Drama Therapy Review
Volume 12 Number 2
© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Intellect Ltd. Article. English language.
Open Access under the CC BY-NC-ND licence. https://doi.org/10.1386/dtr_00191_1
Received 15 February 2026; Accepted 17 July 2026; Published Online September 2026

NISHA SAJNANI
New York University, USA

MARÍA SOL GUERRERO GIMÉNEZ
University of Cuyo, Argentina

RAVINDRA RANASINHA
Research Institute for Dramatherapy, Sri Lanka

RUSSYA CONNOR
Independent Scholar, Australia

KYOO HO MOON
Yong-in University, South Korea

CHANAPHAN THAMMARUT
Thammasat University, Thailand

MAJID AMRAI
Drama Therapy Center of Iran, Iran

LINDSAY IRWIN
New York University, USA

FRANCESCA MCINALLY
British Association of Dramatherapists, UK

YI YANG
Drama Therapy China, China

PEDRO HUMBERTO TORRES GODOY
EDRAS Chile, Chile

RINAT FENIGER-SCHAAL
University of Haifa, Israel

SHRUTI GARG
Drama Therapy India, India

AKHILA KHANNA
City University of New York, USA

STELIOS KRASANAKIS
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

MARC ALEXANDER WILLEMSEN
HU University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands

The World Alliance of Dramatherapy: History, purpose and the work of global professional belonging

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

KEYWORDS

drama therapy
professional identity
belonging
creative arts therapies
international
professional association

ABSTRACT

The World Alliance of Dramatherapy (WADth) was established in 2017 as a global alliance of professional, membership-based drama therapy associations and currently comprises 17 associations representing 34 countries, with approximately 4223 documented members. Rather than functioning as a regulatory or accrediting body, WADth was conceived as a federated platform to support international exchange, collaboration and collective visibility for the field. This article traces the historical conditions giving rise to the Alliance, examines its mission and organizational form and situates WADth within broader debates on professionalization, cultural plurality and global mental health. It also reflects on the tensions and challenges that accompany efforts to build global professional belonging across uneven sociopolitical, regulatory and economic contexts. Drawing on WADth's official mission documentation and established drama therapy scholarship, the article argues that WADth represents a distinctive model of global professional organization, one grounded in relationality, plurality and reflexivity rather than standardization alone, and concludes by considering implications for the future development of drama therapy as WADth enters its second decade.

MOTS-CLÉS

thérapie par le théâtre
dramathérapie
identité professionnelle
sentiment d'appartenance
thérapies par les arts créatifs
internationale association professionnelle

RESUMEN

La Alianza mundial de dramaterapia (WADth) se estableció en 2017 como una alianza global de asociaciones profesionales de dramaterapia basadas en la afiliación de sus miembros. Actualmente está integrada por 17 asociaciones que representan a 34 países, con aproximadamente 4,223 miembros documentados. Más que funcionar como un organismo regulador o acreditador, la WADth fue concebida como una plataforma federativa destinada a fomentar el intercambio internacional, la colaboración y la visibilidad colectiva del campo de la dramaterapia. Este artículo examina las condiciones históricas que dieron origen a la Alianza, analiza su misión y su estructura organizativa, y sitúa a la WADth en el contexto de los debates más amplios sobre la profesionalización, la pluralidad cultural y la salud mental global. Asimismo, reflexiona sobre las tensiones y los desafíos que acompañan los esfuerzos por construir un sentido de pertenencia profesional a escala mundial en contextos sociopolíticos, regulatorios y económicos marcados por profundas desigualdades. Basándose en la documentación oficial de la misión de la WADth y en la literatura consolidada sobre dramaterapia, el artículo sostiene que la WADth representa un modelo singular de organización profesional global: un modelo fundamentado en la relacionalidad, la pluralidad y la reflexividad, más que únicamente en la estandarización. Finalmente, considera las implicaciones de este enfoque para el desarrollo futuro de la dramaterapia, en un momento en que la WADth inicia su segunda década de existencia.

PALABRAS CLAVE

dramaterapia
identidad profesional
sentido de pertenencia
terapias de artes creativas
asociación professional internacional

RESUMÉ

L'Alliance mondiale de dramathérapie (WADth) a été créée en 2017 en tant qu'alliance mondiale regroupant des associations professionnelles de dramathérapie basées sur l'adhésion de leurs membres; elle compte actuellement 17 associations représentant 34 pays, avec environ 4 223 membres recensés. Loin de se présenter comme un organisme de réglementation ou d'accréditation, la WADth a été conçue comme une plateforme fédérative visant à favoriser les échanges internationaux, la collaboration et la visibilité collective de la

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

discipline. Cet article retrace les conditions historiques qui ont donné naissance à l'Alliance, examine sa mission et sa forme organisationnelle, et situe la WADth au sein de débats plus larges sur la professionnalisation, la pluralité culturelle et la santé mentale mondiale. Il propose également une réflexion sur les tensions et les défis qui accompagnent les efforts visant à construire un sentiment d'appartenance professionnelle à l'échelle mondiale dans des contextes sociopolitiques, réglementaires et économiques hétérogènes. S'appuyant sur les documents officiels relatifs à la mission de la WADth et sur la recherche établie en matière de dramathérapie, l'article soutient que la WADth représente un modèle distinctif d'organisation professionnelle mondiale, fondé sur la relationnalité, la pluralité et la réflexivité plutôt que de se baser seulement sur la normalisation, et conclut en examinant les implications pour le développement futur de la dramathérapie alors que la WADth entre dans sa deuxième décennie d'existence.

INTRODUCTION

Drama therapy has matured as a profession across multiple cultural contexts over the past nearly seventy years. Originating from overlapping traditions in theatre practice, psychology, community arts, developmental drama and anthropology, the field has developed diverse training programs, professional associations and research orientations across Europe, North America, Australasia, Asia, Africa and Latin America (Emunah 1994; Landy 1994; Levy and Cornejo 2003; Jennings and Holmwood 2016; Johnson and Emunah 2020; Jones 2007). Despite this growth, there had been no single locus of global organization to systematically support cross-border collaboration, mutual recognition and collective advocacy. The North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA), initially founded as the National Association of Drama Therapy (United States) in 1979, provided a model of multi-country representation when it became the NADTA in 2013. Efforts to connect drama therapists across Europe date back to the 1990s and eventually crystallized into the European Federation of Dramatherapy (EFD) (n.d.), founded in 2013 as a federated body for collaboration in the field (Willemsen and Pitruzella 2026). In other regions, drama therapy emerged within broader movements to professionalize the creative arts therapies, as in the Netherlands, where the Dutch Association for Expressive and Creative Therapy was founded in 1962 (Willemsen et al. 2024).

In response to the absence of a global forum, the World Alliance of Dramatherapy (WADth)[1] was established in 2017 as a federated international platform, where member associations could cooperate without surrendering autonomy or imposing uniform standards. This organizational choice speaks to a central question in the creative arts therapies: how to cultivate professional coherence while honouring cultural specificity and epistemological diversity (Sajnani 2012; Johnson and Emunah 2020). This article examines the history, mission and organizational form of WADth, situating it within ongoing discourses in drama therapy scholarship about professional identity, research paradigms and global practice and reflects on the strengths and challenges of WADth as a model of global professional belonging. It has been co-authored by current representatives and allies of the WADth as a means of reflecting on the value of this international effort over the past decade.

1. The WADth acknowledges variation in how 'Drama Therapy' is spelled and uses the preferred spelling of formal names of associations with variation where needed and in accordance with publication style guides.

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

2. See https://www.hcpc-uk.org/. Accessed 4 August 2026.
3. See https://srilankadramatherapy.org/about-us/. Accessed 4 August 2026.
4. See https://edraschile.cl/. Accessed 4 August 2026.
5. See https://edraschile.cl/achidra/. Accessed 4 August 2026.

