

**MOVING
BEYOND
INCLUSION**

**An
Artistic
Resource**

Contents

WELCOME	3
INTRODUCTION	5
THE ARTIST’S VOICE	6
A DANCER’S REVIEW	7
IN CONVERSATION	11
REFLECTIONS	16
IN DISCUSSION	21
PARTNERS	26

Welcome

The case has been made and won many times: inclusive practice – working with disabled and non-disabled dancers makes for more thrilling and more excellent art. It has been proven by a good number of professional inclusive dance companies who, for many years, have been producing art of the highest quality around the world. Yet the mainstream dance sector is still a long way from fairly representing the diversity of society at large and exploiting its inexhaustible potential for the creative process. Inclusive practice is still regarded by many (whether artists, presenters or audiences) as something of a socially motivated tick-box exercise rather than a necessity if dance is to continue to evolve and remain relevant as an art form.

Moving Beyond Inclusion (MBI), a two-year project, co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union, has sought to foster a broadening of perceptions in the mainstream dance sector. Through an ambitious programme of activities including training, skills exchange, choreographic research, performances, conferences and advocacy work, the project hopes to advance the sector as a whole towards the day when inclusive practice finally becomes a standard context for the generation, presentation and appreciation of top-quality dance – where, if you like, ‘inclusion’ becomes the ‘norm’.

As part of that ambition, the resource before you is a collection of interviews and conversations with the exceptional disabled and non-disabled dance artists who have engaged with MBI’s activities. It has been designed to bring the focus back to the artists – in particular the disabled artists whose

voices are rarely heard in the dance world – and to provide a platform for their views on the project and its impact on them and their careers. The artists represented have come to the project at different points in their dance careers, and their thoughts and observations reflect that breadth of experience. It should be noted that they frequently make reference to the two Choreographic Labs (in Uddevalla, SE, and Rovereto, IT, respectively), which were the artists’ main engagement points with the MBI project. Further information about the wider MBI programme of activities can be found on the project website (www.movingbeyondinclusion.eu).

We’re privileged to have this resource crafted and curated by disabled artist-researchers Kimberley Harvey and Kate Marsh.

And so, without further ado: To you artists, dancers, choreographers – may this resource encourage you to keep seeking out those opportunities to engage with inclusive projects such as MBI and to work with as many different artists as possible.

To you emerging or aspiring disabled dancers – may this resource convince you that the professionals are out there. Please find them and join them. Be encouraged to consider who your role models are and for whom you yourself can in turn be a role model.

To you choreographers – may this resource spur you to seek out ever more opportunities to work inclusively and to enjoy the rich dividends that brings to your art.

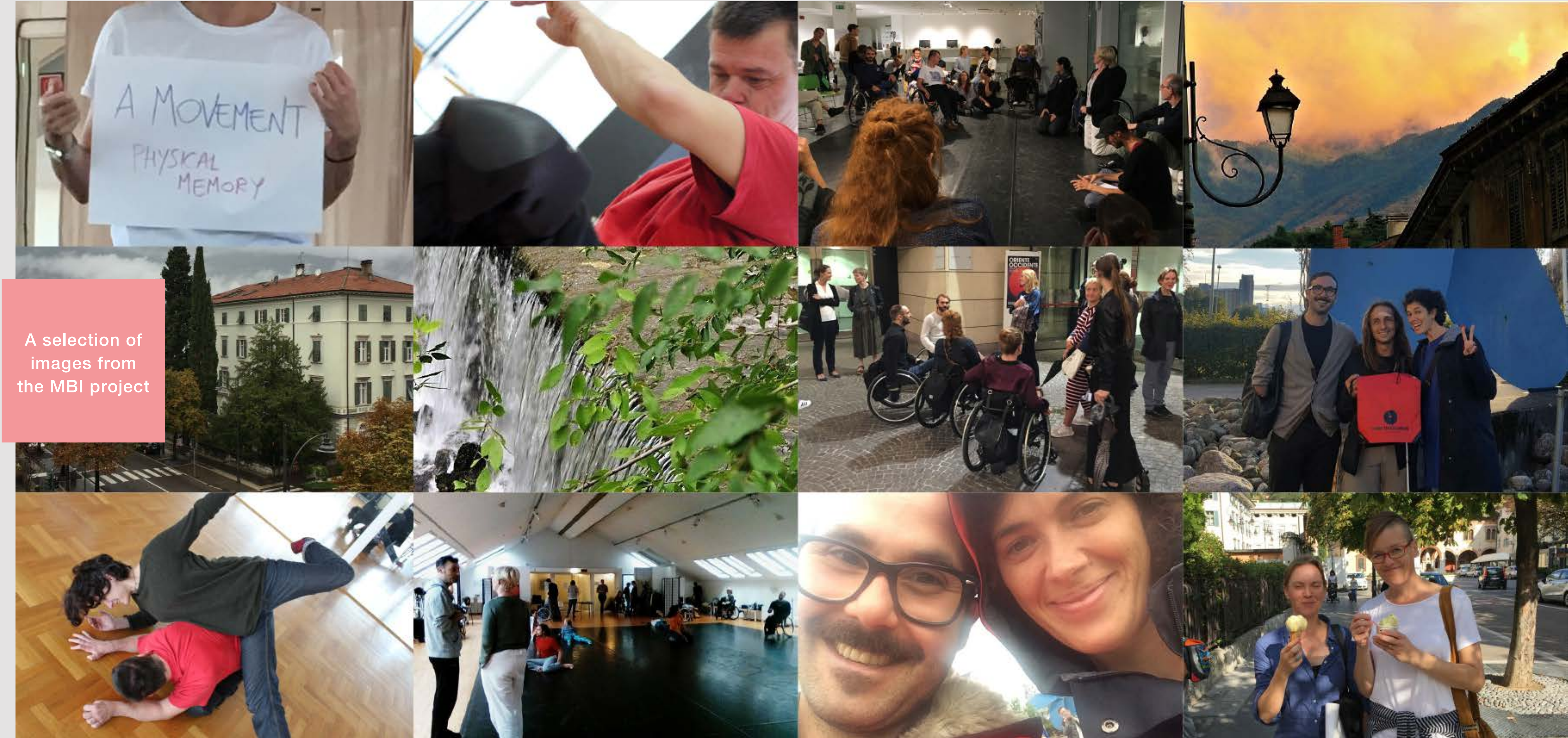
To you presenters – may this resource persuade you to seek out professional inclusive productions for your respective platforms; to discuss the art with the companies’ artistic directors, dancers and choreographers; to gain further understanding of and vocabulary around the aesthetics and quality of inclusive work; to become excited about the infinite possibilities that inclusive practice offers for the development of a dynamic, living art form.

To you audiences – may this resource inspire you to watch, appreciate and be awed by the best of inclusive practice.

