

Playing Bodies

Manual with new curriculum and piloting

Project N°: ID 2023-1-ES01-KA210-ADU-000155469
Elaborated by: L'ESPACE APS/ASD
December 2024



Playing Bodies

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Introduction

Technological advancement is a constant aspect of human development. It not only shapes daily life and society as a whole, but also impacts art and its expression within cultural contexts. This has always been the case.

In recent years, this trend has intensified, making the technological evolution so apparent that it seems essential, for understanding our era and particularly our artistic landscape, to conduct an investigation revealing how artistic expressions are merging with the integration of these "new technologies."

A few decades or even centuries ago, innovations like the simple use of electricity and artificial lighting brought significant changes to the performance of live artistic works. The same applies to music, where recording, reproduction, and amplification capabilities drastically transformed the forms, formats, and textures of musical expression. Today, the influence of "new technologies" manifests in surprising and unexpected ways in artistic discourse, achieving varying degrees of success, but leaving few areas untouched by this integration.

This integration is what we aim to clarify in this research. We seek to understand how and in what manner new technologies are asserting their power and influence within the realm of Live Arts, how they are being utilized, and the reasons artists are welcoming them and relinquishing spaces. This infiltration into the artistic domain may or may not harmonize with existing elements that already occupy specific disciplines. New technologies can either integrate smoothly or disrupt everything they encounter, taking over domains not originally theirs.

Each partner in this project has analyzed and exemplified how this phenomenon is occurring in their respective countries. This collaborative effort has helped the partnership establish a common understanding from which we can explore how we can mutually influence one another, as well as what new tools or innovative applications of technology we can contribute to develop a shared methodology for the movement arts in which each partner is engaged.

This has thus served as the theoretical foundation for our research, from which we have exchanged methodologies and our unique approaches with one another. It has provided the linguistic and conceptual basis for articulating our shared practices and the triangular connections between the three distinct interpretations of movement that we each bring to this Erasmus+ project.

The dance companies involved in the project.



Body Architects (Austria)

Body Architects Association is an interdisciplinary arts organization with dance at its core. It has been born from the urge to create artistic work that prioritizes strong, physical dance expression while encouraging the trans-disciplinary approach (encouraging the cross-contamination of methods and disciplines, notably, live music and live art installation). The expressive language of Body Architects is characterized by the focus on artistic skill and research, as well as developing and mixing styles. The Body Architects' dancers have a background in contemporary dance, partnering, acrobatics, and breakdance. The musicians are very physical multiinstrumentalists and the visual artists are also live performers.



The mission

The mission of the Body Architects is to promote the value of human movement by artistic and educational work. We combine the artistry of dance with the agility of athletic and acrobatic forms to create something truly unique that appeals to a wider audience. In the process, we aim to foster greater appreciation for various live performing art forms while expanding existing expressive vocabularies.

One of the first creations of the group is House Beating, a large performance for outside spaces. It sets out to translate architectural concepts into ways the bodies interact with each other, with the space, and with a live-created wooden installation. The project became a touring piece (mainly, in Poland and the Czech Republic), and as such, it is often accompanied by workshops for the local community as well as it integrates local performers into the presentation. Next, came architektura+tanz, a collaboration with the Linz-based architecture-focused exhibition space afo architekturförum Öberösterreich. This project is a continuation of the approach, this time together with multiple visual artists and architects (working with new materials such as paper, wooden sheets, rope, metal, concrete) which resulted in a performance and an exhibition.

Further, The B-Team is a successful touring performance in the language of physical theatre that focuses on four comedic characters and uses a collection of wooden pallets as an ever-changing stage set. It exists both for theatrical and outdoor spaces which made it possible to be performed in very diverse places such as Albania, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Luxemburg, to name a few. The most recent stage production is Life Below Water, a collaboration with the electronic music group Austrian Apparel. Besides, there have been multiple solo works by Hygin Delimat such as Landscape Before Catastrophe, Slowstepper, and For Living In, which strongly align with the organization's way of working. The touring live of Body Architects is documented and available in vlog format through the YouTube channel. Furthermore, Body Architects has been very active in the media of dance film, with 3 short projects to their name: THEY FEEL LIKE HOME, WARP and Place Alone.

P. Voitech Brtnicky



Over the last five years, the organization has become more involved in education and dissemination practices. It followed the need for supporting physical movement in Vienna since the local dance scene leans towards rather minimalistic types of expressions. Body Architects wanted to share knowledge and provide space for young makers who also shared this need for cultivating strong physicality and skill.

In 2019, Craft Choreography[1] was launched. It was a bi-monthly presentation platform for young makers, taking place in Brick 5 an alternative performance venue. It welcomed artists from the local and European dance scene and gathered large audiences. A big emphasis of the series was on direct communication with the audience in the form of audience talk and video materials (vlogs, event compilations, artist interviews). At the peak, Craft Choreography hosted workshops taught by artists to students of local art schools. During Covid, the series continued in a format of live-stream. In 2021, the series was discontinued.

Following the practice of speaking to the performing artists, Mind Culture Podcast[2] was created. The podcast is a very accessible way of popularizing the art-derived knowledge among the wide international audience. Some notable guests include Willy Dorner, Florentina Holzinger or Georg Blaschke.

The majority of artists working within and with the Body Architects are also active teachers and pedagogues. They share their knowledge at several Universities in Austria and abroad (dance, circus, and music), in workshop contexts, in cultural centers, and in art and dance schools. Over the last 3 years, the organization has also participated in European Erasmus+ Projects that focus on developing new pedagogical methods in art education: Viral Visions and Playing Bodies.

The organization has worked over the years with many talented artists, including: Hygin Delimat, Marcin Denkiewicz, Noemi Wagner, Nikola Majtanova, Wendy Choi-Buttinger, Elias Choi-Buttinger, Andreas Buttinger, Łukasz Czapski, Martyna Lorenc, Maria Anna Chlebus, Volland Szekely, Alexander Georgiev, Schayan Kazemi, Sebastian Wasner, Dominik Traun, Martyna Lorenc, Manuela Deac, Franz Koppelstaetter

[1] <https://architects.hygin-delimat.com/craft/>

[2] <https://architects.hygin-delimat.com/mind-culture/>

Pedagogical Approach

🌀 The main focus points in our work

Partnering – We want to be able to work and dance together with other people, by exchanging weight and sensory information with other bodies. We share tools of partnering in a very pure technical way, as well as to be in the moment, feel, trust, and play with tools of improvisation.



P. Marta-Ankiersztejn

Connecting bodies with architecture – We create shapes within our bodies and relate them to other bodies and/ or the outside surroundings. We share tools on how to construct and deconstruct shapes in the body and how you can connect a sensation to a form.

As Body Architects we are interested in the human body and the connection we can build with others and with the surroundings. We like to work in close physical contact, using the techniques of partnering and contact improvisation. We also like to do our activities outside of the traditional stage and studio spaces and to get inspired by the multitude of surroundings (both by architectural and nature spaces).

In our pedagogical approach, we are interested in sharing our experience and movement language, as well as getting inspired by each person who works with us. We are teaching not only professional dancers but targeting a broader field, containing amateurs, that are interested in movement. It is important to us that each person receives personal attention to continue their development. The objective is not to change what each person builds for themselves, it is to add information and knowledge to their “Backpack”, so they can have more tools to continue their physical education.

🌀 In our workshops/ class, we approach the body from various angles

Sensation: We are interested in how the body can become open and sensitive towards any physical information it receives. Therefore the focus is very much on listening. We believe that we have to be able to listen first in order to take any meaningful action or decision.

Technique/ Forming/ Shaping: We share technical tools, for example, how to lift someone, and how to receive weight, while being safe and protecting your own body.

The center of the body: The Hips play an important role throughout the workshop/ class. We use the hips as a guide, a motor, a strong base, and a point of connection with other bodies.

Improvisation: We offer tools to play with and challenge someone's creativity.

Outside Space: After connecting in an inside space, we are trying to connect the tools and try to apply them outside. Hopefully, with the knowledge we gathered in the studio, we can relate to the architectural environment.

🌀 Our goals

P. Nikola Majtanova, Lev Riseman



It is important to us that people build a sensitivity to be able to work together with other people/ other bodies, as well as be inspired by the architectural environment.

No matter their background, we hope that after working with us, people develop greater sensitivity and openness to working with others or in a group.

They get enough information and technical tools on how to approach another body. At the same time, they can listen, understand the other's energy, and translate it into their own body. They feel free to be playful and just simply enjoy dancing together. They get inspired by the architectural environment and can apply it in their work and life.