DRAMA THERAPY BEFORE THE ALLIANCE: A PLURAL FIELD

The development of drama therapy as a profession did not follow a linear, centralized trajectory; rather, it emerged through multiple intersecting traditions and institutional pathways. Two of the oldest professional organizations were formed in the United Kingdom and the United States. In the United Kingdom, the British Association of Dramatherapists (BADth n.d.), founded in 1977, played an important role in the professionalization of dramatherapy by developing standards for training, ethics, supervision and continuing professional development, while advocating for the recognition of dramatherapy as a distinct profession. These developments contributed to the statutory regulation of dramatherapists by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)[2], making 'Dramatherapist' a legally protected title. Entry to the profession is through HCPC-approved master's-level training, and dramatherapists work across the National Health Service, including mental health, learning disability, forensic services, hospices as well as in education, social care and private practice. In the United States, the National Association of Drama Therapy (NADT), established in 1979, later became the North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA) in 2013, extending representation to Canadian drama therapists following several years of Canadian representation on their Board of Directors and a vote of the membership (Gaines and Butler 2016).

In other contexts, the profession has evolved through the interplay of local performance traditions, culturally rooted healing practices, community rituals, environmental catalysts, training programs and regulatory requirements. In Sri Lanka, modern drama therapy practice formally emerged in 2014 through structured training that integrated Buddhist psychology, Indigenous performance traditions and contemporary therapeutic frameworks (Ranasinha 2013). Responding to post-war, post-tsunami and ongoing sociopolitical psychosocial needs, this work is grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy that honours traditional healing rituals while meeting international professional standards, thereby legitimizing Indigenous epistemologies within therapeutic practice (Ranasinha 2025). Dedicated training and research bodies such as the Research Institute for Dramatherapy[3], in collaboration with national institutions, including the Sri Lanka Foundation and civil-sector partners, have translated drama therapy from dispersed practice into certificate- and diploma-level education, supervision and applied research, embedding it within psychosocial, educational and post-conflict recovery infrastructures.

In Latin America, the professional field of drama therapy is still consolidating, yet the region has a long history of community-based, performative and arts-based psychosocial practices rooted in popular theatre, ritual, education and collective healing. Many of these practices developed outside formal professional labels but share core principles with drama therapy, particularly embodiment, symbolic action and social transformation. Within this landscape, Chile and Argentina have been pioneering sites of formalization. In Chile, drama therapy was institutionally introduced in 2005 through the region's first postgraduate training program, which became a hub for practitioners from Chile and neighbouring countries; since 2024, EDRAS Chile[4] has provided further training focused on clinical, educational and community practice, alongside the professional association ACHIDRA[5], re-founded in 2024 and currently bringing together around twenty members. In Argentina, close dialogue with the Chilean experience led to the creation of a university-based postgraduate diploma at the National University of Cuyo in 2018,

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

supported by the Faculties of Medicine, Arts and Education, and the foundation of Dramaterapia Argentina (DAr), which now includes around sixty members and provides a national organizational framework for training and professional exchange.

In the Middle East, drama therapy has developed at the intersection of long-standing cultural traditions and contemporary professional organizing. In Iran, the Iranian Psychodrama and Drama Therapy Association, which began its official activities in 2002, has been central in consolidating the field nationally, with representation across nine provinces and work structured around graduate-level training and therapeutic services for children, adolescents and adults. Centres in Tehran, Khuzestan, Kerman and Rasht collectively reflect a geographically distributed and socially responsive model of practice. In Israel, drama therapy developed within YAHAT (the Israeli Association of Creative and Expressive Therapies), established in 1971. Today, approximately 400 registered drama therapists practise throughout the country, supported by two accredited MA programs and a Ph.D. program, and have contributed notable research to the international field (e.g. Korde et al. 2023), reflecting both the early recognition of dramatic methods as therapeutic tools and sustained efforts to establish drama therapy as a recognized profession.

Across Asia, drama therapy has grown rapidly over the past two decades. In South Korea, development has proceeded through two main pathways: practitioners trained in the United States and the United Kingdom, and local drama and psychodrama specialists adapting practice to Korean contexts. Growth has been supported by openness to integrative and alternative therapies and by prior acceptance of other arts therapies in medical, educational and welfare systems. Drama therapy is now taught at the postgraduate level in more than ten universities, with expanding undergraduate and doctoral provision, and is practised across schools, hospitals and community settings, often supported by national health and welfare voucher schemes. Contemporary practice integrates international models with locally grounded emotion-focused and movement-based approaches, alongside efforts to develop culturally responsive assessment tools and theoretical foundations (Park 2016). In Taiwan, drama therapy emerged in the late 1980s, catalysed by Chang's graduate study at NYU (2016) and subsequent introduction of workshops and university courses. It expanded through theatre departments, teacher-training programs and private institutions, supported in part by national arts education policy, yet Taiwan still lacks a dedicated graduate program and unified professional pathway. In response, Chang and colleagues called for a Taiwan Drama Therapy Association, which has since been formed in 2025, to convene practitioners and coordinate training, research and ethics appropriate to the local context.

In South-East and East Asia, newer organizational structures continue to form. In Thailand, the Dramatherapy Thailand Association (DTTH), established by Thai-registered drama therapists in 2021, works to develop a drama therapy database and certified training programs amid limited professional recognition and concerns about adapting UK-based training within Thai cultural contexts; early clinical research has begun to explore outcomes with Thai PTSD patients (Thammarut 2024). In China, practitioners with backgrounds in theatre, psychology and education have long experimented with psychodrama, developmental transformations (DvT), Playback Theatre and related approaches (see Johnson and Emunah 2020). Since the first Chinese drama therapy student graduated from NYU in 2016 and became certified in 2017, more than fifteen Chinese drama therapists have completed formal training in the United States, the United

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

Kingdom and Canada, and in 2025 they established Drama Therapy China (DTChina), an emerging organization dedicated to recognized, ethical practice.

In Hong Kong, drama therapy gained momentum in the 2000s as locally based practitioners returned from overseas training, established the Hong Kong Association of Drama Therapy (HKADT) and introduced the modality into community organizations, mental health services and higher education. The Master of Expressive Arts Therapy at the University of Hong Kong helped position drama/theatre within a broader expressive arts framework, while clinical placements, NGO services and school programs increased public awareness of drama therapy's relevance to youth mental health, trauma and community well-being. However, the field continues to confront the absence of a standalone degree, lack of statutory recognition and limited human resources. In response, HKADT has prioritized the development of a localized ethics code, adapted from international standards and reinterpreted for Hong Kong's linguistic and organizational contexts.

In South Africa, where performance, ritual and embodied arts have long played a role in healing, the formal profession of drama therapy is relatively recent. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, practitioners trained abroad returned at a time of urgent need for collective healing in the aftermath of apartheid. Early professional organizing secured recognition of drama therapy by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), including formal registration, examination processes and professional representation, enabling drama therapists to work in medical, educational and community settings and advocate within the national health system. The South African Association of Drama Therapists (SAAD) was established as a modality-specific professional home, while the broader arts therapies network SANATO struggled to meet the diverse needs of the professions and was eventually dissolved, in part because its activities remained uniquely accessible to a privileged white minority (Nebe 2016). Subsequent gatherings, such as the 2009 Tapping the Field symposium and the 2010 Building Bridges: The Arts Therapies in Africa conference, underscored the need for unified advocacy on issues such as engagement with the HPCSA, ethics and public sector recognition. Sustained efforts for locally based training led to the establishment of drama therapy education at Wits University in 2013, aimed at contributing to social transformation through the recruitment and development of drama therapists and applied drama practitioners (Nebe 2016). In 2019, the South African National Arts Therapies Association (SANATA) was created as a consolidated professional body for four arts therapies professions, integrating SAAD and formalizing a relationship with WADth.

By the early twenty-first century, national drama therapy associations existed in multiple countries, shaped by local regulatory, educational and healthcare environments. Yet international exchange remained largely episodic and informal, occurring mainly through national conferences with limited global participation, publications and ad hoc practitioner networks, conditions that set the stage for the formation of WADth.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WORLD ALLIANCE OF DRAMATHERAPY

The WADth was formally launched in 2017 as a global alliance of professional drama therapy associations. Its stated purpose is to facilitate cooperation among associations, promote drama therapy internationally, support the exchange of information, encourage collaboration across cultures and

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

languages and foster international research on the state of the profession (World Alliance of Dramatherapy 2017). At present, WADth consists of 17 professional member associations representing 34 countries with, at the time of writing, a total of 4223 documented members (Appendix 1)[6].

