo 2023
Artistic Director of Din of Shadows

DaCo is a one of a kind experience where all the special sparks of collaboration and creativity are explored. It is a place where you feel safe with no judgment to create and speak your mind.

Chrystal Tam

Dancer at DaCo 2023

It was such a pleasure to be a part of Daco'23. Through the Dance Collaboration Lab, I was able to work with dancers and choreographers that I had never worked with before in the city. It is special to help an emerging choreographer develop a new idea and to be a part of the beginnings of their career. Angela provides a positive, encouraging and creative environment!

Christian Lavigne

Dancer at DaCo 2023

I believe DaCo is a professional experience with great value and potential. It was such a unique experience where new dancers and choreographers are able to meet, and create new material and ideas in an environment that welcomes and supports emerging artists. The Toronto dance community needs more accessible experiences like this.

Meghan McMartin

Dancer at DaCo 2023

The residency was a welcoming and safe space to research, explore, and create collaboratively. Angela has facilitated a platform that supports the curiosity of emerging artists through process-focused development, and the exchange of ideas. Daco is an excellent springboard for young artists seeking opportunities to shape their choreographic and collaborative skillset, refine their artistic voice, and build valuable connections within the Toronto dance community.

Jessica Germano

Dancer at DaCo 2023

DaCo '23 was an incredible experience for me. It allowed me to learn from and grow with emerging artists in the dance community and gave me many tools to carry with me throughout my dance career. I am extremely grateful for Angela for the opportunity to participate in the Dance Collaboration Lab this year. I would highly recommend this process to any dancer/artist who would like to build new connections and enter an artistic process.

Chloe Reelis

Dancer at DaCo 2023

Testimonial for DaCo

Dr. Quinn Jacobs
Founding Artistic Director, Din of Shadows
September 20, 2023
Toronto, Canada



To whom it may concern,

My name is Quinn Jacobs, and I am the Founding Artistic Director of Din of Shadows.

Din is a Toronto-based experimental performing arts company dedicated to commissioning and producing interdisciplinary works by Canadian creators from the fields of dance, music, and theatre. The company has employed 63 creators, performers, and technical personnel since its inception in 2017, including 15 dancers. Din has presented 19 world premieres across six unique events, with two events planned for 2024.

I was a composer and guitarist for DaCo 2023, collaborating with dancer/ choreographer Kayla Jeanson and dancer Chrystal Tam on Kayla's 10-minute work *The Beholder*. This experience was extremely fulfilling for me: working with new talented collaborators, being surrounded by a community of curious and supportive artists for the period of the residency, and seeing all of this cohort's works come to light at the showcase on September 2nd.

The connections I made through DaCo this year will undoubtedly continue to bear fruit. As AD of Din, I am always looking for dancers and choreographers for future shows, and the brilliant and professional Kayla and Chrystal are both high on my list. The names of other participants are also now in my head for future collaborations, including the other choreographers on the show, Alli Carry and Ben King.

As the DaCo community continues to grow, I look forward to working with other alumni in years to come!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Quinn Jacobs".

Dr. Quinn Jacobs
DMA, MMus, BMus

DaCo: Dance Collaboration Lab 2023
A Review by Virag Takacs

Last Saturday *DaCo: Dance Collaboration Lab* hosted its second annual performance event featuring four works-in-progress that have been created during the DaCo residency program. Developed by Angela Blumberg, founder of Angela Blumberg Dance Academy, DaCo is a 2-week, educational residency program meant to provide aspiring contemporary choreographers with space, mentorship and resources to take an idea and turn it into something tangible that they can be proud of. At the end of the residency the audience is invited to view the works-in-progress and allows the creators of these works to look at their pieces in a new light as they are performed.

This year, I had the opportunity to attend the DaCo performance event and it was a wonderful experience. Hosted at the Pia Bouman School of Ballet and Creative Movement, the small theatre gave the evening a feeling of intimacy and connection with the performances and the choreographers from the moment the lights went out for the first feature.

The first performance of the evening, *The Beholder* choreographed by Kayla Jeanson with music composed and performed live by Quinn Jacobs, was inspired by Kayla's own experience in the field of videography and introduced her main character, a simple camera, as an individual. With the camera mounted on her head and connected to a projector showing the audience, in real time, what the camera sees, Kayla beckoned us to view the process of video production as the subject, a dancer, entered the stage. We were able to see how the camera had to move to capture the images showing on the projector; breaking the wall between the raw footage and the "official" product that we are so often used to when looking at videos.