Performances and film

- Landscape Before Catastrophe
- The B-Team
- House Beating
- Slowstepper – On The Edge Of Survival
- architektur + tanz
- For Living In
- They Feel Like Home
- Wrap
- Place alone

Integration of Technologies in Body Architects' Work

Body Architects seamlessly integrate various technologies into their choreographic and performative endeavors to create immersive experiences that push the boundaries of traditional dance. Below is an overview of how technologies meet their work, specifying productions that included these technologies and their applications, along with other complementary activities.

Sound and composition

"House Beating": This performance is inspired by the cutting edge composition and sound engineering of Steve Reich and Iannis Xenakis. Although the end result is very analogue (played live on percussive instruments), the sound patterns are very derivative of the early electronic music.

"Slowstepper – On The Edge Of Survival": Incorporates sonification works credited by NASA as well as a homemade remix of Alice Coltrane in a style of screwed and chopped, creating an overall atmosphere that reflects survival themes. Sound engineering technology, including spatial audio and surround sound systems, helps immerse the audience in the performance, emphasizing the physical and emotional extremes explored in the choreography.

Interactive Installations

"House Beating": Features a morphing wooden installation that responds to the dancers' movements, creating an evolving spatial dynamic. Technology used in making the work as well as performing it involves a plethora of contemporary woodworking tools. It creates a very raw building-site-like aesthetic which highlights the beauty in physical and musical performances

Light and Stage Design

P. Marta-Ankiersztejn



"Slowstepper - On The Edge Of Survival": Uses advanced lighting systems to highlight the physical extremes of survival, creating visual metaphors that resonate with the choreography. Technologies like programmable LED lighting and DMX control systems allow for precise control over light intensity, color, and movement, creating dramatic and immersive lighting effects.

Film and Cinematography

"They Feel Like Home" (2022): This production uses video recording, editing and sound design to convey themes of longing and the concept of home. Digital media allows for a seamless blend of dance and visual storytelling, enhancing the emotional and visual appeal of the performance. Using the medium of film combats the ephemeral nature of dance performance.



"Warp" (2022): Explores themes of time and disorientation through film and video editing. Cinematography techniques provide new perspectives on choreography, emphasizing elements that might be less perceptible in live performances. High-definition cameras and professional editing software enable the creation of visually compelling narratives that extend the reach and impact of the performance.

Complementary Activities

Mind Culture Podcast

The "Mind Culture Podcast" explores the intersection of dance, culture, and society. This platform allows for in-depth discussions on topics related to dance, creativity, and the arts, featuring interviews with artists, scholars, and cultural figures. The podcast employs advanced recording equipment, such as high-quality microphones, audio interfaces, and digital audio workstations for recording and editing episodes



Production Process:

- Pre-production: Involves planning the episode themes, researching topics, and coordinating with guests.
- Recording: Uses high-fidelity microphones and soundproofing techniques to ensure clear audio quality. Portable recording devices like Zoom H6 can also be used for on-the-go interviews.
- Post-production: Involves editing the audio using software like Audacity or Adobe Audition, adding sound effects, music, and ensuring the final mix is balanced and polished.
- Distribution: Episodes are uploaded to podcast platforms such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts, reaching a global audience.

🌀 Viral Visions – creating short form contents for social media channels

"Viral Visions" project explores the impact of digital and viral media on contemporary dance. It includes creating and disseminating dance videos designed to engage online audiences. Technologies such as high-resolution cameras, video editing software, and social media analytics tools are employed to create and optimize content for online platforms



Project Example:

- Title: "Digital Dance Diary"
- Technology Used: Social media platforms and video editing software.
- Application: Features short dance pieces specifically choreographed for online platforms, experimenting with how dance can be adapted to and influenced by digital media. Real-time feedback and analytics help refine the content and engagement strategies.

Conclusion

Integrating technologies and complementary activities in Body Architects' work enriches their choreographic expressions and audience experiences. Technologies such as digital media, sound engineering, interactive installations, advanced lighting systems, and film significantly enhance their productions' narrative, visual, and emotional elements. Additionally, initiatives like the "Mind Culture Podcast" and "Viral Visions" extend the impact of their work, fostering dialogue and engaging broader audiences through digital platforms. These efforts showcase a seamless blend of art and technology, pushing the boundaries of contemporary dance and engaging with cultural and societal themes.

The dance companies involved in the project.



espazoaberto (Spain)

espazoaberto theatre and dance school, was founded and began its activity in 1992 as the first professional theatre school for actors and actresses in Galicia. Since its beginnings, it has worked on the design of an educational project that is in continuous evolution, growing and changing with the times. An avant-garde methodology that is characterised not only by having those subjects linked to the theatrical aspect but with all the artistic manifestations that have to do with contemporary creation.

Both, the permanent and the specific courses, aimed at shaping a broader and more conscious training, are the bases from which to bring students closer to their own, non-transferable training process.

After more than thirty years directing, advising and training creators, espazoaberto has a great deal of experience as an educational centre and continues to believe in the fundamental idea that training, autonomy and freedom are the keys that all contemporary artists must have when creating and transforming reality.

espazoaberto

Pedagogical Approach



The school started its trajectory by implementing Stanislavski's Second Method of Physical Actions. This method is related to other later methodologies that were created elsewhere, such as Grotowski's method, which were also applied at the beginning of the school. From that beginning, Carlos Neira began to develop his own methodology. For this necessary transformation to take place, it must be taken into account that at the time of the beginning of espazoaberto's activity, the method of physical actions covered a large part of the actor's needs. Then, with the evolution of the theatrical act, of the artistic act, and with the development and changes in the world and into society, little by little the actor found himself in the need of new and different tools adapted to the new times and to the new way of living and expressing oneself. It can be said that nowadays the Stanislavski's Method covers much less that it used to do of the acting needs. It is for this reason that the school begins to develop its own methodology.

This methodology leaves behind the Physical Actions Method, although it remains present for the initial part of the student's training process, as it still covers a minor but necessary part of the training and is something that needs to be known and studied. But from then on, Carlos Neira's methodology is based on the needs and the evolution of the times.

It starts from a deep work with the body, considering it as the actor's instrument. The voice itself becomes a part of the body and is no longer an instrument separate from the body. Therefore the body occupies a central position as a working tool. It is also essential in the methodology the contamination with other artistic disciplines so the theatre ceases to be a watertight compartment to become a support within the Living Arts that have to feed on different and more varied tools than only the Physical Actions.



From this starting point, the three training courses are structured as follows:

- In the first course, the foundations of acting and theatre are set. These foundations are established so that the body of the aspiring actor can unlearn and transform itself and begin to understand the essence of the theatrical fact. The work with the text is very limited in this course and everything is directed towards the transformation of the individual, the aspiring actor, so that his or her body begins to sound correctly and is fine-tuned. In addition, the foundations are laid for the understanding of the theatrical fact so that in the future the two elements, the acting and the theatrical fact, will be united.

In this way the foundation is laid for the necessary actor, never a puppet, who has the ability to create, develop ideas and give them form.

- In the second course is when the work with the text is definitively incorporated in order to join the two paths, the acting and the theatrical. In this way, the acquisition of the technique acquired in the first course is shaped and put into practice. For this we use previous dramatic texts but also our own texts, because this is also a necessary tool: the ability to create text from a tool, the body, which begins to speak. The body has the need to express itself and has a bag of words, with the necessary training the body begins to choose them and organic texts are born.