It is important to note that WADth was designed as an alliance of representatives of professional associations rather than individuals and is not an accrediting or regulatory authority. Member associations retain autonomy over their own standards and governance, participating in WADth as an international platform of connection rather than as a centralizing institution. This structural choice reflects both pragmatic constraints, given the diversity of educational and regulatory systems globally, and ethical commitments to pluralism and relationality that align with the philosophical underpinnings of drama therapy practice. It also highlights that decisions about representation, including who is invited into such a platform, when and on what basis, are themselves shaped by existing networks, knowledge, language and geopolitical location, and thus call for ongoing reflexive scrutiny in light of WADth's values of inclusivity and global belonging.

The move towards a formal alliance emerged from informal conversations among senior figures in the field. Exploratory discussions took place between

6. Appendix 1 is available at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gt_GYQRFtm-d2UDvZgbnkvfgLpR4CxtUmzT88cnBRcE/edit?tab=t.0. Accessed 14 August 2026.



Figure 1: The first picture taken of several founding members of the World Alliance of Drama Therapy: Back (L–R) Nisha Sajnani, Salvo Pitruzella; Front (L–R) Kirsten Meyer, Joanna Jaaniste, Jason Butler, Alyson Coleman, European Consortium of Arts Therapies Education conference in Krakow, Poland, 2017.

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

colleagues such as Nisha Sajnani, Stelios Krasanakis, David Read Johnson, Ingrid Lutz, Susana Pendzik and others, who reflected together on the desirability and feasibility of a global alliance and on the kinds of structures that might best support international collaboration. These exchanges helped clarify both the perceived need for a global forum and the initial criteria for membership, namely, that it should be an alliance of professional membership-based associations and not individuals.

Building on these preliminary conversations, Professor Nisha Sajnani, in her capacity as past president of the NADTA and director of the Graduate Program in Drama Therapy at New York University, sent a letter inviting a more formal consideration of a World Alliance to an initial group of leaders of professional membership-based drama therapy associations, including Alyson Coleman (BADth – United Kingdom), Dr Joanna Jaaniste (NECTA – Australia), Professor Jason Butler (NADTA – North America), Professor Johannes Junker (EFD – Europe), Professor Susana Pendzik (YAHAT – Israel) and Leané Meiring (SAAD – South Africa). After consulting with their respective organizations, each one shared a written expression of interest (Appendix 2)[7].

Viewed in hindsight, this initial invitation process can be understood as a critical moment for reflexive learning within WADth: it illustrates how global professional projects emerge from partial vantage points shaped by existing networks and uneven visibility across regions, and how subsequent developments have required the Alliance to revisit inclusivity, visibility and outreach so that its evolving membership aligns more closely with its stated commitment to global professional belonging. As the Alliance's reach expanded, particularly in the Global South and non-anglophone contexts, members also identified additional leaders, including Professor Miri Park (Korea), Dr Majid Amrai (Iran), Dr Ravindra Ranasinha (Sri Lanka) and Dr Sol Guerrero (Argentina).

MISSION AND ORGANIZATIONAL AIMS

The first meeting of the WADth was held online on 14 October 2017 to begin conversations about the mission, objectives, activities and governance structure of the Alliance. NYU continues to play a non-voting coordination role by funding a graduate student position to support the maintenance of the website, public engagement on social media channels, and to coordinate quarterly meetings and special initiatives. The following objectives were determined by consensus, which continues to be the primary approach to decision-making:

1. *Promotion of drama therapy internationally*, increasing visibility and understanding of the profession worldwide.
2. *Facilitation of international exchange of information*, including research, practice innovations, educational initiatives and sociopolitical realities affecting member associations and professional trajectories. This takes place through quarterly meetings of representatives.
3. *Encouragement of collaboration across cultures and languages*, recognizing that diversity enriches the field. This is supported by the maintenance of a multilingual website which includes a centralized map of training programs and definitions of drama therapy provided by member associations.
4. *Support for international events*, including maintaining a listing of member events, coordinating joint conferences where possible and coordinating

7. Appendix 2 is available at: https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/11WzcuoOOq4XYPLzi-C2SfJIYydx3VUsw. Accessed 14 August 2026.

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

International Drama Therapy Week, which takes place during the third week every October.

5. *Promotion of international research on the state of the profession*. This has been partially accomplished by sharing research on the website and social media platforms and through periodic surveys of the field.

In addition to supporting established professional associations, WADth also functions as a forum for associations in the process of formation, offering a space for dialogue, learning and peer support as professional identities and organizational structures take shape. This has been particularly significant in contexts where drama therapy is emerging as a recognized profession, but formal associations are still being developed, including recent and ongoing processes in China, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, Taiwan and Turkey. In these contexts, WADth provides opportunities to engage with international peers, observe diverse models of professional organization and reflect collectively on questions of training, ethics and representation without prescribing a singular pathway to professionalization. In this sense, WADth operates as connective infrastructure rather than as a normative authority, aligning its emphasis on dialogue, exchange and shared visibility with drama therapy's orientation towards participatory and reflective practice.

GOVERNANCE WITHOUT CENTRALIZATION

One of WADth's defining features is its non-hierarchical governance model. The Alliance operates through representatives of member associations, with a rotating meeting chair and consensus-oriented decision-making. Quarterly meetings allow time for representatives to consult with their constituencies, resisting centralized control and foregrounding relational accountability. This governance approach aligns with the profession's attention to role, power dynamics and relational context in therapeutic practice and seeks to keep power differentials, political tensions and resource inequities visible, inviting ongoing critical reflection on participation and representation.

Nonetheless, this governance model presents pragmatic challenges, including loss of shared institutional memory, language accessibility, uneven technological capacity and participation shaped by resource disparities. Attempts to establish committees, including Practice, Ethics, Advocacy and Research Committees, have therefore struggled with sustained engagement. Other challenges are discussed later in this article.

INTERNATIONAL DRAMA THERAPY WEEK AND GLOBAL VISIBILITY

International Drama Therapy Week is a signature WADth initiative, held annually in the third week of October. Practitioners and member associations independently organize workshops, performances, talks and educational events, while WADth provides a shared timeframe, hashtags (e.g. #dtweek and #dtweek2025) and online amplification. Social media metrics show increased visibility and public awareness during this campaign, with reach and content interactions multiplying between roughly ten- and several hundred-fold over the course of International Drama Therapy Week. The distributed format reflects WADth's view that global identity emerges through multiplicity, functioning as both advocacy and collective ritual.

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

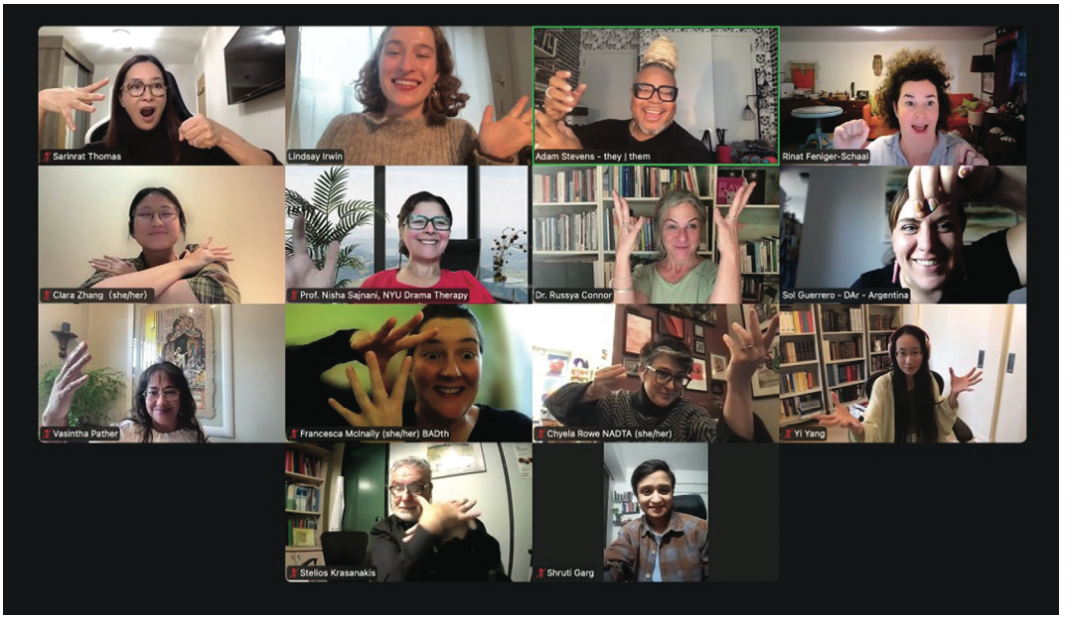


Figure 2: Representatives of the WADth meet quarterly over Zoom.

RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL PLURALITY

WADth's commitment to promoting international research has important implications for how knowledge in drama therapy is produced, circulated and interpreted across diverse contexts. Research traditions vary considerably across regions, shaped by differences in academic infrastructures, funding regimes, professional regulation and dominant epistemological orientations, which in turn influence both research methods and outputs and which forms of knowledge are recognized as legitimate or authoritative within particular settings.

Through its international networks, conferences and communication platforms, WADth facilitates encounters among practitioners, educators and researchers working within different research cultures. While such exchanges do not necessarily challenge established hierarchies of evidence, they create opportunities for dialogue in which practice-based, qualitative and culturally situated forms of inquiry can be articulated alongside more formal academic research. To date, WADth has used its website and social media platforms primarily for information-sharing and signposting relevant journals and published research, reflecting an emphasis on visibility rather than methodological endorsement. Systematic analyses would be needed to assess how fully epistemological plurality is realized in practice.

In 2022, WADth coordinated the first global pilot survey of drama therapy practitioners to take stock of the profession's contemporary contours across its member associations and beyond, with findings presented at an online drama therapy conference hosted by New York University but not yet published in the academic literature.[8] Drawing responses from 421 professionals in 34

8. This pilot survey was approved by the Institutional Review Board at New York University (IRB-FY2019-3041).

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

countries, of whom 83 per cent identified as drama therapists, the survey suggested a field that is both demographically narrow and professionally diverse: most respondents were women in the ethnic majority of their countries, aged 35–65 with more than six years of practice, yet they worked across a wide range of clinical and community settings and applied drama therapy with children, adolescents and adults in roughly equal proportions. The data also highlighted striking global asymmetries, with strong representation from associations in the United Kingdom, North America, the Netherlands and Israel, and comparatively limited participation from South American, Arab and African countries, mirroring wider inequities in training provision, professional recognition and research infrastructure. At the level of practice, respondents reported treating primarily anxiety, trauma-related conditions and depression, while describing a labour landscape in which most are employed part-time, earn modest incomes relative to national contexts and navigate hybrid roles across clinical, educational and community sectors. As an early, Alliance-led effort to map who is currently visible within organized drama therapy, where and how they work, and with which populations, the survey points to the value of WADth convening periodic formal global state of the field inquiries as a core contribution to research and knowledge production about the profession.

CHALLENGES FACING THE WORLD ALLIANCE

The challenges facing WADth and its member associations operate at three interrelated levels: external sociopolitical and regulatory conditions, internal organizational dynamics within the Alliance and broader epistemic questions about evidence, practice and professional identity.

External sociopolitical and regulatory conditions

WADth's establishment coincides with growing international interest in arts-based and embodied approaches to social care, health promotion and community well-being (Sajnani and Fietje 2023). Drama therapy practitioners increasingly work in contexts shaped by displacement, collective trauma and systemic inequities, where traditional individual psychotherapy models may be limited or inappropriate. In such arenas, drama therapy often functions as community-based psychosocial support, emphasizing collective meaning-making, imagination, action, agency and social connection. WADth offers a forum in which these practices can be articulated without being subsumed under narrowly medicalized frames, providing an important counterpoint to dominant global mental health paradigms.

At the same time, the sociopolitical and regulatory contexts within which drama therapists live and work are highly uneven, a reality that has been a recurring topic in WADth's quarterly meetings. In many countries, drama therapy is not formally recognized as a profession, and practitioners operate amid political instability, economic precarity and urgent social needs. In such settings, the development of professional training, research and regulatory frameworks for arts-based therapies is often deprioritized in favour of more immediate concerns related to health, housing, employment or social conflict. This creates a structural tension between evident psychosocial needs and limited institutional support for disciplines such as drama therapy.

The Australian context illustrates how professional recognition can fluctuate in response to policy shifts. A decade ago, drama therapy was relatively

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

well established: creative arts therapy master's programs were offered at institutions such as the University of Melbourne and Murdoch University, including a standalone drama therapy degree at Melbourne. These pathways lent legitimacy to the profession, and drama therapy was regarded as comparable to other psychotherapy modalities in both remuneration and professional standing, as reflected in National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) pricing that positioned creative arts therapies alongside other evidence-based supports. In late 2024, however, the NDIS issued updated guidelines that effectively excluded creative arts therapies, including drama therapy, from its list of recognized evidence-based supports. While describing such therapies as 'permissible', the NDIS stated that they 'do not meet the evidentiary standards required to be classified as a "therapy"' (National Disability Insurance Agency [NDIA] 2024) and implemented this shift abruptly, without consultation, transparency or prior warning. Drama therapy, though not specifically named, was implicitly grouped with art and music therapies, with little recognition of its distinct theoretical and clinical foundations.

The consequences were immediate: participants experienced disruptions in care, and practitioners faced a sharp decline in professional recognition and remuneration. Therapists previously compensated in line with their qualifications were reclassified alongside general support services, resulting in both economic and symbolic devaluation. A subsequent Independent Review of Art and Music Supports, led by health economist Dr Stephen Duckett AM,[9] found evidence supporting the effectiveness of art and music therapies in appropriate circumstances but recommended aligning remuneration with counselling rates, noting that these professions are not nationally regulated (Duckett 2025: 44–49). This partial recognition, nevertheless, reinforced perceptions of creative arts therapies as auxiliary rather than integral to the mental health ecosystem, highlighting broader tensions in the professional identity and belonging of drama therapists in Australia, who remain caught in cycles of validation and devaluation shaped more by bureaucratic decision-making than by the growing body of clinical evidence.

In India, sociopolitical tensions around the professionalization of drama therapy are closely tied to the country's evolving allied health legislative landscape. Since 2022, professionally qualified drama therapists have been advocating for recognition under the category of 'art therapist' within the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Act, 2021 (NCAHP 2021), which sits within the Health Ministry. While the ministry made provision for arts therapies under Entry 7 of the Schedule to the NCAHP, it only named art and dance movement therapy as examples. Drama therapy, along with other modalities such as music therapy, creative arts therapy and expressive arts therapy, were inadvertently omitted as examples. This legislative gap has made formal recognition a matter of both policy and proximity, as much of the advocacy depends on who one knows in positions of political influence and what metrics they would consider valuable at what time (i.e. school literacy and suicide rates). This also risks the professionalization of the field becoming folded into state or legislative agendas that may not always align with orientations of individual drama therapists. Sustained visibility through conferences and public panels, where drama therapists and NCAHP members have spoken together on mainstream Indian public health policy (Indian Association of Dance Movement Therapy 2025), has marked meaningful progress in this direction. Indian drama therapists are engaging in efforts to articulate core processes rooted in their own cultural and clinical contexts and develop local

9. 'AM' stands for Member of the Order of Australia.

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

postgraduate training so that aspiring practitioners are no longer compelled to invest significant financial and personal resources in seeking degrees abroad.

In Sri Lanka, sociopolitical and regulatory challenges are particularly pronounced. Drama therapy is not formally recognized by a governmental licensing or monitoring authority, and no statutory body exists within the public health system to regulate or accredit drama therapists. The dominance of a biomedical psychiatric culture has further marginalized psychotherapy and arts-based approaches, often positioning them as secondary or 'non-essential' within psychiatric rehabilitation settings (Ranasinha 2021). As a result, drama therapists are largely excluded from inpatient mental health services and staff development programs in state hospitals, despite widespread psychosocial need.