To all you readers – the MBI partners have been advocating the value of inclusive practice for years. We know that there is little to be gained from preaching to the converted; it is essential we aim to broaden perceptions outside our own circles and networks. We ask you to please help us in this endeavour, for the sake of a fairer society and a thriving, evolving dance sector.

Read, enjoy, and pass it on!

With thanks, the MBI partners.



A selection of
images from
the MBI project

Photography (Left to right): Veera Grimberg, Mirjana Vuletić, Veera Grimberg, Gordana Svetopetric, Veera Grimberg, Gordana Svetopetric, Veera Grimberg, Aristide Rontini, Mirjana Vuletić, Gordana Svetopetric, Aristide Rontini, Veera Grimberg

Introduction

from Kate Marsh
and Kimberley Harvey

We are dance artist-researchers at different stages in our careers. We each have a practice that seems to shift between the ‘mainstream’ and the so-called dance and disability sector. This duality of where we are located and where we locate ourselves in dance is apparent in where we practice, with whom we practice and the funding we receive to practice.

Two decades of making, performing and educating in dance have taught us both the genuine value of talking to others about our experiences; this process has helped us locate ourselves into a community of artists, producers, curators, teachers, choreographers, the list goes on. By talking openly about the obstacles and the successes, we are making ourselves heard, adding our voices to current discourse in the broader dance sector. By claiming a space in these discussions, we are pushing ourselves and our practice beyond the margins of dance practice. Our experience and our stories open up new ways of thinking, new ways of making and new ways of understanding dance.

It is our hope that this resource will invite others to talk about their experience and aspirations in dance. We hope that, like us, you may encounter something here that shows that there are possibilities for different modes of practice and ways of thinking about dance.

The Artist's Voice

The dance artists contributing to this resource came to Moving Beyond Inclusion with different entry points, not only to this specific project, but also to dance in general. They may well have had varying experiences of inclusion too as well as differing opinions as to what an inclusive environment and – more specifically – what an inclusive dance environment means to them. We hope this resource provides a platform to delve deeper, learn more and keep the current conversations alive and evolving.

When we were asked to curate this artistic resource for Moving Beyond Inclusion we both felt that it should be an opportunity to hear the voices of the artists involved. The artists have generously shared their thoughts, ponderings and perspectives, which we have presented in an open, conversational format, with the aim of creating space, generating questions and drawing out individual responses.

In our shared experience of working in dance we recognise that the voices of dance artists are largely under-represented, and this seems amplified in the case of disabled artists; the experiences of performers are often mediated through existing, established spokespeople in the art form. We believe that sharing these voices and experiences here signposts the aspiring disabled dance artist to lived experiences of dance training and practice.

Moving Beyond Inclusion was an international, cross-cultural project, which brings with it the potential to create a lasting and broad impact. We wanted to take the time to capture, collate and consider those first-hand accounts of happenings and any nuances of the residencies and dance artist experience in different locations and cultural contexts.

We hope that this artistic resource will be able to contribute to the development of a dance environment that is continually shifting and evolving; but always with inclusion and diversity at its heart.

A Dancer's Review of a Choreographic Lab held in Rovereto, Italy

Sanja Polić, a dancer of the inclusive dance group Magic from Rijeka, Croatia, Invited by the Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance / Zagreb (HIPP) to participate in the project Moving Beyond Inclusion.

Three years ago, I joined the dance inclusive collective from Rijeka (dance group Magic) from pure curiosity to try something new, different. It could be said that I entered the world of contemporary dance quite accidentally. However, this is not quite the case because I had been thinking for a while about how to improve my body motor skills. Through swimming I managed to achieve better body function, but the fine motor skill remained an unexplored territory. At first, I could not figure out how and in what way my uncoordinated

movements, and at times uncontrollable movements, could become dance. By exploring myself from a new perspective, I discovered that dancing is not the sum of defined movements on which choreography can be created. In time, thanks to the dance, I came to the knowledge that I couldn't imagine before...That no matter the type or difficulty of body obstacles, there is always a way of expressing art if it is desired...and I am now exploring this new world / new dimension deeper and deeper...

A DESIRE A WORD A MOVEMENT A DISCOVERY
WHAT DO YOU NEED A THOUGHT PHYSICAL AHA MOMENT
NOW ... AND NOW... AND NOW AN IDEA MEMORY

Prompts for reflection from residency

The project Moving Beyond Inclusion (Choreographic Lab, Rovereto) for me was an unforgettable experience that, as well as my entry into contemporary dance, has opened some new perspectives for me. First of all, in the depth and quality of the movement, so that simply everything can be expressed by the body. It does not matter if anything limits you, but it is important within your ability to explore your own possibilities up to the limit every day again. I am a person who loves to explore, who loves adventures, but I did not expect that I would feel so much the positive energy and the amount of togetherness within this group of unknown people.

Sometimes, in , we seemed to be one body, and in fact we are so different... and this diversity and uniqueness of each person is enriched. I realized that dance is not just a moving body, but a state of mind. Every substance in the body, and the energy flow that makes the whole.

At the very end of the week when short works of the choreographic laboratory were presented, I was most impressed by **Anouk Llaurens'** group where the choreography was entirely improvised, using words as a kind of command to the dancers which they implement on the

scene. The audience thus participates in the choreography of the play that is just made in front of their eyes. Some words determine the dynamics, the dance and the content of the displayed material on the scene.