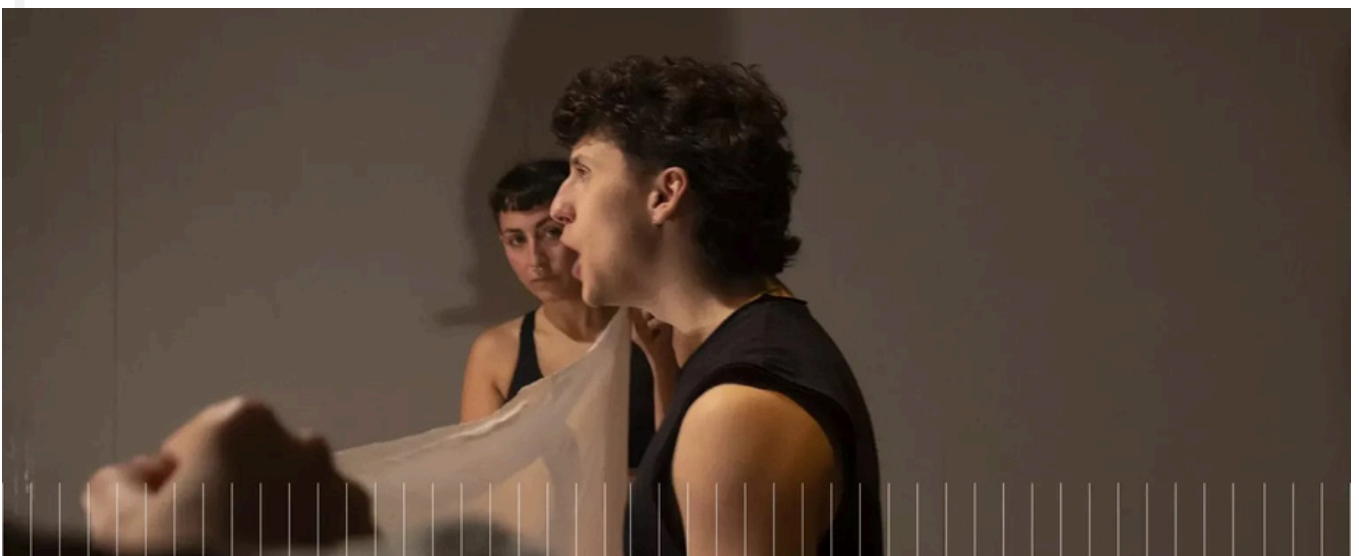
- In the third year, students develop the creation of their own artistic project, a project that they can take with them when they leave the school to join the artistic circuit and show it to the public as their first professional work. In this way they go through a process of research that is put into practice on stage, developing it and getting it ready to be premiered. Depending on the tendency or personal preference of the student, one way or another is taken within the Living Arts and this project is aimed at initiating the path into the world once the training process carried out at the school has been completed.

In order to carry out all this work, a series of subjects that the student must pass are established. In the first year, students begin with Physical Preparation of the Actor and Acting. In the second year, the work with the voice, Vocal Technique, Acting in Front of the Camera and Theatre Theory and History are added. In the third year, students continue to work with the body and acting, as in the second year, and have the option to continue working with the voice and the camera, with maximum dedication to the development of their personal project.



Objectives of the works

The aim of the school has always been to train professionals for the Living Arts disciplines, especially in the field of contemporary expression. These professionals have to be complete in terms of their training and have to have gone through a process of transformation through information, knowledge and the path between unlearning and relearning, which gives them the tools to develop themselves, either through already formed companies, with their own projects or in the audiovisual world, depending on the will of each one.



• Talk about your artistic production

espazoaberto as a school has no artistic production of its own, being this expected, as this is not part of its mission nor its objectives, which are focused exclusively on the training process of the students. Carlos Neira, director and teacher at the school, does have an extensive trajectory of artistic pieces that have been produced and in these processes there has been a greater or lesser link with the school itself. Organisationally, these works could be divided into two lines. One of them would be those projects independent of the school with its professional company in which espazoaberto operated as a place of creation and rehearsal and also as a place of training for most of the cast members. Another line, with a stronger link to the school, would be those pieces that Carlos Neira turned more closely to the social structure of espazoaberto, with the direct participation of students in the process of training at that time, and which sometimes responded to commissions from festivals or public institutions.

Bearing in mind this variability of links between Carlos Neira's creations and the school, we will proceed to list an important part of his productions.

• Performance



- **Punto de partida. 1993.**
- **Me gusta que me lo hagas... 2000.**
- **Tuanis. 2002.**
- **Corpos disidentes. 2006.**
- **4:48 Psicose. 2007.**
- **A mirada de Pier. 2008.**
- **Wake-up. 2009.**
- **Operatorio, with Antía Otero. 2012.**
- **Showroom. 2008.**
- **Acción#1 and Acción#2. 2010**
- **Provisional Time. 2010.**
- **Corporal (je t'aime). 2010.**
- **1 MÁIS 3. 2014.**
- **A poética do baleiro. 2024.**

How the technologies meet your work



Apart from more or less established uses of devices related to image capture and their projection on stage, we are particularly interested in mentioning the tests and experiments carried out with movement and position sensors.

According to his particular experience, he encountered a factor that is always present and difficult to forget when deciding to apply this type of new technology advances. This factor is the arbitrariness of technology and the professional tension it induces, apart from the dramatic tensions inherent to the scene. We are referring to the fact that technology is fallible, that it can work well or not well at all, or even not at all at a given moment. Although, ultimately, it always arrived in time to be properly activated in the shows, there were occasions when only at the last moment was everything ready, just before the performance began. This was a drain and a mistrust that can take its toll on the energies available before the start of a public performance. The Living Arts are not yet ready for devices that may have a higher margin of error than any other device already implemented in professional practice. It is likely that with the passage of time these margins of error have been reduced as we are talking about an experience of a decade ago, however, one senses that computers and sensors have not yet become as reliable as would be required for a show where live time makes or breaks the success or failure of the performance.

On the other hand, the use of the sensors, which triggered effects and sound recordings, never reached the level of perfection that was expected and that was achieved by working purely with the actors and actresses. The sensors, placed on the wrists and ankles of the performers, were set up to modulate the texture of the recordings, their volume and intensity depending on two factors: the momentum of movement and their inclination with respect to the axes of the space. Despite working relatively well in terms of their timely activation, they did not manage to provoke the extreme modulations in the sound that they were trying to achieve, causing the need to have to make up for these spaces with other elements, acting or otherwise, different from the technological one. From this point of view, this phenomenon can be attributed to the different communication one must have with technology, as this communication is bidirectional with actors, with a subjective response, and unidirectional with the technology, where only parameters are applied from the human to the machine until the exact point is found. The aim was to achieve this with the performer as an intermediary, that is, to direct the movement of the performer and for this to vary the sound that was emitted, but the result of this interaction did not work in the way that was expected. This production was *Wake Up*.

In a different experience, working with heel pressure sensors, the use was, however, optimal. Despite the factor of the possibility of technological failure in the devices and software, the presence and prominence of the sensors was more measured and the dramatic intensity did not depend in this case exclusively on them, so it was experienced in an optimal and low-profile way, i.e. they were used as other usual elements such as lighting or video cameras could be used and did not leave a sense of frustration, facilitated by the prudent presence given to them. This production was *1 MÁIS 3*.



The dance companies involved in the project.



L'espace (Italy)

L'espace APS/ASD (l'espace Dance Company) was founded in 2012 in Palermo with the aim of promoting and disseminating avant-garde and research contemporary dance and culture locally, nationally and internationally, becoming a point of reference for its revolutionary and holistic approach through the productions of its dance company, its commitment to dissemination and its educational offerings.

The association was founded by the choreographer-dancer Giovanni Zappulla, artistic director of the Zappulla DMN company and creator of the innovative Danza Movimento Naturale method, which stems from the substantial union of contemporary dance, Taijiquan and Zhineng Qigong. The method is the expression of a study model that is consistent with human nature in all its aspects: biomechanical, energetic and psychic through disciplines that enable the development of human potential by re-establishing the heritage of internal connections. President of the association and co-director of the Zappulla DMN company is the dancer Annachiara Trigili, who together with the musician and composer Giuseppe Rizzo, the dancer Roberta D'Ignoti, and the visual artist Petra Trombini make up the main creative nucleus.

One of the company objectives is to stage a pure and natural dance, through the close link between mind and body, making the dancer a means to push the audience to live the performance as both an aesthetic and emotional experience.

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The company has a repertoire consisting of the following shows: Apollo and Daphne (2015), a duo with music by Giuseppe Rizzo; Memories from the future (2016), a trio on Beethoven's Seventh Symphony; Sul Sentimento (2017), with music by Fabio Badalamenti; Natural Landscapes (2016), the result of the collaboration between the Zappulla DMN company and the Collective M. I.M. Arte Escenico of Mexico City, pièce for 10 dancers with music by Giuseppe Rizzo; Wunderkammer (2021), trio with music by Giuseppe Rizzo; Dafne and Apollo (2022), duo with live music by G. Rizzo and video mapping. The association has a partnership with La Galèrie Chorégraphique of Carcassonne (FR) directed by Thierry Gourmelen and is the winner of three European Erasmus+ projects for the dissemination of good practices through the art of choreography. These three projects, currently underway, Dance Highways, Viral Visions and IN.TO.DA.TE. contribute to the creation of a strong international network with various realities operating in the contemporary dance scene including: La Fundición - Asociación Puertas Abiertas (Bilbao, Spain); Dansearena nord (Trømso, Norway); Fundacja Rozwoju Teatru 'NOWA FALA' (Warsaw, Poland); Theater der Klänge (Düsseldorf, Germany); Body Architects (Wien, Austria); Mala akademija umjetnosti (Ernestinovo, Croatia), giving rise to training and performance events.