With the camera following the dancer as she performs, we were shown the intricate underlying relationship between the camera and its subject; focusing on how control is passed back and forth through instances where the dancer directs the camera to assume certain angles and positions, while other times the camera moves freely around the dancer. While the audience identified the camera as an individual from the start, it only seemed to realize its own autonomy when it saw itself through a mirror. The dance ended with the camera's subject and Quinn Jacobs walking off the stage leaving only the camera as it made its way to the projector and then repeated its movements from the start of the dance. The camera came to rest on the spot where Quinn Jacobs had been sitting with his guitar, showing the audience that the projector was replaying the recording and no longer showing what the camera saw. This end to the dance showed how once the video has been made and released to the public, we no longer know what happens to the subjects or even the camera.

While the first dance had been reserved Ben King's piece, *Sims On Ice*, was much more active and intense. There was so much energy present from the very beginning, from the costumes to the music. A fast paced performance where the audience got to see Ben's "creatures", as he calls them after the event during the post-show talks, in their own little world. Ben even says that he wasn't much interested in continuity, both emotional and physical, creating the hectic and spontaneous nature of the performance. Inspired by the workshops done during residency, *Sims On Ice* was bursting at the seams with energy and emotion, leaving the audience to fluctuate between amusement and fascination as we followed the story being told.

Last choreographer in residence this year, Alli Carry focused on gender and agency; asking the audience to consider the question "What is it to perform?" Throughout her residency she experimented with masculine and feminine movement as well as how much of each was in a

dance. Her piece, *A Subject* with music by Crescenzo DiCecco, utilized these gendered movement ratios to explore femininity and feminine agency. The dancers starting off with wearing masks as they emphasize masculine movements in an almost robotic fashion while the music blares heavy music to accompany it.

With her interest in gender, Alli was greatly inspired by the book “The Second Sex” written by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949. The book is one of the first to address the position of women in society and how they are often considered the ‘other’. Alli surprised the audience by quoting parts of the book during her piece. Halfway through, the dancers slowly drop to the floor one-by-one and remove their masks, from there they watch as a single dancer stands and explains thorough movement the words that now get projected on the wall for the audience. It is one of those moments that will forever stay in memory; a single dancer in the spotlight translating words into movement as behind her a projector shows quotes from the book that inspired the dance. Afterwards the dancers move more smoothly and with more freedom similar to the music that had turned into something light and joyful, reminding the audience that in the beginning the dancers had been playing at being men and didn’t have the agency to perform feminine movements.

As a special treat there was a fourth performance to end the night by a past choreographer in residence. Marisa Ricci developed her contemporary dance *Colony Collapse* last year and has since turned the work-in-progress into a complete dance routine and has been invited to perform in Montreal at the Festival Quartiers Danses in a few weeks. On Saturday we only saw a short excerpt from the full version, but even just that small part showed how much the dance had evolved from last year.

Marisa used bee colonies as inspiration for the dance because of the intricate relationships that govern them and how easily the natural balance could be destroyed until the colony inevitably collapses. Dressed to roughly resemble bees, Maria played the part of the queen bee with two other dancers as worker bees. The performance showed the importance of the matriarch and the unique relationships between each character in the dance. However, through greed and disconnection the colony she sets up breaks apart and eventually collapses.

Being able to attend and watch the performances was an incredible experience that I will never forget. Witnessing all the skill and wonder of these dances was a true gift. Each choreographer had clearly worked hard to create something that spoke to the audience. Each and every choreographer can, and should be, proud of what they’ve created; they all showed great skill and enthusiasm for dance and performance. Under the guidance of Angela and the workshop facilitators, a future is blossoming where aspiring choreographers can share their ideas and create amazing performances like the ones this year. I hope to one day see these performances not just as works-in-progress but as complete works and furthermore I wish every individual who took part in the residency continued luck in developing their ideas.

I am Marisa Ricci, a professional dance artist based in Toronto. I am a performer and educator who is also motivated to discover my choreographic potential. DaCo has been an integral part of my artistic journey and success as an emerging choreographer.

I was selected to participate in DaCo as a choreographer in its inaugural season (2022). Stemming from a concept I had proposed, during my residency I built some of the foundation of what would eventually grow into a larger, more developed independent choreographic work, entitled "Colony Collapse".

Thanks to the the support I have received from DaCo in the early stages of my project, I have since had the opportunity to expand and showcase the work at the 21st edition of Festival Quartiers Danses' (September 2023), a prominent presentation platform in the national and international dance community.

A program such as this - where time and space are dedicated to research with peer support and without the pressures of producing a finished product, are far too few and competitive in our field. Incubators like DaCo are essential to the choreographic process and can catalyze progress as a new creator.

I am grateful to have been involved in Angela Blumberg's DaCo - Dance Collaboration Lab and am delighted by the possibilities it offers for emerging choreographers like myself.

Marisa Ricci

Marisa Ricci