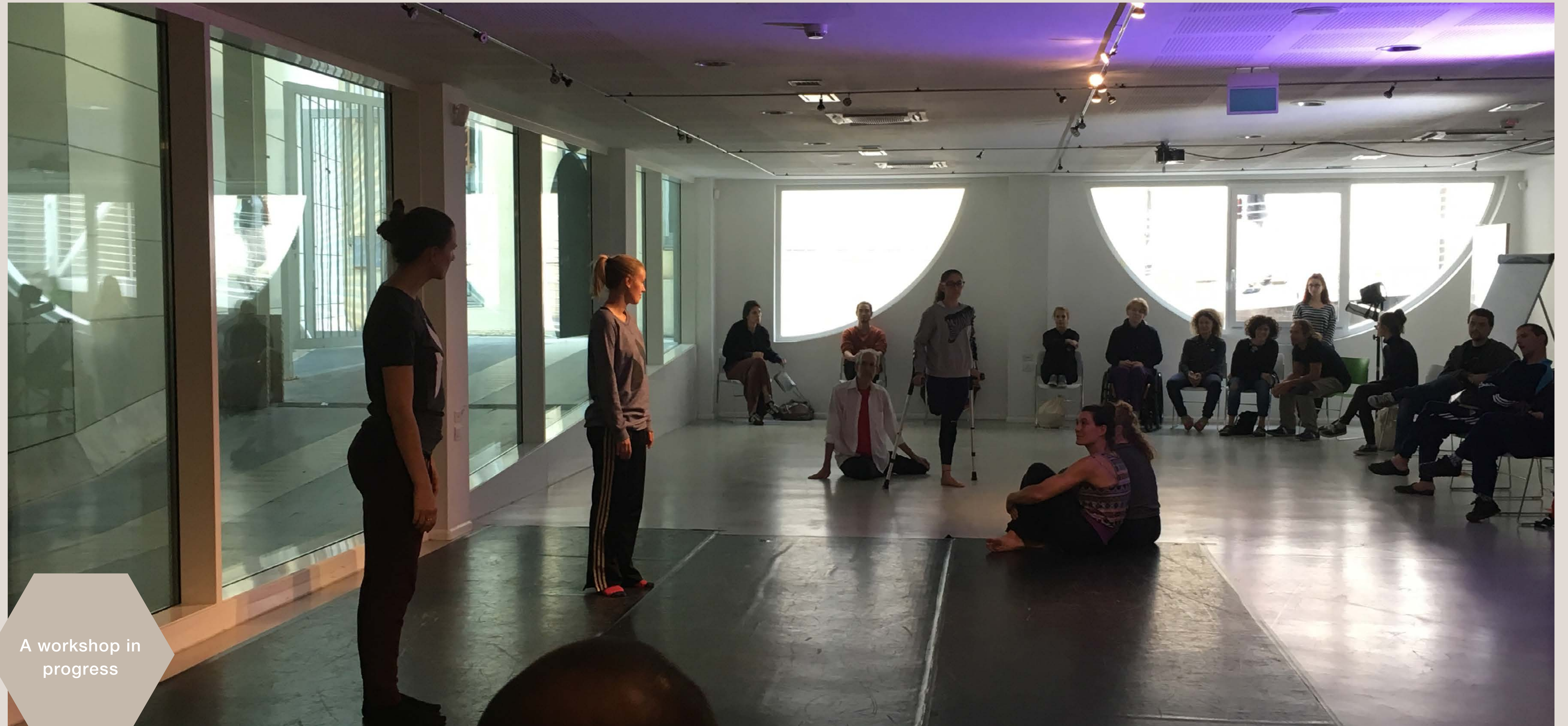
I think [Moving Beyond Inclusion] it's necessary, as are many such projects / socializing / exchanging experiences, because it allows the widening of horizons, growth and development of an individual / community in dance expression, but also gives us a lifelong experience that becomes a legacy that we then pass on to others.

ANOUK LLAURENS

Anouk Llaurens is an independent dance artist.

For more information see:

www.independentdance.co.uk/author/anouk-llaurens



A workshop in
progress

Photography: Veera Grimberg



Beautiful
surroundings
in Rovereto

Photography: Veera Grimberg

In Conversation

**Conversation between Candoco Dance
Company dancers: Megan Armishaw (MA)
and Toke Broni Strandby (TS)
Facilitated by Kimberley Harvey (KH)**

MA We are going to talk about this one together. So, we've chosen "What is Candoco to you?"

TS Candoco for me is a place where I can be an artist. [Shared moment of acknowledgement between Meg and Toke] And a place where I am allowed to be an artist. It's a place where I have a voice as an artist [laughter] and also as a person, as an individual. I believe it's a place where there's lots of space in terms of openness and welcoming.

MA Experiment

TS Yes. I feel like it's a place where there's lots happening all the time...

MA Yep

TS ...and lots more than I actually know about.

MA Yes, it's interesting that you call it a place, because on paper...

TS Yes

MA...it's a company or it's your job or...well, I wouldn't describe it as my job, even though it is my job. It's an environment, a community really, I guess, that we are part of. We are part of the core of it.

TS Yes

MA And we get varying degrees of contact with the outside of it...[Shared moment of acknowledgement between Meg and Toke] But yeah, I agree with all of the things that you're saying in terms of, it's not like we turn up [at the studio] and we are told what to do; starting at a certain time, finishing at a certain time...

TS It's more like we all need to figure out what we need to do.

MA Yeah...

TS ...not what we have to do.

MA ...What's necessary for the day or for the moment.

TS Yes

KH How long have you been in the company?

TS Almost four years.

MA Almost three.

KH Between you, you've both been around Candoco a while, has it changed in the performing company?...Has your role shifted a little in the performing company?

MA Yeah, I think there are certain things that I can't change. Like, I am not very good at time-keeping so there are some things that I can't take on responsibility for. But in terms of

the work and passing the work onto new dancers...I think you do gain a real sense of responsibility about that...and that's not just in the studio; it's when you get to the theatre and you realise that [none of the new dancers] have ever done it with lights before or haven't ever tech-ed this piece before; and there are some things that are really useful to know...Yes, I think, actually, we have a lot of responsibility in that sense.

TS Yes, and when you've been here for a while, you can feel the waves the company is going through in terms of work and performances. Some periods of time are much more dense about creating or doing lots of workshops or having people in to do research with us. Whereas, other times it's only about performing and there is not really time for anything else. It's very unpredictable. Being in a rep company you just need to 'take in' and deal with things a lot of the time.

MA I think socially as well, we are such a small unit that when [company members change] your role does shift. You're still the same person, but actually, what you were for somebody who's left is not the same as what you are for someone who is new. That really feeds into the work you make.

TS And I think also, like, right from the beginning of when I joined, people would constantly talk about the history of Candoco and the people who'd been here before. Even though I don't know them (I've seen them and I have met some of them), but I have never danced with them; I still feel like I know them.

MA Yes and they have affected somehow what's now...

TS Yes, and by being in the company, it's very clear that I am now a part of that history or that I am part of the coming history, which feels quite valuable and it makes me quite proud. And also, I am satisfied with it – that I am here for a reason...I'm not just 'another dancer' or 'another replacement'.

MA Yes

KH And then in relation to Moving Beyond Inclusion, you've both been part of it from the beginning...

MA Yes! We have both done both years.

KH Has it felt like quite a specific project for Candoco?

MA Actually, for me, it's been the first time I experienced in-depth studio time with other companies who were working in the same ways; the same world or whatever you want to call it. Whilst being a part of Candoco, that was the first time I got to spend that much time with other people.

KH And then, thinking about Candoco's role in MBI?

MA It's interesting because I feel like, actually, it was one of the only times that I have felt like Candoco wasn't really leading it. I mean, I think to be there in a participatory role was really nice actually – to not have to feel that people were looking to you for answers or...

TS I think MBI is quite an exciting project! It's a great experience, like you said before, it's such a privilege to be with other companies that work the same way as we do – more or less – and to spend a week together; learn from each other; and to be in mixed groups working with choreographers.