In May 2021, the association organised the first edition of the Festival Dissidanza in Palermo and in October 2022 the second one, involving national and international artists engaged in experimental and innovative performance projects among contaminations and avant-garde technologies. Through its productions, the Zappulla DMN company has carried out several international projects including, in 2016, a collaboration with the M.I.M. Arte Escenico Collective of Mexico City that gave rise to an artistic residency and the creation of the show for 10 dancers Natural Landscapes represented at the TMO of Palermo and at the Dance Theatre of Mexico City. The company also took part in the 2019 and 2020 editions of the Dance Cités festival in Carcassonne, the Rencontres mouvementées choreographic platform in Toulouse in December 2020, the Dissidance festival in Ajaccio in September 2021 and the U!New festival in Warsaw in December 2021 and September 2022.

The association is also committed to professional and amateur training through weekly courses, stages and workshops with choreographer Giovanni Zappulla and the Zappulla DMN company as well as collaborations with national and international artists including Damiano Bigi, Patrice Usseglio, Marina Rocco, Michèle Etori, Fabien Delisle, while continuing the dissemination of the Danza Movimento Naturale method, which represents an innovation in the training panorama of the performer and dancer.



• Pedagogical Approach

🌀 The “Danza Movimento Naturale” method

The Danza Movimento Naturale (DMN) method was created in 2005 by Giovanni Zappulla, choreographer, dancer and artistic director of the choreographic centre L'espace.

His long stay in France – at the National Conservatory of Music and Dance of Boulogne Billancourt and at Ridc (Rencontres Internationales de danse contemporaine) – gave Zappulla a strong pedagogical imprint that pushed him to deepen the techniques and the path already undertaken by the dancer Isadora Duncan (1877–1827).

In the footsteps of Isadora Duncan: the rebel genius and her 'inner movement'

Isadora Duncan was a rebel genius, an essential piece of dance history precisely because she did not have a pre-established academic education and also because she always had the courage to explore the limits of dance.

The Natural Movement Dance thus starts from an in-depth study of the techniques of Duncan, the first who theorised the category of internal movement.

"We could define it as a movement that finally resolves the dichotomy between spirit and body. A dichotomy – points out Zappulla – that has been imposed as a superstructure but that the Greeks did not know: in the theatre they were musicians, actors and dancers together. In the same way, internal movement starts from the soul, radiates to the bones and deep muscles, to the mind and body: it is a force that we have not been used for centuries.

The connection with oriental disciplines

The DMN method – born from the collaboration between the choreographer and the dancer Annachiara Trigili – developed with the substantial union of contemporary dance with music and with the encounter with Taijiquan Chen and Qigong, disciplines in which we find the concept of internal movement, consistent with human nature in its biomechanical, energetic and psychic aspects.

"It is not surprising that Western thought and techniques meet with Eastern ones, just as the mind and body return to dialogue through the Danza Movimento Naturale method,' Zappulla observes, 'because the human body is conceived as an orchestral instrument. It has the same harmony that we find in the images of the dancing Greek figures, the same harmony that Isadora looked for in museums, in order to bring it back to the theatre: the natural place of this harmony'.

Questions to (re)start from

What contemporary dance has started to do again just over a century ago is to give the body the opportunity to construct its natural history, to express its essential movement according to its inner balance. In the DMN method, the body learns to listen to these laws. "We have to start – says Giovanni Zappulla – from some questions: do we let our body express its own rhythm? How can we follow its natural mechanisms to really move, regardless of the effect to be produced, of the result to be achieved? How can we move slowly or quickly, without being imposed an artificial functioning? If technological progress has helped to shrink the space-time in which we acquire information in a bulimic way, what about individual space-time?"

Sicily, abroad, the past and the future

A method, DMN, which has already been exported across borders, from France to Mexico, through workshops and performances in which the dancer's body is no longer considered an object to be irreversibly worn out in homage to the aesthetics of movement, but a centre of strength, growth and well-being.

The dancer thus becomes strong through dance itself. And dance becomes natural again, incredibly rich; bodies can go far beyond questions of technique and style, movement has its own truth.

"At the same time," the choreographer continues, "the research I carry out could only have originated in Sicily. The company I direct could only be conceived in a land with an immense heritage of complex and different cultures, and which possesses the strengths and capabilities to find a meeting point. A contemporaneity in evolutionary continuity with a past in which mind and body were united in a single harmony. Our task is to find it again. Only then the dancer will realise that s/he already has a music inside her/him, written just for her/him: and all s/he can do is listen to it and share it."

Artistic production



- **Coin Cafè (2001)**
- **Tramontate erano le Pleiadi (2002)**
- **L'aviatore (2004)**
- **Coming Soon (2006)**
- **No man's land (2010)**
- **Sul sentimento (2017)**
- **Tech No Trash (2010)**
- **Apollo e Dafne (2015)**
- **Memories from the future (2016)**
- **Natural Landscapes (2017)**
- **Wunderkammer (2018)**
- **Dafne e Apollo (2021)**
- **Love (H) U man's Love (2023)**

• How the technologies meet your work

In the Natural Movement Dance (DMN) method, which forms the foundation of the artistic creation of the Zappulla DMN Dance Company, technology is not seen merely as an additional tool but as a means to enhance the extraordinary complexity and potential of the human being. Our vision is based on the idea that technology, especially that available in the global market, is a projection of the vastness and richness of human capabilities. It is not an alteration of human nature but an expression of it, a way to amplify and share with the audience the depth and sensitivity of the human experience in all its diversity.

In the context of live performance, the company uses advanced technologies such as "sound and processing capture" and "video and processing capture," tools that allow for real-time interaction with the actions of the artists on stage. These technologies are not merely accompaniment but become an integral part of the performance, capable of strengthening, emphasizing, and at times transforming the actions on stage. Through the use of these techniques, we are able to bring the more subtle yet equally significant details of the artists' interpretation and emotions to a broader perceptive dimension, making the nuances of bodily, vocal, and musical expression not only visible but also audible and tangible to the audience.



A concrete example of this interaction between dance and technology is seen in the performance *"Love(H)U man's Love,"* which emerged from the international collaboration in the Erasmus Plus project "Playing Bodies."

Here, the stage transforms into an immersive experience through the use of interactive sets, which come to life through the real-time processing of images captured by a camera. The footage of the artists is processed by an algorithm that transforms the images into video projections that interact directly with the on-stage actions, creating a dialogue between the body, technology, and the surrounding environment.

Furthermore, the auditory aspect of the performance is enhanced by the use of advanced technologies for processing the voices of the dancers. The voices, which intertwine with the acting and singing, are captured by special microphones and then processed by audio software. This process creates a sound flow that is not just a simple recording but a dynamic composition that interacts with the musical score of the entire performance. The transformation of the voice, merging with movement and image, amplifies the emotional intensity of the performance, making the experience even more immersive for the audience.

In summary, the approach of the Zappulla DMN Dance Company exemplifies how technology can be harmoniously and sensitively integrated into artistic creation, not as a separate or foreign element but as a natural extension of human potential. In our work, technology becomes a language that enhances the experience of the moving body and sensory perception, creating a deeper and more immediate connection with the audience.

Productions that included technologies

In these productions the relationship between performance and the use of technology emerges as a central theme, highlighting how technology is not just a support, but an integrated and fundamental component of the artistic experience.

1. *Wunderkammer (Creation 2018)*

Technology is used in an innovative way to create a unique sonic dimension. Giovanni Zappulla's choreography and Giuseppe Rizzo's music merge into a multidimensional expression, where the "sound capture" technology plays a pivotal role. Sounds from the scene are captured and transformed in real-time, creating a soundtrack that reflects the connection between the human microcosm and the macrocosm of the universe. Here, technology is not merely a technical element but a medium to explore philosophical and universal concepts related to the mind, body, and dance.

2. *Dafne e Apollo (Creation 2021)*

The use of technology in this performance serves to deepen the dramatic impact and sensory experience of the audience. The interactive video and music, resulting from digital processing, are elements that accompany the narrative and amplify the interaction between the dancers and the environment, creating a dynamic set that follows the emotional journey of the protagonists. In this context, technology is not just an aesthetic tool but a mode of "dialogue" between the inner world of the artists and the audience's perception, involving them in an immersive and transformative experience.