Within these regulatory constraints, practitioners have developed alternative pathways to sustain and advance the practice. Private-sector organizations, non-governmental actors, religious institutions, schools and community networks have become key sites for training, practice and outreach. Through these channels, drama therapy has reached outpatient populations affected by war-related trauma, natural disasters and sociopolitical violence (Ranasinha 2021). State engagement has emerged only intermittently, such as the Ministry of Health–led drama therapy training for mental health workers in 2018, which demonstrated institutional openness without translating into long-term professional recognition or regulatory reform. This situation exemplifies the structural tension between urgent community-level psychosocial needs and limited institutional prioritization of arts-based therapies. While culturally responsive drama therapy has proven adaptable in addressing trauma and psychiatric rehabilitation in Sri Lanka, its development remains dependent on informal networks, individual advocacy and short-term initiatives rather than sustained policy commitment.

Such cycles of validation and devaluation highlight broader tensions in the professional identity and sense of belonging experienced by drama therapists worldwide, shaped less by consistent evidence appraisal than by shifting bureaucratic priorities and sociopolitical climates.

In Thailand, due to the limited recognition of the art-based approach and restrictions on the number of practitioners, drama therapists have collaborated with other professionals, including art therapists, music therapists and dance and movement psychotherapists. Together, they have proposed the establishment of 'Creative Arts Therapy' as a recognized healthcare profession with formal professional accreditation. This proposal is currently under review by the relevant regulatory authorities.

In Hong Kong, the long lacked statutory recognition and limited human resources, exacerbated by broader social and livelihood pressures, including the tightening social control under the national security law and the resulting outflow of professionals, have made it difficult to build a robust body of evidence-based, locally grounded research, leaving the field in a prolonged state of early-stage development.

Sociopolitical realities also serve as a reminder that drama therapy is never practised in a vacuum but develops within wider historical, economic and political contexts unfolding on a global stage. In this sense, the WADth has created a unique space for professional dialogue that transcends geopolitical boundaries and tensions. Members from countries without diplomatic relations or those considered to be in conflict have found in the Alliance a forum where they can meet, exchange ideas and celebrate their shared dedication

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

to the field. These encounters, facilitated through virtual platforms, enable connections that would be difficult or impossible to establish through other channels. The ability to collaborate professionally with colleagues from nations otherwise deemed adversarial represents one of the Alliance's most meaningful contributions – demonstrating how a shared commitment to healing and creative expression can build bridges across even the most entrenched political divides.

Taken together, these dynamics help explain the profound diversity in how drama therapy is organized, recognized and practised across regions, underscoring the importance of WADth as a space for dialogue, reflection and collective professional learning. These external conditions shape not only how drama therapy is organized and practised within specific countries, but also how WADth itself must continuously strive to configure representation, participation and sustainability as a global alliance.

Internal challenges

Against this backdrop, WADth also faces a number of internal challenges related to representation, participation, organizational continuity and resources. First, questions of representation and voice arise in relation to how member associations are formally positioned within the Alliance.

The EFD, which includes eighteen countries, agreed to having a single representative from the EFD as a whole rather than having EU members join both groups. However, given their status as founding members of WADth, accommodations were made for BADTh and YAHAT to have representation at both the EFD and WADth. Questions have been raised about whether this was justified and whether this decision should be revisited. The leadership of the EFD and WADth has needed to remain vigilant of this complexity as it reflects broader concerns about whose voices are heard and whose are not.

Related concerns surface around the rotation of representatives within the Alliance. While this ongoing renewal is a significant strength, bringing new perspectives, energies and voices into the collective, it also carries costs in terms of continuity and institutional memory. Given that WADth meets formally only four times a year, some discussions necessarily unfold in fragmented ways, are taken up by different people at different moments or remain partially developed before being interrupted by changes in representation. This rhythm can at times limit the depth with which complex issues are explored, even as it reflects the Alliance's commitment to openness, shared leadership and distributed ownership.

These questions of representation are further complicated by the uneven organizational development of member associations. One of the challenges facing the WADth is the significant variation in organizational development and professional establishment among its member countries. Member organizations range from emerging groups with small memberships still working towards initial professional recognition to well-established associations with hundreds of registered practitioners and formal accreditation structures already in place. This diversity means that the priorities, resources and immediate concerns of member organizations can differ considerably, where a newer organization may be focused on gaining legitimacy and building foundational training programs, a more established one may be addressing questions of specialization, research standards or regulatory frameworks. While navigating these differences requires careful attention to the distinct

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

needs of organizations at various stages of development, this diversity also creates opportunities for mutual learning, with more established organizations able to offer guidance, share lessons from their own developmental trajectories and provide inspiration to those in earlier stages of professional recognition.

For example, the Chilean association has at times been unable to maintain a representative within the Alliance due to internal restructuring processes, while in Argentina sustained participation has depended largely on the availability of a single English-speaking representative, reflecting broader linguistic and structural challenges within the field. These challenges underscore the complexities of global coordination without centralization, yet they also reflect WADth's ethical stance of prioritizing mutual recognition and shared ownership across differently positioned associations.

A second domain of tension concerns the boundaries of the Alliance and the definition of who 'counts' as a drama therapist or a drama therapy association. As drama therapy intersects with adjacent fields such as community and applied theatre, education and social practice, WADth must negotiate membership criteria without foreclosing engagement from countries where professional identity, regulation and representation are still emerging. These tensions are not anomalies but are inherent to global professional organizations across differences. Our stance has been that WADth's value lies not in resolving them unilaterally but in holding them as sites of ongoing negotiation, dialogue and reflexive practice.

A third internal tension lies in balancing efforts to articulate a shared scope of practice alongside ethical and training guidelines, developments that could meaningfully advance the profession, while maintaining a genuine commitment to pluralism. A clear example of this tension is embodied even in the spelling of the profession: Dramatherapy (United Kingdom and European Union), Dramaterapia (Argentina and Chile), Drama Therapy (North America) and Drama-Therapy (India). Beyond terminology, this challenge also involves ensuring that definitions of drama therapy are not implicitly imposed by western contexts, where the profession has been most formally organized, but remain open to culturally situated forms of practice and professional formation. At the same time, this openness raises a further complexity: how to recognize and legitimize diverse local practices and knowledge systems without losing the academic rigour, ethical standards and professional coherence that have been developed within more established training and research traditions. This balance is particularly delicate in regions where access to training, literature and international dialogue is uneven due to linguistic, economic and geopolitical constraints, and where new forms of practice often emerge under conditions very different from those in which dominant models were originally formulated.

These definitional questions are not merely semantic; in contexts such as India, they have become part of conscious efforts to adapt and localize the profession. In 2019, a significant conversation took place as drama therapists and allied professionals collaborated for the first time to create a successful two-day symposium at NIMHANS hospital, Bangalore. What began as a peer group of drama therapists is now an eighteen-member association, registered under the Karnataka Societies Registration Act. Members, who were trained in the 'West', eventually chose to use a hyphenated spelling of 'drama-therapy', as a way to symbolize Drama-Therapy India's (DTI) continuous striving towards adapting 'drama' and 'therapy' to the diverse Indian

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

context. Currently, DTI is a nationwide initiative focused on increasing awareness, improving access to inclusive mental health support and contributing to the broader health systems in India by centring drama therapy processes. Through collaboration, research, education and advocacy, DTI serves as a collective working to grow the understanding and application of drama therapy throughout the country.

A fourth internal tension concerns how best to support an international congress. In light of a small global membership, unequal currencies, travel-related costs and global warming, WADth agreed not to compete with other professional events but instead to invite WADth representatives to one another's annual conferences and, where possible, to co-produce gatherings. Since its founding, WADth has collaborated with the EFD twice to produce a global congress (Amersfoort, 2023; Riga, 2025). More recently, however, meetings have highlighted the need to decentralize this practice and work towards more distributed opportunities to convene in connection with existing conferences outside the European Union.