MA I think maybe that, although it's amazing, that might have been one of the challenges for me as well – just in terms of how far you can really get in a week when the choreographer might be new to you or the people in the room are probably new to you with quite varying disabilities. It takes time to get to know each other and what a group needs. I felt like – probably both times, actually – that by the end of the week we were only just starting to get to that point.

I don't know how you felt about that? [Asking Toke]

TS I'm quite torn, actually, because I feel that when I start thinking about the name of it – Moving Beyond Inclusion – I have so many questions...and I don't know how we can do it or what we are trying to move beyond. And when I see that in comparison to how the weeks have actually been set up and what I'm going through, it has absolutely no relation to each other. It makes me [feel] a bit funny because I think it's an amazing week and I learnt a lot from being there, but that is a separate thing. What I would have actually really liked is to go into more depth with all of us as companies – we work quite differently from each other, but still we are working with the same values and visions.

MA And I think what's great, actually, is that there was a really mixed level of experience in the room. So some of the companies that came didn't come together very often or maybe hadn't done many things at all and I think, actually, that's great that they were part of that situation and had practical experiences and people to talk to about how the system works...

TS ...and I am actually really curious to understand how each company works – much more than I am about working with other choreographers, in terms of this project. I would really like a day each where we taught everyone [about each company's way of working]. We could do it in the way we wanted – it could be a seminar, a workshop; it could be so many different things – this is... 'This is Candoco'; this is what we do'; 'This is a Candoco class, or the idea of a Candoco class'. And whether that is repertoire-related or not. And then the next day it's Spinn, then BewegGrund – because I think I would learn much more by having that than just talking about it.

KH Was there anything that surprised you in terms of MBI? – either specific weeks, specific encounters or the way you approached certain things, or just things you noticed...

TS I think it surprised me when we were in Sweden for the first time – also because it was the beginning of everything, it was the beginning of this two-year collaboration. I felt like it was part of an ongoing process and I left with lots of questions; and I think we left with lots of questions for the company...

MA Yes, I think we did.

TS I don’t really feel that those questions have been followed up on. Like, there were lots of questions about company classes and technique classes; and about ‘how do we, as Candoco, actually work with each other?’; or what is a ‘Candoco class’? – to name a couple of things. And I don’t feel like we have spent time on figuring that out for anyone to kind of feedback to MBI.

KH Is that something that you feel you would have liked to be able to use MBI to do in a way?

TS Yeah, I think so. It seemed quite an important project...

MA I think also it opened up a conversation with more people; whereas, having that conversation over and over again between ourselves and not finding any answers can be quite, um...

TS Circular...

MA I think we just get tired of it at times.

TS Yes

MA And I think at that point it felt like, ‘oh, we’ve opened this discussion up with lots of other people and suddenly it’s not like our same old questions; and we came away feeling a bit more fresh and able to talk about it and practically try some new things; but I guess it’s just reality as well. There was that time put aside for MBI to happen, but there wasn’t time put aside for working off the back of it. I think that’s something that surprised me – getting there and realising how big our European community is in some ways and I thought ‘Oh it’s going to be really nice now to connect with people’.I think it feels much more possible, but it hasn’t really happened for us. But I think it has happened for other people, probably, within the other groups. And we have bumped into people, actually, since; and people have come to open classes, I think?

TS Yeah...

MA ...and the auditions and stuff, so that was great. But I feel like it would be really nice – now that the project has finished – to keep those relationships alive, because I think that some really special friendships were made and it would be nice to feel that they continued somehow. I think it would be really fruitful for everyone. I realise there’s also the question of time and money; and programming... But even if it’s just a little thing, like, making it possible for us to go and do company class with one of them if we are off contract or...someone’s invited here or...

TS Yes

KH And I guess it’s that thing of going beyond the programmed activity – and that there is some in-built fundamental foundations laid down in terms of relationships

(and more specifically, international relationships) – not just for Candoco, but for you as people; artists and as a ‘dancing community’...

MA Yes, and I guess that’s something that we have complete autonomy to do for ourselves, if we want to; but at the same time, it sort of feels like it would be really nice if the ADs [Artistic Directors] were still facilitating an element of that connection.

KH Did you encounter any thoughts, opinions that arose that surprised you or were unexpected? In a good way (or not)? I suppose I am interested in how the cross-cultural elements were facilitated, because there will be differences of opinion, thought...

MA & TS Yeah...

KH ...and whether there was room for that?

MA I think that Toke and I were really lucky in the sense that we were in Anouk’s [Llaurens] group –

KH Okay, yes.

MA ...And just the way that she works was so, kind of, ‘enabling’ for all of those elements to be there. So, those sort of differences in opinions or approaches came out within the practice of her work, but didn’t necessarily need discussing because we had time ‘inside them’.

KH I’m just conscious that sometimes Labs like this can be ‘hotbeds’ for lots of particular topics or potentially tricky aspects to arise. Obviously, MBI is wonderful and, as you said, [referencing Toke], it does raise some questions around ‘what

is Moving Beyond Inclusion?’...As Candocans, - dancers/ artists - we share an understanding, an approach...

TS Yeah.

KH But there is something quite interesting in terms of considering what things we find ourselves coming up against?

MA Well, I think in the first lab actually there was... This was how the big discussion about technique came up, because the choreographers were leading class in the morning and some people were either happy or not happy about how it was facilitated.

KH Right.

MA: There was very purposefully a space left open in that week to discuss that and the choreographers were really generous to say, like, ‘please just say what you think’ basically...

TS Yes

MA So, that did come up, but there were so many people there that I think certain voices were heard maybe and other voices, who may have had the opposite opinion, weren’t necessarily heard. But I think it’s important it came up. I think it came down to really simple things, like demonstration – how a task is demonstrated; or the language that’s used to introduce something...

KH Generally, were these classes facilitated inclusively? Or were you, sort of, left to your own devices and – I’m just thinking of the Candoco TTI’s [Teacher Training Intensives] and how they are structured with feedback given afterwards?

TS I think it was like that in Sweden.

MA [In Italy] we did have some discussions that **Susanna [Recchia]** facilitated and I found that more useful because we were in groups of four or five. So, actually, you could have a bit more of a conversation.

TS I felt it was more of an evaluation. It wasn’t really broadened out so I didn’t get to hear about it...

MA It wasn’t opened back up to the big group. I think that’s the other thing about having so many people involved is that you often don’t get to hear a lot of the conversations taking place.

KH If you put your ‘ideal hat’ on for a minute, say there was another one [residency], as a dance artist/Candoco Artist/ as you, how would you envisage that being different (or not)? How would it be a progression from the previous ones?

MA I feel like I’d be interested in, now that we all know one another as groups, if there was actually more of a possibility of doing an ‘exchange’ – like you used to do at school – or like, a company exchange; or one company spends time with a different company for a week or two doing some research and then, you swap. And then maybe there was some way of sharing it to the group at large. I feel like my desire is to actually spend, kind of, more knitty-gritty time with a smaller amount of people...maybe?