3. Love(H)U man's Love (Creation 2023)

In this case, technology serves to create a constantly evolving experiential space where the interaction between dance, music, and video generates a powerful and ever-changing sensory flow. The project explores the spiritual origins of movement through techniques such as hypnosis and trance, and technology is used to reveal and amplify the experience of altered states of consciousness. The live electronics, with its ability to capture and transform sounds generated by the performers in real-time, create a sonic landscape that mirrors the performers' inner flow, while the video scenography makes the invisible tangible, offering the audience an immersive view of the artists' inner world. Here, technology becomes a carrier of an intangible dimension, reinforcing and completing the artistic message, creating an experience that is both visual and sensory, as well as spiritual.

In all three performances, technology is not merely an aesthetic or functional element but an active interlocutor that interacts with the body, sound, and image. It enables the exploration of new modes of perception and interaction with the performance, making the artistic experience more immersive, interactive, and sensorily engaging. Technology is not seen as a separate entity from dance but as an extension of it, helping to shape and give substance to a dynamic and ever-evolving artistic reality.



The experience in this project. What's up before "Playing bodies"?

Body Architects

Participating in the European Network Playing Bodies has opened our horizons to completely new pedagogical approaches, such as the original methods of teaching of Carlos Neira or deep investigation of the Zappulla DNM Method. On the level of teaching dance and music, we gained new tools and approaches that we are already putting into practice to various extent in our regular pedagogical activities. Those include the Qi Gong inspired movement coordinations as well as a plethora of acting exercises. Both can be integrated literally or even easily translated into our pedagogical practice. Thanks to the exposure, we also got to question the themes of authority, value in personal expression and calmness and see our own work through those lenses. Furthermore, we got to see how the other organizations manage their daily operations. On the artistic level, we got to try and participate in the sound-video processing experiment of L'Espace as well as in the live performance-video work of Espazo Aberto. We certainly got inspired to try some of those strategies perhaps in our upcoming artistic works.

espazoaberto

The Erasmus+ Project Playing Bodies came to us as a stimulating experience on different levels. The first trip to Vienna gave us the opportunity to travel and to get to know the reality of another European country in its everyday life. It was also the first contact with the essence of the Erasmus+ Project: mobility and intra-European contact. This allowed us to see first-hand what the dynamics and ways of doing are in these projects and in situ. This happened in general about the Erasmus+ Projects and more specifically about our own project Playing Bodies through the reception of our hosts in Austria, the artists of Body Architects. The implementation of the programmed activities and the whole mobility, in general, was a stimulus for our activity, both teaching and artistic and also at the level of project partners, a spur that led us to consider how to continue the journey and stimulate us to launch an activity that remained dormant. Thanks to this impulse we started all the engines to be able to give and give the best of ourselves in the next mobility in which we would be hosts.

In this way, we established the foundations on which we wanted to support the visit to our city and our school and we activated a powerful energy that led us to work intensely during the time between these first two mobilities. The logistical, teaching and artistic preparation for the next meeting was an arduous but rewarding process of work that was ignited by that first shared experience. That initial stimulus was transformed into an intensive dedication in order to have everything ready when we met again. Our intention was to show in the best possible way the work carried out in the school by Carlos Neira and that the methodology applied to train actors and actresses in our theatres could be known first hand.

When the week of mobility arrived, we were excited to receive, on this occasion, the view of our partners about the work that is developed in the school and about ourselves. This was a powerful stimulus that led us to do our best to show our work in the most profound way possible in just a few days. This effort was rewarded by the genuine interest of our partners in the work we were showing them. The very fact of the encounter between professionals from different countries, traditions and methodologies was interesting in itself and we valued it very positively. It was also gratifying to see how intentions of mutual collaboration, beyond the project, appeared in conversations about the possibility of organising courses, workshops or performances in each partner's place of origin.

Once in the last meeting we were able to know yet another city with a very different reality. And it was as well very stimulating to meet another social network of people working around the Living Arts and carrying out projects of development of social and art matters. We came back satisfied to have shown our work and to be able to see others accomplishments.

L'espace

The Playing Bodies project originates from the ongoing creative investigations of our dance company, Zappulla DMN, and is deeply rooted in our original methodology, Natural Movement Dance. This methodology, with its holistic approach, combines knowledge and practices from various traditions, such as Traditional Chinese Medicine and Taijiquan, with the experimental approach of contemporary dance. The fusion of these diverse fields has allowed us to develop an integrated view of the body as a tool for exploration and communication, where each movement is connected to both the inner world and the surrounding environment.

Throughout our work, we have come to understand and envision a new role for the live performance artist. The artist is no longer seen solely as the body expressing itself physically, but as a vehicle for a complex interplay of emotions, thoughts, and meanings.

The dancing body thus becomes the convergence point of multiple expressive tools: movement, emotionally in tune with the action and expression, and the voice, which enriches the performance with sound, text, and song. These elements, intertwined during the sharing of creative material with the audience, have led us to incorporate technology, particularly through the use of software designed for sound and video processing and interaction.

The Playing Bodies project also provided us with a unique opportunity for growth and exchange through our collaboration with highly skilled partners, who enriched our artistic journey. Working with the Espazo Aberto association, which has extensive experience in Action Theatre, pedagogy, and dramaturgy, allowed us to deepen the performative and narrative aspects of our work, refining the ways we connect with the audience. In particular, Espazo Aberto's innovative approach has encouraged us to consider performance not only as an artistic form but as an educational and communal process that transcends the traditional boundaries of theatre.

The Body Architects association, with its expertise in dance, acrobatics, screendance, and videopodcasts, helped us explore the potential of moving images, opening up new creative horizons and enabling a synergy between dance and visual media. Their contribution allowed us to develop advanced techniques in video creation and post-production, seamlessly integrating the visual and performative aspects of our project.

This magnificent collaborative experience has made us not only more aware of our role on a local level but also more visible internationally, strengthening our artistic identity and impact on the contemporary scene. Our engagement with new technologies has had a direct and positive influence on our artistic production, enabling us to refine and complete our latest creation, which perfectly integrates movement, sound, image, and technology into a single sensory experience.

The culmination of this journey was the final event of the Playing Bodies project, held during the latest edition of the Dissidanza International Festival. During this event, we had the opportunity to share our work with a large audience, which actively participated in our performance, becoming an integral part of the creative process. The enthusiastic and engaged response from the audience demonstrated the strength and impact of our work, marking an important milestone in our growth as a dance company and as artists.

The project activities #1

Workshop in Wien

As part of the initiative, a workshop was held in Vienna to promote the exchange of teaching and choreographic techniques among the project partners, scheduled from April 6 to April 14, 2024. Each partner contributed three participants, which included choreographers, contemporary dance experts, producers, and dance students, who collaborated and shared their experiences during a five-day session at Studio Arbeitsplatz. At the conclusion of the workshop, the venue compiled the insights and best practices from the dance companies and other attendees, which will serve as the foundation for this manual. Below is the schedule and a day-by-day summary of the activities that took place during the Vienna workshop:



Body Architects

1. Warm-Up

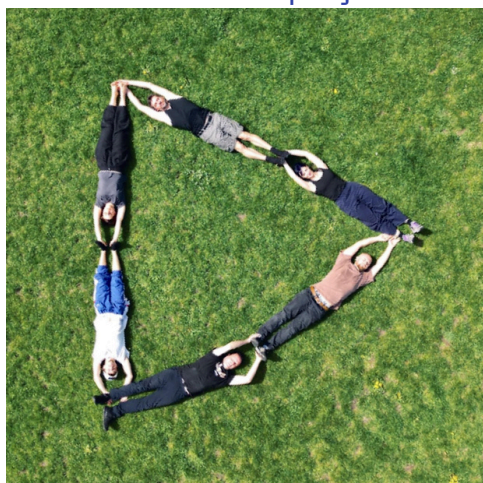
What: The warm-up focuses on awakening the senses, enhancing spatial awareness, and fostering participant connections. Participants engage in the concept of "passing through" and game-like exercises that encourage connections both with individuals and the group, involving varying distances to facilitate these connections. For example, walking in random directions and always going between people.

Why: This workshop day takes place outdoors in a park, surrounded by (Vienna's) architecture, to provide a practice experience in unconventional settings. As Body Architects, we often utilize site-specific and urban environments, bringing our art to outdoor spaces and new locations. This offers participants the opportunity to move and dance outside traditional settings like dance studios or theatres.

2. Find a Place, Make an Installation

What: Participants are tasked with an improvisational movement exercise where they find a spot in the outdoor location and create a small installation using their bodies. This creates a tableau vivant, or 'living picture,' where participants merge with the surrounding structures and objects such as benches, walls, and fences.

Why: We use architecture in both urban and body contexts, exploring their interrelations. This exercise encourages participants to engage their creativity and connect their bodies with the objects and structures around them, reflecting our approach to integrating body and environment. All of these 'living pictures' were documented for dissemination and online platform visibility and sharing of the outcomes of this project.



