

EDN CARTE BLANCHE FOR ARTISTS

Bassano del Grappa, 20 – 26 August 2019



The second edition of the EDN Carte Blanche for artists took place from August 20th to 26th, 2019 hosted by the CSC - Centro per la Scena Contemporanea. Members of the European Dancehouse Network were invited to nominate artists to join a festival linked to another EDN member, this time the B.Motion Festival in Bassano del Grappa (Italy). The 2019 edition of B.Motion festival gathered almost 200 international participants: artists, operators, experts from the field, journalists, critics in a space conceived as a platform for dialogue and exchange. The festival presented 20 works over five days and offered a series of workshops, conferences and open debates, presentations of projects, films screening, summer schools, feedback activities, and spaces for networking

The format of the group exchange in the Carte Blanche Artists Focus was maintained, continuing to support a stimulating environment for and amongst makers. For this edition, twelve artists from nine Dancehouses attended B.Motion under the guidance of local mentor Eva Zilio. They formed a heterogeneous group of diverse practices, ages, interests and backgrounds. The ecology of the group offered a multi-layered ground in which the makers started to get acquainted with each other, creating a space for dialogue, confrontation and interaction among themselves and open towards other B.Motion participants.

The EDN Carte Blanche took place over six inspiring, intense and enriching days, offering the participants a privileged access to the performances and the side programs they were involved in. Each day was organised in a similar way, starting with one hour of physical practice functioning as an introductory practice for the discussions that followed. The next two hours were dedicated to series of meetings aimed at developing a focus on topics and issues relevant to foster a dance language and culture in dynamic, multicultural and transnational contexts. The key theme of these meetings has been Dialogue. The meetings have been led by Peggy Ollislaegers, Monica Gillette, Merel Heering and Tyrone Isaac-Stuart as facilitators in dialogue with some of the choreographers and artists involved in the programme of the festival.

The afternoon (from 14h00 to 22h30) was dedicated to performances, always followed by a networking dinner late at night.

Bassano del Grappa is a small town which becomes an open stage during the festival, as many of the performances take place in site-specific locations. The participants have been involved in a process of discovering the city and the communities inhabiting it through dance, encounter of bodies and shifting of perspectives. Participants took up different roles with their presence:

observers, participants, audiences, explorers, friends in a shared journey, which hopefully was just a start!

Read more about the activities in which the EDN artists took part, the show they attended, the focus on their discussions, from Dancing Museum workshops to informal dinners and dancing. We wish to thank Eva Zilio, mentor of the 12 participants of this EDN Carte Blanche at B.Motion, for this detailed report!

Participating artists and dancehouses:

Keren Rosenberg – Dansmakers Amsterdam;
Ian Ancheta, Dane Badal and Suka Horn – Dansateliers Rotterdam,
Anne Dietricht – Hellerau Dresden,
Kristyn Fontanella and Liam Scanlon – Dance Ireland,
Regina Rossi – K3 Hamburg,
Marion Muzac – CDNC Toulouse,
Lili Stern – Trafo Budapest,
Lanre Malaolu – The Place London,
Marie Gourdain – Tanec Praha

DAY 1: the first encounter

On the 20th August, most of the participants arrived in Bassano. Some of them earlier, some of them later. The first meeting scheduled in the afternoon was attended by just a few participants: Keren Rosenberg – Dansmakers Amsterdam; Ian Ancheta – Dansateliers Rotterdam; Anne Dietricht – Hellerau Dresden; Kristyn Fontanella – Dance Ireland. Regina Rossi – K3 Hamburg and Liam Scanlon – Dance Ireland arrived immediately after and joined a first dinner together. This encounter was conceived as an informal opportunity to meet and share, get familiar with each other and more specifically to get an overview of the multi-layered programme of the following days. I introduced the work of CSC and in parallel the structure of the festival. As the Carte Blanche programme was a very intensive one, this was a necessary introduction to the schedule of our activities, the communities we were going to meet, and the debates in which we would take part.

Already at this first stage a kind of internal choreography started to shape the dynamics of the group, involving the makers to get to know the specificities of each participant in an enriching process of sharing and understanding. The variety of the group has not been perceived as a limit or a boundary, but rather as a bracing and inspiring opportunity to expand each other's perspective.