TS I think I would be very interested in more seminar-like classes where people are talking about things, or panel discussions and this type of thing (rather than movement).

KH So that you can really delve into things?

TS Yes and then maybe have a few of them, so that I can choose which one I am most interested in – so then the groups will be smaller.

KH Did you two teach on the MBI project?

MA We taught on a [training intensive] in [Gothenburg], Sweden, prior to the Uddevalla Choreographic Lab ...which was a really interesting way of going into it actually So that you come in with a slightly different perspective.I I didn’t feel like I came in ‘just’ as company dancer...

MA It was nice, because we had had a whole week with the group and working with Quarantine Theatre Company as well.

KH Do you think MBI has informed you as artists?

TS No

KH Fair enough.

MA Don’t you? I do. But that’s okay that we are different. I think it’s important that we spend creative time with others and that the MBI labs have been a chance to open up a larger conversation across countries (both in moving and talking!). This, of course, can only be the beginning but to have a beginning is very necessary! During the labs I have had time for myself as well - to ask questions about my practice and to be challenged

KH Thank you so much.

SUSANNA RECCHIA
Susanna Recchia is Candoco Dance Company Rehearsal Director and an independent dance artist.
For more information see:
candoco.co.uk/about-us/people/staff-and-board/susanna-recchia

move together
pause together
compose the stage/s
+ time. Call sustain
clarity

How do you perceive atmosphere?
Senses are composing with each other
intuition is before knowing.
listen before practice.
Time: musicality
hearing
duration.

Search - investigation
listen
eyes open eyes
moving away

pausing is an active place.
Eyes moving
Breath.
Tasting my experience.
forgetting our habits.
experiencing my own act

Identify your interest
identify your desire
and go for it.
Not a to train the body
but to train the attention.

Search - investigation
listen
viewer opens eyes
listener open eyes
Agreeing - moving away

Rhythm isn't about the beats
But living in between!
It's a structure you need to
fill in order to breathe,
to find presence and
interest.
When you start putting your
awareness into what you think
and do, that's when it begins
dance.
The more you practice the

A selection
of Toke's
handwritten
notes

Reflections Leon Goličnik

Dancer

IMRC (a collective supported by and working under the auspices of HIPPI - Hrvatski institut za pokret i ples)
Zagreb, Croatia

HOW DID YOU COME TO THE MBI PROJECT?

I came to the Moving Beyond Inclusion lab because I practice contemporary dance in Integrated Movement Research (IMRC) Collective from Zagreb and Iva Nerina who leads the collective invited me to go there. A friend of mine invited me to an inclusive dance workshop. Since then I have participated in several performances with my colleagues. If I could get a wheelchair for dance through a [non-profit] or something, that would contribute to my professional development as dancer.

COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE: I BECAME A PROFESSIONAL IN DANCE WHEN [AND/OR] I AM A PROFESSIONAL DANCER BECAUSE...?

I became a professional dancer because I realized that I can do it. Dance for me was love at first sight. I want to work on performances and travel with my colleagues all over the world. I also want to say that if I were not dancing I would sit at home and watch TV or sit in front of the computer. Dancing has also helped me to escape my loneliness. If there were no dancing,



Brochures from Oriente Occidente Festival in Rovereto, Italy

I would just sit around in my wheelchair. Contemporary dance is fun and exercise to me. I like to travel and learn new contemporary dance moves and I wish I could do it every year.

WHAT ARE THE ONGOING CHALLENGES FOR YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN DANCE?

In performance creation, it is important to me that we make a story. When we dance that story out it feels like we are making a film and to me it is commitment and fun. The best time is when I am dancing a duet with my partner. My challenge is to show everyone that I can do something in my life. I would like to find a job as a professional dancer, earn money and meet many colleagues and make friends. My goal is also to get the Croatian Actors' Guild Award. What surprised me the most is how well people accepted me. The training tempo in Rovereto was challenging to me, but I am aware that time is limited and that one should train to succeed, which is what makes me happy. So, to conclude, no objections there.

Reflections Esther Kunz

Dancer
BewegGrund,
Bern, Switzerland



Photography: Veera Grinberg

Photo taken from within circle of participants during workshop in Rovereto, Italy

HOW DID YOU COME TO THE MBI PROJECT?

I came to it through BewegGrund, which I've been part of for a number of years.

WHAT IS BEWEGGRUND TO YOU?

BewegGrund has become very important to me. Through BewegGrund I have discovered the joy of dancing and I'm also studying English because most of the workshops are in English. BewegGrund opened a door, which I went through without thinking. Any challenges and difficulties came up gradually, but they have taught me a lot and made me stronger. Also, I got to know more people through BewegGrund, and I was able to travel to various places. In BewegGrund I was able to dance in various pieces and I take part in workshops. I also accompany Susanne Schneider [BewegGrund's Artistic Director] when she goes to teach.

COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE: I BECAME A PROFESSIONAL IN DANCE WHEN [AND/OR] I AM A PROFESSIONAL DANCER BECAUSE...?

That is a funny question as I do not really feel like a professional dancer. I did not study dance or do a dance education. I would call myself a good dancer in continuous development. But I have learnt a lot from rehearsing in various dance pieces with real dance professionals and from performing on stage.

THREE MEANINGFUL MOMENTS IN YOUR DANCE CAREER?

The word or term 'dance career' is also a special one. It was not a goal of mine to start or have a dance career. Dancing found me I did not look for it. I have experienced a lot through my time in dance. A very nice moment was that my grandparents came to a performance. Being on stage is very very nice. Generally, rehearsals are exciting even if they sometimes get very tough. Being in rehearsal is an intense time and it always takes a long time until the whole piece is put together clearly for me and I understand it all or most of it. The piece changes with every performances and there will be little new stories that interest the audience.

WHAT ARE THE ONGOING CHALLENGES FOR YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN DANCE?

For me, the challenges are mostly the travelling, I'm not very used to that and I reach my limits. But it's getting better, I don't get upset as quickly anymore.

WHAT WILL YOU TAKE FORWARD IN YOUR PRACTICE FROM THE MBI PROJECT?

I have learned a lot of new and interesting things. In one of the dance weeks [artist lab], I realised that it was too much; I reached my limits. Here I have to learn to listen to myself sooner and take a break.

Reflections Aristide Rontini

Freelance Dancer
and Choreographer
Imola, Italy

HOW DID YOU COME TO THE MBI PROJECT?

I encountered the MBI project whilst I was attending a course in community dance projects in Italy in 2015. At the time the artistic director of the programme, Franca Zagatti was leading a community dance project in collaboration with Oriente Occidente, who were looking for a disabled professional dancer to include in the MBI project and they asked Franca if she knew someone. She gave my name and I joined the project.

COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE: I BECAME A PROFESSIONAL IN DANCE WHEN [AND/OR] I AM A PROFESSIONAL DANCER BECAUSE...?

When I was a teenager I used to attend theatre courses. One of my drama teachers suggested that I study dance to improve my physicality. After the first dance class I became passionate about it and during the following years I took more and more classes and workshops. During one workshop I met the artistic director of Rotterdam Dance Academy who offered me the opportunity to attend the dance programme there. I decided to go. After four years of studying and some professional experiences in the later years, I guess I become a professional dancer.

THREE MEANINGFUL MOMENTS IN YOUR DANCE CAREER?

Memorable moments in my career are;

1. When I was still in the Academy and I worked with the choreographer Michael Schumacher for the solo dance “With Without”.
2. When I met the Italian choreographer Simona Bertozzi in Italy and we started working together.

WHAT ARE THE ONGOING CHALLENGES FOR YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN DANCE?

I think the main challenge as disabled performers is to take the courage to go for what really inspires us. I think clear desires and constant work help to find the way to realise our dreams. More specifically for me in Italy, as far as I have experienced, I think we must activate more and more situations where disabled dancers are welcome to practice dance and grow artistically with particular attention to the pedagogical aspect. Additionally, I think we need to fight for specific [funding] - both from specific European Countries and globally - dedicated to disabled artists during this period in which both working and school environments are not [fully accessible] yet. I also think that there is a lack of disabled people in leading positions.

WHAT WILL YOU TAKE FORWARD IN YOUR PRACTICE FROM THE MBI PROJECT?

Moving Beyond Inclusion was an important project for my career because I got in touch with the dance companies Balletto Civile (It) and Spinn (SE). I have been collaborating with them since working on MBI. During MBI I was surprised by the fact that I am not alone. I met so many beautiful “disabled” performers facing similar problems in order to realise their aspirations in the dance world. Now I am aware I am part of a European Dance Community fighting for the same goal and rights. This makes me stronger. I think that I will find the way to follow more my artistic interest and go for it. I am also a disabled artist, but mainly I am a person with an artistic vision that I want to deepen and specify. Being disabled is a very important and significant part of my life in relation to the environment, but it doesn’t represent me as a whole.

Reflections Denise Kastler

Dancer,
tanzfähig
Berlin, Germany



Photography: Mirjana Vučić

Two dancers viewed through the spokes and wheel of a wheelchair.

HOW DID YOU COME TO THE MBI PROJECT?

I was taking part in the weekly tanzfähig classes, I also visited some of the additional organised workshops. Then I was asked if I would participate in the MBI project.

WHAT IS TANZFÄHIG TO YOU?

tanzfähig is the base for my dance experiences, the place where I visited my first workshop and developed both the desire for dancing and trying out as well as gaining a sense of security. It meant that I could meet like-minded people (especially in the sense of acceptance of physical diversity). tanzfähig is not a company, but an initiative that made it possible, with their opportunities, for me to participate as a wheelchair-user, particularly since the studios were accessible. The fact that I was already over 50 years old when I started dancing did not play a role in being able to dance, so I could have the experiences that suited me at the moment.

COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE: I BECAME A PROFESSIONAL IN DANCE WHEN [AND/OR] I AM A PROFESSIONAL DANCER BECAUSE...?

I am not a professional dancer.

WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU, EITHER IN YOURSELF AND YOUR EXPERIENCES OR IN YOUR SURROUNDINGS?

The first time I got off the wheelchair to the ground and much later, the very conscious moving from the wheelchair to the ground. The perception of the difference of the own body with its movement possibilities, whether it is in the wheelchair or moves on the ground. Touching moments in improvised dance duets and an amazing duet with a pedestrian during class after working with Jürg Koch and his specific methods.

WHAT WILL YOU TAKE FORWARD IN YOUR PRACTICE FROM THE MBI PROJECT?

There are a lot of people who deal with dance and physical diversity, I would say try something out, create pieces and how you can network with them or make contact. I have learnt that it would be nice to have a dance group or company where you could dance regularly and also develop pieces. I have learnt about different approaches to the common dancing, for example: What is the connecting of all dancers, how can you make it visible? Or: In which exercises can all do the same but individually different things? I really liked the method of “instant composition” and opened up tremendous possibilities.



Dancers
warming up
and talking

Photography: Veera Grimberg

In Discussion

Transcript of a recorded discussion between Veera Suvalo Grimberg (Artistic Director of Danskompaniet Spinn) and Emilia Wärff (Dancer with Danskompaniet Spinn):

VG Hello, this is Veera from Spinn.

EW And this is Emilia from Spinn. And we are now answering some questions to Kate and Kimberley. And the first question is ‘How did you come to the MBI project?’ And...if I remember rightly, it was Candoco contacting me and also, BewegGrund - I knew from before. So these were the two partners that I was, kind of, familiar with earlier. And the rest, they were new. But because we had some kind of relationship through mentorship and so on, it - yeah, I guess it was quite easy for them to ask us to become one of the partners. So, that’s how it happened. And, as I’m a dancer in Spinn - Veera was very excited and told me “There’s a new project and we are going to work with different countries”. And it really sounded so great. So I came to it quite naturally through Spinn.

VG ‘Spinn – your involvement?’ Well, my position is to be the Artistic Director of Spinn. Well, I actually gave up my teaching job and lots of other things because Spinn means so much to me. I’m gathering all my experiences from before – with dancing, and choreographing; and I put it all into this job. So I, kind of, created my own work. It’s a big part of my life, I just can’t think of being without Spinn.

EW Yes, and for me, it’s also changed my life really, because it’s not the track I had before. I was a designer and had just graduated and then Spinn came into my life and I couldn’t resist to continue with it. And now it has passed eight years so, something is very strong.

VG But you are combining both things...

EW Yes, I’m still combining, yes, that’s true, but it feels like there is... Some more effort in the dance. The design thing is going on a bit parallel, but, for the moment, I feel like the dance is taking most of my time in thinking.

VG Well, to the next question

EW ‘I became a professional in dance when...and/or...I’m a professional dancer because’. Both Who should start?? [Laughter]

VG I can start if you want? Well, I studied in Sweden. Dance is a fantastic way to express yourself and I just don’t feel at home in any other way of expressing myself as much as in dance. Dance makes... Life and the world into a better place. I really believe in that power that’s in there. And also, because I want to see other people grow in dance.

EW For me, I was in school in England between the ages of 2 and 5 and we had ballet on the schedule. The boys would play with Lego and the girls could have ballet.