10. This photograph was intentionally taken in a vintage, hyper-formal portrait style to reflect the absolute seriousness of this playful endeavour.



Figure 3: The initial meeting to discuss the formation of a drama therapy organization in India which took place during a symposium at NIMHANS, Bangalore, 2019. L–R: Back row: Professor Nisha Sajnani, Mahnoor Yar Khan, Professor Parasuram Ramamoorthi, Kashma Goyal, Pallavi Chander, Mike Clarke. Front row: Anshuma Kshetrapal, Dr Maitri Gopalakrishna, Anupriya Meenakshi Banerjee, Noor Sengupta, Vikramjeet Sinha.[10]

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56



Figure 4: Representatives of the WADth during a plenary panel at the EFD Conference in Riga, Latvia. L–R: Professor Nisha Sajnani (co-chair), Johannes Junker (co-chair), María Sol Guerrero Giménez, MD, Dr Rinat Feniger-Schaal, Adam Stevens, Dr Russya Connor, Dr Chanaphan Thammarut and Anamarija Vuić (then student coordinator of WADth).

Broader ontological and epistemological uncertainties

Finally, WADth's work is conditioned by material and infrastructural constraints, including language, digital access, financial resources and environmental uncertainty. Language differences, uneven digital infrastructure and disparities in resources shape patterns of participation across regions. Reliance on institutional coordination and volunteer labour further raises questions about sustainability, continuity and equitable representation within the Alliance.

For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, drama therapists were compelled to shift practice into fully digitized and hybrid spaces in the absence of institutional infrastructure or formal regulatory guidance. Research conducted in Sri Lanka demonstrated how digital platforms functioned as liminal therapeutic 'studios', simultaneously extending access and generating new ethical dilemmas around privacy, data security, embodiment, consent and the holding of therapeutic relationships within domestic spaces (Ranasinha 2025). These experiences echoed insights from practitioners across countries (Keisari et al. 2023) and foreground epistemological challenges concerning what

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

constitutes presence, dramatic reality and containment when bodily co-presence is disrupted yet relational depth and symbolic play remain active. They also reveal how such hybrid practices intensified the positioning of drama therapists as practitioners working between systems: between formal health services and informal community networks, technological mediation and embodied practice, and global professional discourses and locally grounded cultural realities.

CONCLUSION: WHY THE WORLD ALLIANCE OF DRAMATHERAPY MATTERS NOW

Tracing the emergence of WADth against the backdrop of diverse national and regional histories shows that global professional organization in drama therapy cannot be separated from uneven regulatory regimes, linguistic landscapes, colonial legacies and material conditions. The Alliance has developed in dialogue with associations that range from long-established bodies with formal accreditation structures to newly formed groups working towards initial recognition and has had to navigate questions of representation, membership boundaries and scope of practice without defaulting to a single normative template. Its federated, non-hierarchical governance model, with rotating chairs and consensus-oriented decision-making, seeks to keep questions of voice, power and institutional memory visible, even as it encounters practical challenges related to continuity, participation and resource disparities.

At the same time, WADth's commitment to pluralism is expressed not only in governance but also in its approach to definitional and epistemological tensions. The coexistence of different spellings of the profession, varied training pathways and locally rooted practices underscores that drama therapy is not a fixed entity to be exported but a set of evolving, contextually situated processes. Efforts to articulate shared ethical guidelines, scopes of practice and research priorities therefore unfold alongside an insistence that local knowledge systems, Indigenous healing traditions and community-based arts practices must be recognized rather than subsumed. In this sense, WADth functions less as an authority that resolves disputes than as a relational platform that holds them as sites of ongoing negotiation, reflection and learning.

The challenges facing the Alliance and its members, including fluctuating professional recognition, fragile regulatory environments, linguistic and technological barriers, climate and travel constraints and broader ontological and epistemological uncertainties, are not incidental but constitutive of global drama therapy practice. Case examples from Australia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Hong Kong, Latin America, South Africa and elsewhere illustrate cycles of validation and devaluation, the marginalization of arts-based therapies within biomedical systems and the resourcefulness of practitioners who build alternative infrastructures through community networks, education and advocacy. Within this landscape, WADth offers connective tissue: a space where associations can share strategies, articulate tensions and support one another in navigating evidence regimes, policy shifts and sociopolitical crises that affect their work.

It is in this sense that the Alliance matters now. As drama therapists respond to displacement, collective trauma, systemic inequities and environmental uncertainty, WADth provides a forum in which their practices can be understood not as peripheral or auxiliary but as central to broader conversations about mental health, social care and community well-being. By enabling

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

representatives from countries with divergent or strained geopolitical relations to collaborate around a shared commitment to healing and creative expression, the Alliance demonstrates how professional belonging can become a vehicle for solidarity across borders. Its emphasis on relationality, plurality and reflexivity offers an alternative to purely standardizing models of global mental health, suggesting that coherence in the profession may emerge from sustained dialogue and mutual recognition rather than from uniform protocols alone.

Looking ahead, WADth's second decade presents opportunities to deepen this role. Strengthening participatory governance structures, expanding multilingual and digitally accessible platforms, mapping global research and practice more systematically and co-creating gatherings that are responsive to climate and economic realities could enhance the Alliance's capacity to support its members. At the same time, maintaining vigilance about representation, knowledge hierarchies and the risk of reproducing existing power imbalances will remain essential if WADth is to honour its commitment to global professional belonging. In holding together a diversity of practice, shared ethical concerns and a collective desire for recognition, the WADth offers a distinctive model of how a profession can organize itself globally: not by erasing difference but by centring it as the very ground of its work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the following alumni from the NYU Program in Drama Therapy who, in their capacity as research assistants, each served two-year terms as coordinators of the WADth while they were students: Opher Shamir, Monica Lopez Gamboa, Akhila Khanna and Anamarija Vuić. Each coordinator sustained the continuity of the Alliance by responding to inquiries, maintaining the website and social media platforms, scheduling quarterly meetings, record-keeping and organizing the annual International Drama Therapy Week, under the supervision of Professor Nisha Sajnani. The authors also thank Kirsten Meyer, who, while she was representing ANZACATA, contributed to the 2022 survey of the field together with Rinat Feniger-Schaal, Anamarija Vuić, Akhila Khanna and Nisha Sajnani.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

This article was researched and written to the standards of Intellect's Ethical Guidelines: https://www.intellectbooks.com/ethical-guidelines. Permission has been granted to publish the letters in Appendix 2.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

FUNDING

The authors received no specific grant from any public, commercial or not-for-profit agency to aid in the research or writing of this article.

REFERENCES

British Association of Dramatherapists (n.d.), 'BADth history', https://www.badth.org.uk/about-the-british-association-of-dramatherapists/badth-history. Accessed 21 February 2026.

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

Chang, H. H. (2016), 'The development of dramatherapy in Taiwan', in S. Jennings and C. Holmwood (eds), *Routledge International Handbook of Dramatherapy*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 8–17.

Duckett, S. (2025), *Independent Review of the Place of Art and Music Therapy within Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme*, Canberra: National Disability Insurance Agency, https://dataresearch.ndis.gov.au/research-and-evaluation/decision-making-access-and-planning/independent-review-art-and-music-supports. Accessed 29 August 2026.

Emunah, R. (1994), *Acting for Real: Drama Therapy Process, Technique, and Performance*, Hove: Psychology Press.

European Federation of Dramatherapy (n.d.), 'About EFD', European Federation of Dramatherapy, https://www.efdramatherapy.com/about-efd. Accessed 24 January 2026.

Gaines, A. M. and Butler, J. D. (2016), 'The history, trends and future of North American drama therapy', in S. Jennings and C. Holmwood (eds), *The Routledge International Handbook of Dramatherapy*, New York: Routledge, pp. 52–64.

Indian Association of Dance Movement Therapy (2025), 'Symposium 2025: Body and Mental Health', https://www.iadmt.org/symposium.php. Accessed 15 January 2026.

Jennings, S. and Holmwood, C. (eds) (2016), *Routledge International Handbook of Dramatherapy*, London and New York: Routledge.

Johnson, D. R. and Emunah, R. (eds) (2020), *Current Approaches in Drama Therapy*, 3rd ed., Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas Publisher.