Logo Playing Bodies

We create a special logo representing the digital version of our logo (play sign) using the bodies of partners to form it. This adds a creative element for the dissemination and sharing of our practice and the project on online platforms.

3. Partnering Workshop Exercises

What: The focus of this day was based on partnering exercises and technical elements of partner movement. We start with manipulating the partner's body, understanding body structure, bones, muscles, reactions, and limitations. Building on this understanding, we progress to weight-shifting exercises, where partners practice offering and receiving weight using safe, natural techniques that rely on structure rather than muscular tension. We then introduce small lifts, starting with basic techniques utilizing the pelvis and lower back as a sturdy lifting surface. Advanced options are also offered for safe experimentation. Participants explore these concepts through guided improvisation, emphasizing partner listening.

Why: Partner work is a fundamental tool in our practice as Body Architects. We introduce these tools to workshop participants to provide insight into partnering options and movement interactions with other bodies. By teaching basic principles and advanced elements, we ensure participants understand how to use their bodies effectively while offering varied options and propositions for experimentation.



1. Volleyball

Description:

Phase 1. Students are divided in two teams, A and B. They throw an imaginary ball with their bodies as if it were real. As they throw it, they say the name of the person on the other team to whom they are throwing it. They make only one direct pass from team to team the whole time.

Phase 2. Now the passes are as well team to team and only one pass each turn but indirect. This means that they look and make the body gesture of throwing the ball to a person but they say the name of another person at the moment of throwing it and the one who has to receive the ball is the person who's name has been said.

Phase 3. Passes within each team are now introduced, always direct, as follows:

First, one direct pass is made (this means, with coherent look, gesture and name) within the same team, then an indirect pass, as explained in phase 2, towards the other team. The other team follows the same scheme. When the ball returns to the first team, now three direct passes are made within the team and then an indirect pass to the opposite team, the other team repeats the scheme. Next, five direct intra-team passes are made before passing, then seven, then nine and so on.

In all phases, with each throwing or receiving error, the game must start again from the beginning, within the same phase.

Analysis:

It is a work of unblocking, disinhibition and creation of the present. The objective of the exercise is to dilate the experience of the present, which is the origin of the theatrical event, and to create dramatic tension through maximum concentration. We understand the present as a rubber band that tends to shrink but can be stretched and the dramatic tension is the fact of stretching that rubber band under the actor's control. It is considered a first, fundamental step in the development of the basics of acting.



2. Simply showing oneself

Description:

The student walks from the front of the stage to the back, turns around and faces the audience, standing still, letting himself/herself be seen and doing nothing.

Analysis:

When we unconsciously do something we know we have to do, we put ourselves in a second level, to the background, the action comes into play and we can hide behind it. In this exercise we try to suppress all action so that one remains naked before the audience, without doing anything and allowing oneself to be seen authentically, which is the most difficult thing; to really show oneself before the audience.

This is the essence of the acting fact, to remain without hiding in front of the gaze of the public, of the other, who comes to see you in your work. It is the essence of acting because it is the very beginning, the place of origin and birth of the very acting phenomena. Just as movement is born from stillness, action is born in the absence of action, from the need to do something. The actor's doing is born from the absence of action.

3. Armchair

Description:

The student moves quickly from the front of the stage towards a couch in the center of the stage and places himself on it in a spontaneous way and freezes in a certain body expression with a certain dramatic content. Then, he is asked to feel deeply his whole body, down to the smallest details of each part, and to say verbally, without moving, what he thinks he is expressing with that particular posture. He is then offered the external gaze of the teacher and classmates on what is really coming to them when observing him. As a last phase, it is proposed to him to let a short text be born that has origin and birth in that concrete corporeality, that is as compatible as possible with what is already in the body, there is where improvisation is born.

Analysis:

We work on the gap that exists between what the actor thinks he/she is projecting and what he/she is really projecting. It is about making this mismatch narrower and narrower, so that the actor knows as accurately as possible what he is really feeling bodily, what he is expressing with his physical form and what is reaching the spectator, which should be exactly the same thing.

When there is a disagreement between these things a distance is generated between the actor and the spectator. The objective is to reduce this distance and generate a communion with the spectator's gaze. This part belongs to the acting fact.

When the text is generated, we start from the idea that the words already exist but have no particular order, as if there was a bag inside the actor with all the words that exist in the language he handles, and the one who chooses the words from the bag should not be the actor but the body, and when it is the body that chooses them, we reach the maximum organicity, although they pass through the intelligent head of the actor. This is also a part that works with the acting fact. The part related to the theatrical fact is simply that small fiction in which the actor enters when he chooses a certain text with his body. Pure improvisation.

L'espace presented its choreographic approach. An intense workshop was led by Giovanni Zappulla, based on his long-term choreographic research. Zappulla is a choreographer and dancer, director of l'espace choreographic centre in Palermo. The workshop was based on the "Natural Dance Movement" and "Zhineng Qigong" which represent a new approach to dance for the solution of tensions and the evolution of human beings.

The workshop featured a theoretical overview of the Natural Dance Movement Method. To truly grasp the foundational aspects of this method, it's essential to consider the historical and philosophical contexts that have shaped dance over the past century.



The study of dance has often aimed at achieving nearly otherworldly formal and aesthetic ideals, which has led to a significant detachment from the more fundamental elements related to the individual and their emotions. Consequently, the resulting dance tends to drift away from joy, as dancers frequently confront a profession that physically exhausts them, making their bodies fragile and leading to premature retirement from the stage.

This is especially true for classical dancers, who are sadly forced to conclude their artistic careers at a young age. Their elegance on stage, cheerful expressions, and graceful movements often mask the countless hours of intense labor in tight outfits and uncomfortable footwear, which can permanently alter their bodies, sometimes causing irreversible damage.

When the body and mind are compelled to move away from enjoyment, it becomes challenging to feel fulfilled when suffering from bleeding feet and aching joints. Nevertheless, through their art, dancers provide pleasure to audiences while also finding joy and personal satisfaction in performing intricate movements that connect them with transcendent experiences, achieving remarkable success but at a significant cost to their health and well-being. Why not pursue these goals through a training method that is less painful and demanding, one that respects the human being and their natural functions?

A prime example can be found in Chinese martial arts, particularly Taijiquan, a discipline that highlights individual characteristics through exercises that enhance the body's connections, maintaining health and enabling efficient movement throughout one's life. So, what is the true joy of dance?

To better manage bodily functions and strengthen all aspects of being, the method incorporates ancient Eastern knowledge from traditional Chinese medicine, integrating Taijiquan and Qigong, especially the Zhineng Qigong style. These systems are rooted in internal movement, aligning with human nature in its biomechanical, energetic, and psychological dimensions. The integration of these two disciplines in a dancer's training focuses on reconstructing the connections within the human being, aiming for harmony, well-being, and artistic expression. Qigong works on the most subtle levels of the mind, fostering concentration, deep listening, and energy awareness, while Taijiquan focuses on the body's connections, movement transformation, and strength. Together, these elements cultivate a conscious dancer with precise movements, a healthy body, and a mind fully present in the moment.

In the proposed exercises, we explored Qi, or energy, through a stimulating practice derived from Zhineng Qigong, the LaQi Guan Qi Fa, which we developed through both individual and partnered movements



The project activities #2

Workshop in Santiago

A second workshop was held in Santiago to continue to promote the exchange of teaching and choreographic techniques among the project partners, scheduled from June 22 to June 30, 2024. Each partner contributed three participants, which included choreographers, contemporary dance experts, producers, and dance students, who collaborated and shared their experiences during a five-day session at Espazoaberto, Escola de Teatro. At the conclusion of the workshop, the venue compiled the insights and best practices from the dance companies and other attendees, which will serve as the foundation for this manual. Below is the schedule and a day-by-day summary of the activities that took place during the Santiago workshop:



🌀 Body Architects

1. Warm-Up

What: The warm-up begins by stimulating awareness, awakening the senses, and enhancing our spatial and interpersonal connection. Participants engage in eye contact while moving through the space, emphasizing the concept of "passing through." Game-like exercises are employed to connect participants and the group, involving varying distances and visualizing energies to facilitate connections. Toward the end of the warm-up, we transition to limited space interactions, introducing touch to establish physical connections with others.

Why: The warm-up serves as general body preparation to maximize potential, awaken senses, prevent injuries, raise body temperature, and mobilize joints. This foundational work is crucial for subsequent exercises with partners and groups, ensuring participants are physically ready for more complex activities.