EW I really liked those moments when we walked into this room and the woman in the corner was always playing the piano when we came in and it was a really, kind of a little sacred moment and I was always really looking forward to that. And then, my big sister – I have an older sister, she’s sixteen years older than me so – and she, she had a little dance company with her boyfriend and I was always, like, following what they were doing... But then I got paralysed when I was 5 and life became much more into physiotherapy,

dance was very far away somehow. But I, luckily, got a physiotherapist that was a Feldenkrais practitioner and she was really enlarging my world in thinking about movement a lot and I went to her twice a week – between when I was 6 and 18 - and that was, keeping my body alive really. And at the time I was also looking at dance a lot, I was in the audience a lot. I always went when there was something around and I always felt like, if I saw other people dance I could feel that my body was moving inside a bit. I was always very enriched when I came out from a performance and I felt like ‘oh, now it feels like my body can move much more freely’. I didn’t have any role models though, so I didn’t at all think it was possible for me to dance, until I saw a video clip, on TV actually, it was broadcast a performance with **David Toole** – I think it was like ’94 or something, it was outdoor performance and I remember that I thought this was something really, extraordinary, but I thought ‘Okay, he had maybe, he was a dancer and he had been in an accident and THEN he could dance. I never thought that it could be the other way around – that he had a disability and then you could start dance. So, I thought ‘Okay, that’s not my way’ so I went into art and design world, but I always had, like this little in the back of my head that I wanted to dance somehow. And then suddenly I met Veera! And she asked me if I would want to come to a workshop. And then I said, “Ah I can do the poster or the website or...” And she was like “No I really think you should join the workshop...”. And then I thought, ‘hmmm join a workshop with other disabled people, I don’t know!’ Because growing up, I always was combined with other people that had disabilities, but maybe we didn’t have anything else in common. So, I was a little sceptical, but then, I understood that this was something... Extraordinary, supreme, great occasion that I could not miss! And that was a really great week we had in Lab Sweden – 2009?

VG Yes, and Candoco were part of that as well, so many people that still are role models, **Claire Cunningham** came to that week and...Sometimes, I think it is so much about you meeting a certain person or observing a certain person – like you saw David Toole – And I’m also thinking about some people that I saw on stage, and, you know, there’s this feeling that you carry with you and I think - we needed a door opener...And maybe I opened some doors for you? [to Emilia]. We have to make sure that other people find these doors to their creativity and, I mean, dance as expression has so much to say. We are taking the temperature from society and the politics, whatever – there are so many interesting themes to bring up.

EW And you can make it very bombastic or very subtle.

VG You never know what you’re going to get with dance and you can’t explain everything and actually, I find that most fascinating. You can’t explain things, you feel them and you feel really strong.

VG Shall we move on?

EW Yes

VG ‘Three meaningful moments in your dance career so far’ ... There have been many different moments...

EW YES!

VG And it’s both from kind of, yourself dancing [to Emilia], and in meeting with other people...

EW I think it’s sometimes really during workshops when you find someone and you do a little collaboration with somebody in an exercise and that can be so... Powerful – that meeting...

VG Actually, I’m thinking of one of these occasions in Russia - it was quite early, it was a huge group, I think we had seventy participants in a workshop, it was very large space and the interpreter didn’t arrive in time and we had all these Russian people participating that didn’t know any English. [laughter from Emilia] and then we had to do something because people were just getting restless and we were quite terrified. But it ended up to be the most fantastic workshop and we hardly used any words and yes, the fact that the bodies meet and things happen it’s just, it’s 100% - it’s always something always happens and this was a moment I really could, I really could carry with me...And then, of course, the birth of Spinn in 2010 – of course, that is really overwhelming! [Agreement from Emilia and both laughing]... Because that’s still going on

EW I mean, that is also quite quick – from your thought to when it was founded.

VG Yes, that’s true. That’s right. And I think, actually, the reason why it was possible that we’ve done this quick trip, kind of thing, is because of Candoco [Agreement from Emilia] and all the support from them; and them being there – I’m just so very thankful because thinking of doing this all alone... and we were the only ones in Sweden – there was no help to get, there was no understanding! There was no one with experience!

CLAIRE CUNNINGHAM
Claire Cunningham is a professional choreographer and performer. For more information see: www.clairecunningham.co.uk/

DAVID TOOLE
David Toole is a professional independent dancer. For more information see: <http://davidtoole.co.uk>

EW – say, like “You know, in London, there was something” and people always get a bit like “Aha!” because –

VG Yes, because it’s a bit exotic...

EW A bit exotic. And we say, ‘They are mentors for us!’

I’m also thinking, like, er, I had a long story of operations with my back and that was really – when I met Veera – I was a bit immovable; I had Scoliosis and lots of rods in the back and things... And then all those surgeons of spine surgery – they had a big Nordic conference in Sweden, in the Western region, and they asked me if I could come and speak about my operations; and then, I said “Yes, I could do that, but I also want you to buy a dance performance”.

VG Woohoo!

EW My surgeon, he’s quite open to things so he said “Okay, let’s do it”. And then I asked Malin, my colleague in Spinn, if she wanted to do a duet with me and then we talked to Veera to see if she wanted to be part of this. And then we created a duet called ‘Kurvatur’. And then we had premiere if this in er, a really weird castle...er, what do you call it?

VG Sounds very accessible! ...A fortress, maybe?

EW A fortress, it was a fortress. That was a very special moment. They [the surgeons] were looking at me not as a patient anymore; and I also could show that you can do a lot in life and it’s not about your disability.

VG No, I’m sure that they were very surprised...We should do more of those!

EW I’m actually also thinking about when we went to Rovereto.

VG Okay, what was there?

EW It was so...funny audience, really – and we had done a piece called ‘Trio’, so we were three people on stage. We did this and for me, it has been the most body-challenging work I’ve done.. Afterwards, in Italy, we went to this festival that was part of Moving Beyond Inclusion. It’s very fun to be in Italy and to be part of this festival that has been going on since the 80’s...

VG Over thirty years. I can’t remember the year...

EW So it felt really nice, and they were very kind with arranging the ramps – they had really thought about everything. That’s not the usual thing always, I mean the accessibility always comes in and you feel if the venue is interested in the work or not. I think it was a really engaged audience.

VG in the Nordic countries it’s not always like that! ‘Ongoing challenges – highlighted within MBI – what’s not yet right?’

EW Well, just thinking about this tour that we’ve been doing with ‘Skirt Power’ at the moment – I mean, where are the toilets?

VG [The venues] are new buildings and there are still no accessible toilet in the dressing room.

EW No, they are always on the audience side – so you always have to go out there and hope I don’t meet the whole audience just before. I mean, there is...you always have to find out the plan, organise yourself...

VG It’s a lot of logistics and it takes more time for you to go around. With venues in general that it still feels that they are a bit uncertain and feeling that they are taking a risk when they engage us. It’s...whenever we have a show, many times we are coming back to the same places and I really feel that they get surprised –

EW “It was much better than we thought!”