Jones, P. (2007), *Drama as Therapy: Theory, Practice and Research*, 2nd ed., London: Routledge.

Keisari, S., Feniger-Schaal, R., Butler, J. D., Sajnani, N., Golan, N. and Orkibi, H. (2023), 'Loss, adaptation and growth: The experiences of creative arts therapists during the Covid-19 pandemic', *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 82, n.pag., https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2022.101983.

Korde, Ž., Šuriņa, S. and Mārtinsone, K. (2023), 'Research trends in drama therapy: A bibliometric analysis based on Scopus', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, n.pag., https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1327656.

Landy, R. (1994), *Drama Therapy: Concepts, Theories and Practices*, Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

Levy, L. and Cornejo S. (2003), *La representación de las Emociones en la Dramaterapia*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Médica Panamericana.

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) (2024), 'Statement: NDIS funded music and art therapy', National Disability Insurance Scheme, 26 November, https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/10522-statement-ndis-funded-music-and-art-therapy. Accessed 29 August 2026.

NCAHP (National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Act, No. 14 of 2021 [India]) (2021), 'India code', https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/16824/1/aA2021-14.pdf. Accessed 15 January 2026.

Nebe, W. (2016), 'Redefinition, restoration, resilience: Drama therapy for healing and social transformation', in S. Jennings and C. Holmwood (eds), *Routledge International Handbook of Dramatherapy*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 348–59.

Park, M. (2016), 'The development of Korean drama therapy', in S. Jennings and C. Holmwood (eds), *Routledge International Handbook of Dramatherapy*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 3–7.

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

Ranasinha, R. (2013), *Dramatherapy in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Deepa Centre for Community Development.
Ranasinha, R. (2021), 'Dramatherapy: A culturally responsive practice', in U. Volpe (ed.), *Arts Therapies in Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, pp. 167–69.
Ranasinha, R. (2025), 'Dramatherapy as a multidisciplinary approach to advancing human values in education and mental health: A contribution to the sustainable development goals', *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9:3, pp. 6681–88, https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2025.903sedu0491.
Sajnani, N. (2012), 'Response/ability: Imagining a critical race feminist paradigm for the creative arts therapies', *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 39:3, pp. 186–91, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2011.12.009.
Sajnani, N. and Fietje, N. (2023), 'The Jameel Arts & Health Lab: *Lancet* global series on the health benefits of the arts, in collaboration with the WHO', *The Lancet*, 402:10414, pp. 1732–34, https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(23)01959-1.
Thammarut, C. (2024), 'Developing dramatherapy approaches for all Thai adult patients with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder', Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge: Anglia Ruskin University, https://hdl.handle.net/10779/aru.26090674. Accessed 29 August 2026.
Willemsen, M. A. and Pitruzella, S. (2026), 'Towards unity: Creating a shared definition of dramatherapy within the European Federation of Dramatherapy (EFD)', *Dramatherapy*, 46:2, pp. 167–82, https://doi.org/10.1386/dj_00044_1.
Willemsen, M., Abbing, A., Haeyen, S., de Witte, M. and Van Hooren, S. (2024), 'The creative arts therapists on the continuum of practice within Arts in Health in the Netherlands', *Dramatherapy*, 45:1, pp. 117–24, https://doi.org/10.1386/dj_00008_1.
World Alliance of Dramatherapy (2017), 'Mission', https://www.worldallianceofdramatherapy.com/mission. Accessed 2 January 2026.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Sajnani, Nisha, Giménez, María Sol Guerrero, Ranasinha, Ravindra, Connor, Russya, Moon, Kyoo Ho, Thammarut, Chanaphan, Amrai, Majid, Irwin, Lindsay, McInally, Francesca, Yang, Yi, Godoy, Pedro Humberto Torres, Feniger-Schaal, Rinat, Garg, Shruti, Khanna, Akhila, Krasanakis, Stelios and Willemsen, Marc Alexander (2026), 'The World Alliance of Dramatherapy: History, purpose and the work of global professional belonging', *Drama Therapy Review*, 12:2, pp. 251–76, https://doi.org/10.1386/dtr_00191_1

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Nisha Sajnani, Ph.D., is a professor and director of the Program in Drama Therapy at New York University. She is the past-president of the North American Drama Therapy Association and the past principal editor of *Drama Therapy Review*.

Contact: New York University, 36 Washington Place, Suite 551, NY 10012, USA.
E-mail: nls4@nyu.edu

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5805-6179

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

María Sol Guerrero Giménez, MD, is a psychiatrist and drama therapist. Based on her personal experience and the observation in her professional practice that art and community can make a big difference in people's health, mainly in mental health, she has paved the way for the development and integration of art and health in multiple settings at different scales. She is the founder and president of the Argentinian Association of Dramatherapy (DAr) and representative of Argentina at the World Alliance of Dramatherapy (WADTh). She worked in the integration of three faculties (Arts and Design, Medical Sciences and Education) of the National University of Cuyo to create the first diploma in drama therapy (present co-director and lecturer) in Argentina and is working to establish it as a specialization. She is a coordinator, teacher and supervisor in the International Practicum in Dramatherapy. She is also the co-author of the book *Adolescentes en la encrucijada* (EDIUNC, 2021).

Contact: University of Cuyo, Centro Universitario, M5500 Mendoza, Argentina.
E-mail: solguerrero2110@gmail.com

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3623-1823

Ravindra Ranasinha, a pioneering Sri Lankan drama therapist with over two decades of experience, utilizes drama therapy to support individuals with developmental disabilities, trauma recovery and dementia. His expertise extends to Myanmar, where he has conducted trauma-informed drama therapy training for local mental health practitioners. Ranasinha's approach to drama therapy is deeply influenced by Asian philosophies, drawing on principles of Zen and Tao to foster inner healing and personal growth. He has developed innovative methodologies, including the 'Eight Part Story Method or the Beehive Model', which provide structured frameworks for therapeutic storytelling and group work. Ranasinha has published extensively, including *Dramatherapy in Sri Lanka* (self-published, 2013) and *Creative Arts Therapies for Autistic Children* (Pramuditha, 2015). His recent chapters include 'Faith integrated dramatherapy to address trauma from a terrorist attack' (in *Trauma-Informed Dramatherapy*, Charles C Thomas, 2024) and 'Zen stories to inspire cognition in a patient with vascular dementia' (in *Routledge International Handbook of Therapeutic Stories and Storytelling*, Routledge, 2022). Dedicated to training future drama therapists, Ranasinha is the curriculum developer and course director for drama therapy certificate and diploma programs at the Sri Lanka Foundation and Research Institute for Dramatherapy. His contributions have been instrumental in establishing dramatherapy as a recognized and valued practice, both locally and internationally.

Contact: Research Institute for Dramatherapy, 1/20 A, Ariyawansa Road, Moratumulla, Moratuwa 10400, Sri Lanka.
E-mail: ravindraranasinha@gmail.com

https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5487-1157

Russya Connor works as an educator, lecturer, drama therapist and artist. With a diverse background as an award-winning international performer and theatre-maker, she became interested in the healing potential of the arts. In 2006, she completed MA in drama therapy at Edith Cowan University, Perth, and since then has worked as a drama therapist and counsellor in the drug and alcohol sector, with children and at prisons. She has extensive

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

lecturing and facilitation experience. She delivers drama therapy training at non-government agencies and lectures at universities in contemporary performance, physical theatre and creative arts therapies, as well as developing and conducting experiential programs for business, such as rhythm-based interventions tailored to the specific needs of different population groups.

E-mail: russyac@me.com

Kyoo Ho Moon is a registered drama therapist, researcher and educator based in South Korea. He serves as a director of the Korean Academy of Drama Therapy (KADT) and is a collaborating member of the World Alliance of Dramatherapy. Dr Moon applies his expertise across clinical and academic settings. He treats patients at the Yeonjeong Neuropsychiatric Clinic and lectures at Yong-in University. Specializing in action-based methods, he uses role-play, story-making and theatrical performance to support psychological healing and personal growth.