2. Partnering Technical Exercises



What: These exercises focus on partner work, beginning with improvised manipulation of the partner's body to understand structure, reactions, and limitations. We progress to exercises involving weight transfer, where partners practice offering and receiving weight with guidance on safe, natural techniques. Building on this, we introduce lifts, starting with basic principles that utilize the pelvis and lower back as sturdy lifting tools. Participants then explore these concepts through guided improvisation, emphasizing listening to the partner.

Why: Partner work is a significant aspect of our practice as Body Architects. We introduce basic principles to ensure participants understand and can effectively use partner work.

Additionally, we present more advanced technical elements to provide a glimpse into the vast possibilities of partner work and illustrate the progression from basic to complex concepts.

3. Partner Interactions and Tools

What: Following the warm-up and basic partner work, we introduce three new tools for partner interactions: sliding, rolling, and replacing. These tools, based on touch, guide participants in exploring directions, qualities, and intentions of touch. Initially practiced individually, these tools are later combined and used in improvisation. This concept is then translated into dynamic movement throughout the studio space, transitioning from static to spatial exploration.

Why: These tools allow participants to delve deeper into the nuances of partner work, exploring touch from various perspectives. This method fosters a connection between mind and body, requiring precise focus and awareness. By restricting movement to specific qualities, participants enhance their body-mind awareness and expand their understanding of partner interactions.

4. Outdoor Session and Documentation

What: In the final part of the workshop, participants move to an outdoor location near the studio, utilizing an open grass area surrounded by urban architecture. Here, they continue practicing partner interaction improvisation, group dynamics, and small lifts. This outdoor session is filmed to create a short dance film, capturing the experience. Emphasis is placed on integrating movement with the surrounding architecture, merging creativity with the environment.



Why: As Body Architects, we often work in outdoor spaces and urban environments, integrating body movement, dance, and choreography with architectural elements. This outdoor session allows participants to experience our approach firsthand. Documenting the session on film helps broaden the reach of our artistic expression and audience, showcasing our work from both movement and technological perspectives.

1. Individual ball in movement

Description:

First part – Individual

The student holds a rice ball in his hands and throws it up to the air and catches it continuously. Everything is quite free, you can throw it with one hand and catch it with the other hand or with the same hand. The aim is to make throws of very different qualities, intensities and intentions and to make them more complex in their articulation.

Second part – in pairs

Now, one pupil is placed in front of another pupil and the balls are thrown simultaneously between them, while one throws the ball and the other also throws the ball, so that they also receive them simultaneously. The qualities, intensities and intentions are also varied.

Analysis:

This is the first contact with the text, understanding that the text is a part of the body and the ball plays the role of the text. The physical emission of the text needs an energy, a projection, which must first be born in the body. When actors speak, what they really do is to dance with the words, they don't pronounce them in a mechanical way, they put the words in movement. That has to be done from the body, it has to go through a body experience. The actor first learns that the word is part of the body, but at first he knows it as information, in an intellectual way. The aim of this exercise is to make that information become knowledge, to make it become part of the body. In an infant human, this evolution would happen naturally as the word is added to the infant after learning to walk, but it is an organicity that can be lost as it continues to grow and is usually lost. In one way or another it is something unconscious and this exercise is carried out to bring this mechanism to consciousness. In this way we get the body to begin to speak, to manage the capacity to express and communicate with words. For this, the body has to feel this phenomenon and from there the actor starts to emit the words from the body and gets rid of the declamatory and over-affected effects that may be present. If the body is allowed to speak, the voice and the words respond automatically and directly and autonomously to what is happening in the body. One could say that the actor performs with the body and that the word is a consequence of that, which is the very definition of organicity.

In the second part, in which the ball is passed between couples, the same mechanism is set in motion but in the form of a dialogue.

2. Rod in individual balance

First part. A bamboo stick about one metre long is carried in the palm of the hand or in the fingers, without grasping it. The pupil moves through the space with the stick in his hand. He/she moves while keeping it in balance, playing and varying intensities and qualities of movement.

Second part. An accident is intentionally sought, taking the stick to the limit of balance and trying to resolve it without it falling. If it falls, nothing happens, the pupils just pick it up and continue, but the intention is to take it to the limit and avoid the fall.

Analysis:

The analysis is similar to the previous exercise with the balls and the text, but in this case a bamboo stick is used and the work is based on balance and the recovery of balance in the first part.

In the second part, the accident is decisively incorporated as a decisive element to find an intermediate space between the safe and the inevitable. In this case, textuality is born of resistance to the accident, of the loss of control and its recovery using equilibrium. This accident functions as a surprising element that alters this relationship with the object-text.

On the other hand, on a bodily and postural level, the rod offers us a mobility that constantly escapes control in an autonomous way, in a different way to the rice ball that needs our push. Moreover, it functions as a replica of our spinal column that makes us realise how verticality and upright posture lead us to a much more organic dynamic equilibrium than rigidity or deviation from verticality. There is a continuous relationship between the object and the centre of gravity and the moment the centre of gravity fails, the mechanics of the exercise fail.

Finally, in the exercise there is the random factor, very interesting and productive on an artistic level, which is incorporated by the geometry of the rod itself.



3. Pairs with text and variable distance

Description:

A pair of students move around the stage and are continuously saying a text. In this exercise they can work with a text they know by heart or a text through improvisation. They are in constant movement throughout the stage space, keeping in mind the spatial distribution required for a balanced dramaturgy that is not too heavy on any one point or side of the stage. As the distance between the students increases or decreases, they have to adapt the intensity of the text they say to each other so that it reaches the partner perfectly, without falling short and without overdoing the intensity either, increasing and decreasing as they are closer or farther apart, even as the different dramatic moments become more intense or softer in the quality of the relationship between them.

Analysis:

The projection of the voice is exercised here in relation to the perception we have of the distance that separates us from our partner. This reduces or eliminates the possible mismatch in the perception of this distance between two people who are talking to each other. The voice is intended to be heard with the intention and the intensity with which it is uttered. The voice and the words want to cause a reaction in the other and on stage this is very important. Therefore it is necessary to control and be aware of the space. Space is this that which we create and occupy, and it is in this relationship between the distance and the intention of the voice that the intention is enclosed. For example, if an actor is shouting at a certain distance and knows how to calibrate that distance and the way of perceiving the other's ear, I can be doing an action in which the other is expelled and not attracted.

Specifically, in the exercise proposed, it is about adjusting the intensity to the distance in constant movement as a first approximation to the control of that distance and that intensity. On the other hand, we also work on the awareness of the stage space and spatial dramaturgy using the metaphor of the raft, which is in danger of becoming unbalanced if this space is not used in a dynamic but balanced way.

4. Jump and name

Description:

The pupil goes to an obstacle as a horizontal rod hold by partners that he has to jump over and that can be adapted in height to his individual characteristics. When he reaches the obstacle, he jumps, and at the same moment, pronounces his name with the same intensity and quality as the jump. When he falls to the ground, he advances organically with the inertia he brings with him until he stops softly. Then he has to remain still and silent for as long as he feels that the energy of what has happened in the jump and the name remains and, just before it disappears, he has to pronounce an improvised text that picks up exactly the same quality of dramaturgy that was about to disappear and continues it at the same level.



Analysis:

This is an exercise that relates the body to the text and is connected to the rice ball and bamboo stick exercises. The actor, in this case, first has to adjust the intensity of his voice to the tone of his body used at the of the jump. In this way he continues to reduce the gap that may still exist between one element and the other, thus increasing the organicity of the voice. Secondly, he must develop a sensory register of what happened at the moment of the jump and be able to adjust the new voice emission to the memory of the exact energy he had seconds before.

This is how this continuous memory is exercised, capable of remembering, throughout the duration of a performance, all the events that have taken place and that continue to influence the future of the dramaturgy.

In the second workshop we took up the work started in Vienna by incorporating some typical aspects of the DMN's teaching work.

1. Warm up and alignment work

- Taoist self-massage to sensitise and awaken the whole body and mind, with a specific action on the energy meridians.
- Warming up with Taijiquan techniques to activate circulation in tendons, joints and muscles and strengthen connections by strengthening the internal musculature.
- Use of the relaxation and meditation techniques of Zhineng Qigong, practice of the 8 formulas for the creation of the field in order to quiet the mind and put the practitioner in a situation of deep listening to oneself and the surrounding space. Execution of the Zhineng Qigong exercise: Laqi Guanqi Fa for energy collection and connection with the practice field.

2. Exercises of the DMN method

- Practice of the pivotal 'standing' exercise of the DMN method in which one works on the joint alignment of the posture by developing the forces running through the body.
- Practice of the 'weight shift' having awareness of the star of the movement and relationship with the upper part of the body, creating waves of movement and exploiting the spiral pattern of the internal force. Through these elements small improvisation in space listening to the lower - upper body connection.