DAY 2: what is moving us?

On the 21st, the last participants arrived: Marion Muzac – CDNC Toulouse; Dane Badal and Suka Horn – Dansateliers Rotterdam; Lili Stern – Trafo Budapest; Lanre Malaolu – The Place London; Marie Gourdain – Tanec Praha.

The intensive program started with an immersive experience in the Civic Museum, which led us to explore and discover "*Dancing Museums – The Democracy of Beings*" (2018-2021), a Creative Europe project involving 6 Dancehouses (CSC –Italy; La Briqueterie – France; Mercat de les Flores – Spain; Tanec Praha – Czech Republic; Dance4 – UK; Dansateliers – The Netherlands) as well as several museums, universities and research centres.

Dancing Museums is an action-research project designed to foster and sustain long-term collaborations between dance organizations, museums, universities and local communities in order

to develop inspiring and long-lasting arts and cultural programmes in which people in those communities want to get involved.

The six artists involved in *Dancing Museums* presented practices to explore the space in the Museum and we got to know the essence of the project itself through a series of activities aiming at proposing new forms of dialogue among us (as visitors) and the artworks exposed in the museum. As the *Dancing Museum* artists worked in pairs, we were divided in three groups, mixing local and international participants. Each group experienced the three practices proposed, for a length of 45 minutes each.

- Masako Matsushita (Italy) and Ana Pi (France) proposed a reflection about privacy and the border between personal and public. We were invited to arrange and expose the objects contained in our bags and then to work in group of three (one dancing, one exposing, one writing) to curate our own exhibition.
- Ingrid Berger Myhre (The Netherlands) and Eleanor Sikorski (United Kingdom) led us to create a personal map of the space we were in, developing a guided tour following our personal conception of space and time.
- Quim Bigas (Spain) and Tereza Ondrova (Czech Republic) worked on the gaze and on our first encounter with the objects in the space and the relations created among us, the objects and the other visitors.

After this first meeting, we were introduced to the *Dance Audience Membership Appreciation Society*. How can we become the best spectator ever? How can we prepare ourselves, open our bodies and minds to welcome the works we are going to see in the coming days? Giuliana Majo offered us a short lecture and practice meant to open the T5/T9 vertebrae and to prepare us physically and mentally to our spectators' role. We all became lifelong members of the society and got ready to practice our new best spectator ever role! This initiative is part of the *Aerowaves Exploratorium* programme for audience engagements.

After a lunch break, a walk to the river, and a moment of relaxation, the performances started.



We began with a series of short performances in an open-air space: five artists were asked to develop a seven-minute improvisation/instant composition performance for each day of the festival, in different spaces throughout the city: Palazzo Sturm, Fondazione Pirani Cremona, Museo Civico, and Villa Ca' Erizzo.

Immediately after, we were involved in a two-hour workshop led by Alessandro Sciarroni's team in Villa Ca' Erizzo. Sciarroni offered a souvenir to all participants in the festival: we were invited to learn Polka Chinata, an ancient dance practice once danced only by men under the arches of the city center of Bologna. This dance is nowadays practiced only by very few people. Sciarroni is trying to save it and created a new performance inspired by this dance. The workshop gave us the

opportunity to embody a small fragment of Italian Cultural Heritage and to keep it alive as long as we dance and practice it across the continents. As some of the makers are currently involved with projects related to folk dances, this was a stimulating space for confrontation and inspiration.



After participating in the workshop, explored a new part of the town and seen Sciarroni's performance *Save the last dance for me*, we walked to Garage Nardini, one of the main buildings of CSC, to see Rianto's performance *Medium*. The Indonesian artist introduced us to another temporal and spatial dimension, helping us to shift our perspective in a journey which led us deep into the roots of Indonesian dance and music. We explored the dialogue with nature, spirituality and ritual in a dance which is also an act of resistance: trying to save this particular type of dance from political and religious oppression.

The rhythm of the day brought us to another venue: Teatro Remondini, where the choreographer Kaori Seki led us through various states and sensations of living beings.

Full of new thoughts and questions left open, we took part in the networking dinner, where we started to interact and establish connections with the participants of the festival.