VG “You’re not angry with us because we didn’t have 100% accessibility?” That’s not how it works. We want you to be curious and we can sort things out together and we can – there are ways of developing the accessibility issues. This is about the physical accessibility.

EW But then I also think sometimes they are unsure about our work...Is it professional?

VG YES!

EW Can we trust that the audience are going to be pleased? And, I mean, often audience are are crying when they come to us after a performance, or hugging us. I think it moves something that you maybe you don’t expect from a dance performance. This is still something that the venues haven’t really understood. It’s...

VG Yes [audible sigh]

EW And what to do about that? I think it’s only to keep on –

VG Keep on working

EW Keep working...

VG I mean, isn’t it like that? qell, I think Candoco has done

that! And we have been existing now for eight years, but it’s still, we still need to get into the bigger stages and be more mainstream in that way, so that people can count on us and say “okay, it’s good quality”. I mean, we are established. We would not invite a choreographer and present something on stage that’s unprofessional.We are past that and people should know that so please, let that go!

EW But the challenges are about the education also –

VG Oh definitely! And these things aren’t going fast and again, it’s about special individuals – that, think it’s important and they do their campaign; and sometimes these campaigns, they take years and the changes take years. But as you say, they are, at least, very interested at the moment

EW Absolutely. It’s a vibe for the moment.

VG It’s more trendy now, yes.

EW Inclusion is the way to go and I really think we have to keep that trend alive for very long.

VG Yes.

EW The dance university, they are reaching out a hand and for me, felt it was really important to take that hand and...

VG So you’re part of this?

EW Yes I’m participating in this course, yes.

VG What is it called?

EW It’s like ‘Function and Variation of Choreography’. But there I think they are a bit afr... – they try to make it so neutral; they don’t even talk about disability –

VG Okay.

EW They are really wanting to make it very level – it’s just a course for everybody. I feel there is something lacking...

VG That’s interesting! They probably mean well and –

EW Yeah they mean well.

VG ‘What surprised you during MBI?’

EW I mean, it’s been a great two – is it two years??!

VG Two years, yes.

EW If feels both long and short!

VG We started planning such a long time ago...

EW Right from the first Gathering in [In a different voice] Uddevalla, as we say with Italian...

EW Uddevalla – was so great. We lived at the same hotel, we were together all the time – there were such interesting topics taken up in the discussions and people were really enjoying themselves. And it was also so fun to see what other countries are working with, and we are in the same situation. We struggle in our daily life and sometimes you think that you are alone...

VG Yeah there is a great strength in that. Noticing that you are not alone. I never had a network with other Artistic Directors the way I have now and that has meant so much to me. I will keep these contacts and I will keep them alive, so it’s not like these people will disappear. But there is also something about the simpleness...I mean, it’s about people meeting – the dancers, the ADs, the marketing people etc. It’s like realising

that there is a map of people that exists...

EW Yes! It’s really broadened my way of thinking. You will always have challenges, but you know, there are people solving them out there It feel is like we are more a big family, I think. This was a European project, but now I am thinking, what’s happening in, in South Africa or South America?

VG Exactly!...I have some ideas! Maybe it’s one of the steps? Noticing that we can think bigger...

EW Yes!

VG LET’S think bigger.

EW Absolutely.

VG ...And that gives you things back, because otherwise, I mean, you can live in your little bubble and never get anywhere!

EW Mmm

But that’s not our style. Here, it feels like the WHOLE team – the Spinn team together – we all have these ambitions and all love to travel and we share these dreams...And that makes things possible!

So, ‘what will we take forward...

EW ...in our practice from this project?’ I think a real openness; and that we know all these dancers now that are out there. It feels easier to collaborate, I think. And the knowledge that this project was possible!

VG Absolutely!

EW And it worked out.

VG And we met Aristide, who is now part of ‘Skirt Power’ performance. So, things like that will keep happening in the future; and I think it’s easier for us to think it’s possible.

EW And I think because he’s part of our project now, maybe Italy is interested in how we work, because they still don’t have any inclusive companies so...And they are looking at us and so, maybe, now the ball is rolling?!

VG There was one thing I’ve been thinking about, especially - it’s the role of media and what stories do we want to tell there; what language do we want to use; and what are the rules; who is deciding?...and all that. And, actually, I wasn’t that aware of this whole business before the project, but this was probably through the ADs work and speaking with each other that gave me some tools for the work with media. I have had contact with the media twice during this ‘Skirt Power’ tour. First, it was a newspaper and then, just yesterday it was a radio station. I was interviewed on the phone and it was actually fantastic, because they did not bring up any disability issues. They did not mention the fact that some of the dancers have disabilities.

EW That’s very new!

VG That’s VERY new! I was just like, okay when are they going to ask something...and they did not! They were talking about the work and I just felt so happy! I mean, it’s a fact. You don’t mind to talk about it, I don’t mind to talk about it [to Emilia], but that was not the thing! It was...

EW The work!

VG They must have talked about it somehow; and it was just so well done and such good questions! It just felt so good! So there are so many things...and we don’t want it to finish; and we will find other ways of maintaining the great contacts we have received through Moving Beyond Inclusion...

EW Yes, because we are not beyond yet; but we really want to continue on this track. We also want to discuss this with YOU, what you think...

VG Yes!



Seating area with wooden tree structure

Photography: Aristide Pontini

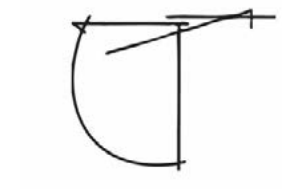
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movingbeyondinclusion.eu

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Candoco Dance Company
2T Leory House
436 Essex Road
London, N1 3QP
United Kingdom
info@candoco.co.uk
www.candoco.co.uk
www.candoco.co.uk/the-work/candoco/moving-beyond-inclusion



Hrvatski institut za pokret i ples (HIPPI)
/ The Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance
Biankinjeva 5
10000 Zagreb
Croatia
www.danceincroatia.com



Associazione Incontri Internazionali di Rovereto / Oriente Occidente Dance Festival
Corso Antonio Rosmini, 58
38068 Rovereto (Trento)
Italy
festival@orienteoccidente.it
www.orienteoccidente.it



Danskompaniet Spinn
Järntorget 7, 1st floor
413 04 Göteborg
Sweden
Producentbyrån
Kastellgatan 6
411 22 Göteborg
Sweden
veera@danskompanietspinn.se
info@producentbyran.se
www.danskompanietspinn.se/en
www.producentbyran.se



tanzfähig
Deidesheimer Str. 6
14197 Berlin
evelyne@tanzfaehig.com
bernhard@tanzfaehig.com
www.tanzfaehig.com



BewegGrund
Postfach 730
3000 Bern 22
Switzerland
info@beweggrund.org
www.beweggrund.org



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