3. information gathering

- Spontaneous and creative writing work starting from the state created by the warm-up and DMN exercises in which through deep listening, thoughts and words connected to the state of mind can surface by drawing on the stream of consciousness.

4. Improvisation 'flow, movement feeling'

- Once you have become aware of how to tap into the stream of consciousness, you can work on movement moved by the intention of consciousness. This step involves working on listening to the feeling during an improvisation session in the space, making explicit the danced movement connected to the feeling and adding the resulting sound, creating a true dramaturgy of words and sounds.



The project activities #2

Workshop in Palermo

The last workshop was held in Palermo to conclude the exchange of teaching and choreographic techniques among the project partners, scheduled from November 4 to November 12, 2024. Each partner contributed three participants, which included choreographers, contemporary dance experts, producers, and dance students, who collaborated and shared their experiences during a five-day session at Institut Français in Palermo and at Cantieri Culturali alla Zisa. At the conclusion of the workshop there will be a final event that will stage the work done by the three partners. Below is the schedule and a summary of the activities that took place during the Palermo workshop:



The third workshop represents a crucial and concluding moment within this project, marking an important opportunity for collective reflection on the work accomplished thus far. This meeting is not only an occasion to assess the progress made, but also a significant phase of comparison and collaboration in view of the upcoming final event.

During the days of activities, participants had the chance to work together in groups, dedicating time to both bureaucratic and administrative aspects, as well as creative elements essential for organizing the final performance. This balanced approach allowed for more effective handling of various challenges, ensuring that every detail was attended to with care.

Particular emphasis was placed on the technical aspects of the project, where detailed analyses of the results obtained in the previous workshops held in Vienna and Santiago were conducted. Through careful discussion, participants drew valuable conclusions that will guide the creation of a manual and an inclusive event, ensuring that the principles of participation and integration are at the heart of our activities.

Each partner had the opportunity to contribute actively, expressing their opinions regarding the work completed and proposing concrete outcomes arising from discussions with other participants. This exchange of ideas and experiences enriched the process, creating a collaborative environment where every voice was heard and valued. In this way, we prepare to conclude the project with a final event that not only celebrates the results achieved but also represents a significant step toward the future.



Piloting

Body Architects

Vienna, January 23 – February 2, 2025



Activity Description

The Body Architects sessions for dance educators took place over eight days in Vienna, utilizing outdoor locations.

The sessions integrated Body Architects' methodology with partner techniques, focusing on movement exploration, embodied research, and site-responsive practices, using the urban landscape as an interactive stage.

Participants Profile

Professionals aged between 23 and 35, including dancers and dance educators, motivated to expand their pedagogical and movement skills, explore movement in public spaces, and integrate new methodologies.

Implementation of Capacity-Building

The sessions included:

- Introduction to the methodology and objectives.
- Warm-up to prepare participants for interaction with the environment.
- Exercises that included:
 - Body architecture
 - Responding to the environment through improvisation and composition.
 - Partnering exercises.
 - Group work.

Each session concluded with feedback discussions, allowing participants to reflect on their experiences and integrate the skills learned.

Evaluation

- Results: All participants found the experience valuable, with an improved understanding of movement in urban spaces.
- Key Comments:
 - a."Dancing in public spaces changed my perception of movement and space."
 - b."The integration of methodologies provided me with new tools for teaching."
 - c."Partnering exercises created a unique awareness of the body."

Additionally, questions arose regarding how to further develop these methodologies in different urban contexts. The sessions fostered collaboration, experimentation, and professional growth, equipping participants with new perspectives and tools for engaging with movement in public spaces.



Santiago de Compostela, December 2–12, 2024



Activity Description

The espazoaberto sessions for dance educators took place over eight days in Santiago, utilizing indoor locations.

During the workshop, participants shared and assimilated various conceptions of the body and movement. The journey developed progressively, aimed at uniting mind and body in an "inner architecture." The exercises fostered internal expression, creating a connection between sensation and external expression, eliminating the "noise" in expression.

Participants Profile

Participants range in age from 18 to 40, with some older individuals, and come from diverse backgrounds, including university students, unemployed, dubbing actors, and workers in the service industry. They are individuals who accessed the course through Espazo Aberto school's training programs.

Implementation of Capacity-Building

Objectives:

- Share and integrate knowledge about the body and movement among partners.

Main Phases:

- Assimilation involves the organic integration of various body methodologies, fostering intuitive elaboration for a personal understanding of information. Proper warm-up prepares the body, while a gradual approach unifies mind and body, adapting to the group's needs. Ultimately, body expression explores inner forms, reducing expressive "noise," and collective dramaturgy weaves individual expressions into a cohesive group choreography.

Expected Results:

- Development of expressive capabilities and connection between internal and external space, useful in artistic contexts.

Methodology:

- Multifaceted teaching proposals that promote continuous learning and the evolution of skills.

The project aims to transform bodily experience into an expressive and creative flow.

Evaluation

At the end of each training session, participants shared positive feedback on the new teaching approach, highlighting their connection with the proposals and the instruction received. They expressed the sensation of exploring a new bodily and mental space, encouraging the discovery and inhabitation of this space with attention. Some noted that sounds and music had varying effects on the creation of this work environment, influencing their experience and integration of information.



L'espace

Palermo, February 3–7, 2025



Activity Description

The L'espace APS/ASD association conducted eight piloting sessions for dance educators in Palermo, Italy, at the Circ'Opificio from February 3 to February 8, 2025. Each two-hour session combined the association's approach of Natural Movement Dance, Qigong, and Taijiquan with techniques from workshops with project partners. The focus was on integrating various movement languages, exploring dramaturgy and theater techniques, and practicing Contact Improvisation. The sessions successfully engaged three groups of participants, both young and old.

Participants Profile

The participants in the L'espace Association sessions were from three distinct groups of professionals aged between 20 and 70, including dancers, theatre and dance teachers, as well as musicians and practitioners of holistic disciplines. The involvement and motivation of the participants, driven by a desire to discover new tools for transmission that would allow them to get involved with their bodies, emotions and voices, was truly exciting.

Implementation of Capacity-Building

- Structure of the sessions:

The sessions for the pilot users alternated theory and practice, focusing on specific methodologies.

- Organization of groups:

Participants gathered in different rooms based on the exercises and pedagogical objectives.

Conducted by Giovanni Zappulla: The sessions were designed with progressively challenging objectives, especially in the last four.

1. Warm-up phase: Each meeting began with exercises to stimulate proprioception and physical and mental sensitivity.
2. Integrated methodologies:
3. Exercises and creativity: The exercises were presented in a playful spirit, stimulating personal creativity and listening.
4. Absence of competitiveness: The atmosphere fostered moments of empathy and connection among groups.
5. Final feedback: Each session concluded with a moment of reflection and sharing of experiences, promoting dialogue on the effectiveness of the methodologies and individual needs.

Evaluation

At the end of each meeting, participants reflected on their experiences and provided feedback on the methodologies explored, highlighting their interaction with movement and the environment. Everyone found the training useful, improving their listening skills and awareness. Many appreciated the integration of methodologies, which offered new perspectives on creation and transmission in live performance. Positive comments emphasized emotional liberation and the importance of mutual listening to resolve conflicts. Overall, the sessions stimulated collaboration, experimentation, and personal and professional growth.



Conclusion

The interaction between various organisations significantly shaped the work of the three partners, leading to both challenges and valuable opportunities for collaboration. The success of this initiative is reflected in the rapid integration of different practices by the participants, demonstrating how well-structured and holistic methodologies can improve both technical skills and awareness. The synergy created through collaboration between the project partners allowed participants to experience a broad spectrum of approaches, enriching their overall experience.

One of the important outcomes was the need to adapt methodologies to accommodate different dance practices and educational contexts with an emphasis on improving group collaboration that revealed collective enthusiasm through improvisation exercises, addressing the unpredictability of performance in public spaces or workshop settings. During this experience the alignment of the three partner organisations with the project's mission was evident, there was a commitment to evolving personal pedagogical approaches, anchored in the body as the main means of exploration, while at the same time investigating different methodologies creating a sharing of perspectives leading to exchanges and building methodological bridges through shared interests in physicality and movement.

However, genuine dialogue requires more than sporadic encounters; it needs a sustained project with depth and intention. Our meetings revealed both commonalities and difficulties in communication between different methodologies, highlighting the need for further exploration to foster genuine exchanges.



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Thank You

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Funded by the European Union.

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Co-funded by the
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