DAY 3: How can we approach dialogue?

The third day started with a question: *How can we develop languages for dialogue? How can we develop languages which allow us to stay in dialogue?*

We experienced different practices with Yasmeen Godder (Israel), Isabella Whawhai Waru (Australia) and Dennis Carney (United Kingdom), in a process that combined verbal and physical interactions. We reflected upon the relation of dialogue and community building, dialogue and protest, dialogue as a form of resistance, dialogue across cultural and political borders. In this path of reflection, our dialogue as a group got more intimate and deeper. The internal dynamics of the group started to consolidate in a process of sharing and reciprocal questioning.



In this mood, we approached the performances of the day. We saw Lilian Steiner's *Siren Dance*, a second round of short performances, the Museum of Human E-Motions, *Arleking* by Ginevra Panzetti and Enrico Ticconi, and finally *Because we love you* by Tamar Lamm and David Kern.

After Panzetti and Ticconi's performance, we had an encounter with the Aerowaves Exploratorium group. The writers and professionals active in Springback Magazine are developing new tools to

share impressions, feedbacks, and responses after having seen a dance performance. We took part in the session deepening our role as active spectators.

As mentor, I think that the makers positively reacted and embraced their role of members of the audience, having the possibility to exit their role of artists and finding a space to enjoy others' creations as inspirational platform for further self-growth.

Often artists are touring and producing, leaving them with little time and space left for confrontation, for seeing works from other artists, for having the possibility to simply reflect and question without necessarily having to produce or present something.

The exchange was perceived and structured as a platform of exposure to other languages, formats, contents, styles, as a space of research and dialogue.

Going to the various locations of the city on foot, we had the possibility to continue our conversations and to deepen the relations that started among us. Questions and curiosities about the functioning of CSC Dancehouse arose. I explained how the international cooperation projects and the programme of residencies work, how we are building relations with artists and organizations and how we are approaching the issue of sustainability within our context.



During the dinner, the group continued the interactions started during the day, getting to know colleagues, producers, programmers and guests of the festival to share impressions and considerations in a more informal setting.



DAY 4: exploring communities

On the 24th, we devoted time to exploring communities. The topic of the morning session was *Dialogues and Relationships* and involved Daniele Ninarello (Italy), Atlanta Eke, S.J. Norman and Angela Conquet (Australia). We were introduced to the communities inhabiting Bassano, especially with the Dance Well – Movement Research for Parkinson's group. Dance Well practice, started by CSC in 2013, developed a space for a community of non-professional dancers, citizens who are

actively participating in the life of our organization. They gather each week to dance in Bassano's Museum and promote dance practices and research for people living with Parkinson's disease.



The makers started to question the role of dance as a human right, as a connector of minds and bodies, as a space for sharing and shifting perspectives and for building plural and inclusive communities. We talked about the local situations, made comparison with and found inspiration from other contexts.

We also started to question the internal dynamics of our group and its role within the festival. How to establish a dialogue among us that is not limited within the space and time of the festival? Ideas started to pop up and we approached the shows of the day through this particular lense: *Schismogenesis* by Tran; *The Rite of Spring* by Berg and Graf; Foscarini's *Animale*; and Sagna and Gonzalez's *Blue prince black sheep*.

Highlight of the day programme was the performance choreographed by Daniele Ninarello and interpreted by a group of local Dance Well dancers. *My heart goes boom* is a collective act, a reflection on shared and personal freedom, a dynamic relationship created through movement and acting as a form of reciprocal support.

After the shows, we had the chance to talk and share feelings and impressions with the dancers and thus enter in the life of the local community in a more lively and immediate way.

DAY 5: a matter of sustainability

On August 24th, the festival started questioning the *Dialogue with the Unknown*. After experiencing a Dance Well class, we attended the presentation of Sara Houston's new book *Dancing with Parkinson's*. It offers a qualitative research on the value of dance for people living with this disease. We started to face questions of sustainability: how to create processes and not projects? How to deal with the responsibility of the sustainability of the communities around us? How many relations we can maintain and care for?

Following the presentation, we took part in the workshop of Liv.In.G network on the topic of "Cultural resistance". It fostered the reflections started during previous dialogues focusing on aspects of production: how to develop tools of support for artistic activities and creative processes fostering cultural resistance?