Contact: Yong-in University, 134 Yongindaehak-ro, Cheoin-gu, Yongin-si, Gyeonggi-do 17082, South Korea.
E-mail: teatr@naver.com

Dr Chanaphan Thammarut is a pioneering registered drama therapist, researcher and author who founded the Dramatherapy Thailand Association (DTTH). She bridges international clinical standards with regional needs, serving as Thailand's representative to the World Alliance of Dramatherapy. She balances her clinical practice at premier psychiatric facilities, such as Bangkok Hospital and Manarom Hospital, with international academia, lecturing at both Thammasat University and London's Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Dr Thammarut holds a Ph.D. from Anglia Ruskin University, where her breakthrough research specialized in creative arts interventions for post-traumatic stress disorder, and she frequently co-authors foundational textbooks alongside leading global experts in the field.

Contact: Thammasat University, 2 Prachan Road, Phra Barom Maha Ratchawang, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok 10200, Thailand.
E-mail: dramatherapy.th@gmail.com

Dr Majid Amraei is a pioneering Iranian drama therapist, researcher, author and university faculty member who has heavily shaped the clinical development of theatre therapy (Namayesh-Darmani) in Iran. As a general secretary of the Drama Therapy Center of Iran (DTCI) and representative to the World Alliance of Dramatherapy, he bridges local clinical practices with international frameworks. An official member of the Paris Institute of Arts Therapies, Dr Amraei balances his clinical work, which focuses on psychological rehabilitation, war trauma and marginalized groups, with widespread academic advocacy, conducting specialized training at institutions like Allameh Tabataba'i University. He is also a widely published author of foundational Persian texts on creative rehabilitation.

Contact: Drama Therapy Center of Iran, No. 26, Mohajer Alley, Iranshahr Street, Tehran 1133713514, Iran.
E-mail: amrai_1348@yahoo.com

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

Lindsay Irwin is a playwright, artist and drama therapy graduate student based between New Hampshire and Brooklyn, New York. She is currently pursuing her MA in drama therapy at New York University (NYU), with an expected graduation in 2027. A graduate of Vassar College, where she served as president of The Vassar Underground, Lindsay has long used arts-based activism and theatre to champion social justice and community awareness. Blending her clinical, therapeutic ambitions with entrepreneurial creativity, she also works as a floral designer and visual artist, exploring the intersections of creative expression, healing and community care.

Contact: New York University, 36 Washington Place, Suite 552, NY 10012, USA.
E-mail: lsi7119@nyu.edu

Francesca McInally is an HCPC-registered drama therapist and theatre director based in London. She serves on the Executive Committee of the British Association of Dramatherapists (BADth) and is trained at the East 15 Acting School.

Contact: British Association of Dramatherapists, 10a High Street, Chislehurst, BR7 5AN, UK.
E-mail: francescamcinally@badth.org.uk

Yi Yang, Ph.D., RDT, is recognized as the first registered drama therapist from mainland China. Following her training in drama therapy at New York University and her doctoral studies in quantitative psychology at Columbia University, she has built a career as a drama therapist, educator and quantitative researcher. Dr Yang is dedicated to advancing the professional development and cross-cultural growth of drama therapy in China.

Contact: Columbia University, 116th Street and Broadway, New York, NY 10027, USA.
E-mail: yiyang@nyu.edu

Dr Pedro Humberto Torres Godoy is a distinguished Chilean psychiatrist, systemic therapist and drama therapist with over four decades of clinical experience. After graduating as a medical surgeon and specializing in psychiatry at the Universidad de Chile, he dedicated his career to the integration of creative arts, neuroscience and mental health. He currently serves as the director of EDRAS Chile, an accredited psychodrama school, and is an active member of both the International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes (IAGP) and the Asociación Española de Psicodrama (AEP). Through his private practice in Santiago, teaching and international publications, Dr Torres Godoy advocates for theatre and psychodrama as powerful, evidence-based tools for psychological healing and group transformation.

Contact: EDRAS Chile, Av. Príncipe de Gales 5921, Of. 1304, La Reina, Santiago, Chile; EDRAS Chile, Celerino Pereira 1905, Taller 3, Ñuñoa, Santiago, Chile.
E-mail: pedrotorresgodoy@gmail.com

Rinat Feniger-Schaal, Ph.D., is a senior lecturer (tenured) at the School of Creative Arts Therapies, University of Haifa, Israel, where she established the MA program in drama therapy and psychodrama. She brings together multiple professional identities as a certified drama therapist (registered supervisor),

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

medical clown and developmental psychologist. Her research focuses on the intersection of clinical practice and empirical investigation, particularly exploring the relationships between play, playfulness, drama, movement and attachment theory. With extensive clinical experience in both public and private settings, she specializes in working with individuals with cognitive impairment and mental health challenges. Dr Feniger-Schaal has secured significant research grants, presented internationally, and published widely in peer-reviewed journals.

Contact: University of Haifa, 199 Aba Khoushy Ave. Mount Carmel, Haifa 3498838, Israel.
E-mail: rfenigers@univ.haifa.ac.il

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8324-8030

Shruti Garg is an Indian dramatist, UK-registered drama and movement therapist (HCPC), and stand-up comedian who merges mental health practice with performance art. Based in India, Shruti specializes in trauma-informed, LGBTQIA+-affirmative therapy and serves as an executive member of Drama Therapy India. An advocate for inclusive spaces, Shruti is the founder of QueerProv, an improv theatre space for queer and women-identifying individuals, and was recognized by Deadant as one of India's top upcoming comics, uniquely utilizing humour and mythopoetic approaches to foster healing and elevate diverse stories.

E-mail: shruti.dramatherapy@gmail.com

Akhila Khanna is a licensed creative arts therapist from India, working with adults in acute inpatient psychiatry and with adolescents and families at a group private practice in New York City. She is also a researcher with the Foundation of Arts and Health India, where she supports gathering data on measurable outcomes of the arts and health in India. Her research, clinical and artistic practice, stems from her training in the Theatre of the Oppressed, in the meditative magic of Bharatanatyam and in playing silly games with communities across cultures.

Contact: City University of New York, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017, USA.
E-mail: ak8334@nyu.edu

https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0843-7920

Dr Stelios Krasanakis is a prominent Greek psychiatrist, educator and theatre director who has spent over three decades advancing the integration of creative arts and mental health. He is the founder and training director of the Institute of Dramatherapy AEON, where he pioneered the clinically recognized 'model of three triangles' in therapeutic practices. Along with lecturing at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Dr Krasanakis has held landmark leadership positions, including serving as the scientific director of the THISEAS drug addiction treatment centre and acting as a founding member of both the European Federation of Dramatherapy (EFD) and the World Alliance of Dramatherapy (WADth). An accomplished director of over twenty theatrical productions, his international research and publications

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56

continue to focus on the transformative intersection of psychiatric rehabilitation, group psychotherapy and performance.

Contact: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 30 Panepistimiou Street, Athens 10679, Greece.
E-mail: aeongr@otenet.gr

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2154-7593

Marc Willemsen, MA, is a practising registered drama therapist and a senior lecturer at the HU University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. He is a Ph.D. candidate at the Open University, connected to the HU research centre for youth and the collective research centre for creative arts therapies, KenVaK. He initiated the shared practice Het Speelvlak, is the vice-president of the EFD and the former training director of DvT Netherlands.

Contact: HU University of Applied Sciences, Padualaan 101, 3584 CH Utrecht, the Netherlands.
E-mail: marcwillemsen@hotmail.com

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6318-8907

Nisha Sajnani, María Sol Guerrero Giménez, Ravindra Ranasinha, Russya Connor, Kyoo Ho Moon, Chanaphan Thammarut, Majid Amrai, Lindsay Irwin, Francesca McInally, Yi Yang, Pedro Humberto Torres Godoy, Rinat Feniger-Schaal, Shruti Garg, Akhila Khanna, Stelios Krasanakis and Marc Alexander Willemsen have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the authors of this work in the format that was submitted to Intellect Ltd.

Delivered by Intellect to:
Guest (guest)
IP: 94.157.9.13
On: Sun, 04 Oct 2026 18:59:56