After a lunch break and some time spent relaxing at the river, we attended the performances of the day: the short performances at the Museum by Chisato Ohno, Zoltan Vakulya, Jeremy Nedd, followed by Yasmeeen Godder's *Demonstrate Restraint* at CSC, and *Graces* by Silvia Gribaudo at Teatro Remondini.

During the afternoon, we had an internal feedback session, which was quite fruitful and important for our dialogue. We have been using the "gain, give, question" technique to brainstorm and afterwards we spent some time talking together about the results. Reflecting on the meaning of

Carte Blanche (white paper), we asked each other: what does this white paper represent and mean for us, now that it is filled with impressions, inspirations and encounters?

Primarily, we reflected on the role of such an experience has in fostering each of our practices and personal/professional developments. Being makers at different stages of their professional development, some of them at the very beginning, some others already more established in the scene, there were of course different visions and feelings.

However, I think that the internal ecology of the group and its marked differences have been its strengths. A peer-to-peer dialogue and confrontation made of this diversity is a treasure to foster further levels of understanding and exchanging perspectives and ideas.

Makers found food for thoughts, inspirations and challenges in different aspects of the Carte Blanche, from its own international dimension to the possibility to observe from the inside the functioning of CSC. Additionally, the exposure to many different performances and dialogues during B.Motion, and the encounter with programmers, producers, operators and artists from all over the world have a potential long-lasting impact that the makers already noted.

Furthermore, curiosity and motivation were some of the keywords that popped up during this feedback session. The makers underlined that this exchange helped them reflect on how to develop new strategies to talk about their work within an international context, how to use different spaces and settings for their practice, how to interact with communities in a reciprocal way, how to get empowered by the encounter with works from other artists.

Two other keywords were sustainability and responsibility. We discussed how this group can be kept alive and how to foster the exchange beyond the limits of the festival. Several proposals were made: keep a virtual contact, schedule Skype meetings to keep each other updated, try to share knowledge and information which could be useful for others' development and growth, schedule a possible new meeting within the coming year.

A weakness of the programme was probably the fact that the schedule was really full and intensive, letting us little time to dive further into each other's practices and to reflect further upon the performances we saw in relation to each other's own practice.

As a mentor, I tried to offer to the group different opportunities to make use of informal settings and moments of sharing with respect to each other's own need for individual space in order to reflect and process what had been experienced.

We can consider a great success of the programme the fact that artists shared contacts among each other, that they are willing to continue this journey started together, investigating new forms of dialogue and possible collaborations among them and with other artists who they met at the festival. They are also interested in establishing a connection with our Dancehouse through possible future residencies and collaborations.

At dinner, the EDN participants interviewed informally CSC's Roberto Casarotto, asking questions relatable to the art of programming, the visions beyond international projects and collaborations, and the values that inspire his work.

DAY 6: ready for the next step

The last day of the festival started in the afternoon with more performances for our group to attend. We took advantage of the morning by spending some time together: swimming at the river, talking, sharing ideas and socializing. It helped us bond with each other and build memories of this week spent together, taking the time to process the information, feelings and impressions collected so far.

The shows started in the afternoon with a series of short performances, followed by Atlanta Eke's *The Tennis Piece* and *This is my last dance* by Tabea Martin. The very last performance, *Ballroom* by Chiara Frigo, involved our Dance Well dancers in an inclusive performance. *Ballroom* is a collective experience where people of different generations and social background come together to dance, requiring the participation of the audience. This last show created an open space where we found the meaning of the days spent together. Dancing with each other, we connected in a moment of humanity and sharing.

After this dancing party, we enjoyed our last dinner together. The makers exchanged contacts and ideas with other artists and guests of the festival. We said goodbye, confident that we have the willingness and motivation to keep this connection alive.

On the 26th, the participants left Bassano and flew back home.



I take advantage of this space to thank EDN and CSC for having made this Carte Blanche exchange possible and for having given me the possibility to be the mentor of the wonderful artists who participated. It has definitely been an inspiring and fulfilling experience, which contributed to our personal and professional development.

Eva Zilio