

DANZA*di*STANZA

Music and dance in Corpi Elettrici's virtual room

by Giulio Sonno

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It's 10:30 in the morning, a bell rings as the guests start showing up and take their seats systematically, very systematically. Someone fixes their hair, someone lights a cigarette, someone else asks *how is it going?* awkwardly, in order to break the ice: they barely know each other, their gazes move back and forth with curiosity from one face to another. Everyone is smiling, in a friendly way, but their faces look tired, and that is definitely not due to waking up early or a party night; they are tired from all the artificial light and the days that have been passing one after another in a monotonous way for a very long time.

This is the beginning of the first meeting of *Corpi elettrici*, an interdisciplinary learning project that mixes music and dance, created by the Gender Bender festival and the Bologna Conservatory "G. B. Martini", as part of the project called *Così sarà! La città che vogliamo* coordinated by ERT. Twenty students from the courses of electronic music and applied music and five dance makers from the M_I_N_E group are getting together to create an open and hybrid field of experimentation, in which both types of artistic expressions meet each other. Their practical purpose is to create short dance videos using original music, composed specifically for this event. But let's be clear: this is what the project turned out to be. At the beginning, it involved a smaller number of participants and the videos were not expected; it had to take place in Bologna, but then the quarantine started and everyone, including the project, had to move from the practice rooms in Piazza Rossini to Zoom's chat room.

«Today it is no longer a backup plan», this is what Daniela Cattivelli, electronic music professor from the conservatory and manager of this project, says at the end of the journey. «The restrictions gave us the possibility to explore something that was ignored in the past.» Five groups, four musicians for each dance maker, three sessions of two hours each, and a virtual room. It is not hard to imagine the difficulties: losing internet connection, having problems with the audio output, the webcam showing just half of the bodies, the time, which is never enough, the impossibility of having physical contact. The limits. As spring blossoms,

the world *outside* becomes a forbidden, dangerous, and unstable place, forcing us to reinvent the *inside* world, a world that had never been that intimately unknown.

Every dance maker begins with a proposal, some of them already have a clear idea, some of them have just a slight idea, and some others want to be inspired by the rest of the participants. Afterwards, the composers share their ideas, suggestions and insights one by one: in some groups they improvise on the spot, in other groups they discuss about theoretical, linguistic, formal, or poetic topics, and sometimes there are private conversations that call for an individual reflection. In seldom cases, it is possible to establish a consistent group dynamic, distance divides people.

Corpi elettrici has progressively developed a strange kind of art that can be contagious, an art that unintentionally reflects and holds the doubts that have arisen from the pandemic: shall we expose ourselves to others or shall we stay in our comfort zones? Even if this precarious time imposes a sort of pragmatism, it also raises questions and technical doubts that end up bumping into wider issues. «What does accumulation mean to you?/What do you mean by *stubborn*/How do you define a forgotten move? /Is it possible to create a dynamic without repeating a landscape? ?» Therefore, an echo of a personal and professional sensitivity can be heard, an echo that establishes empathic relationships that nurture the learning process and makes facing the need to produce (music, choreographies, or videos) easier, while it receives information that can be useful for the purpose of composing as an exercise. «Two different paths, one common destination », says one of the students of the conservatory. «At the end I understood that we *share* one language way more than I thought.»

Thanks to the coordination and mediation of the two partners, who are originally from Bologna, each meeting was able to make good use of the previous one, going beyond technical and logistic slowness. Furthermore, they were able to embrace the difficulties and the possible contradictions that an experimental project involves. The critical moments were faced with sensitivity and honesty, and that was helpful in order to use the unspoken potentials, choose the correct direction and create a field of action for the following encounters step by step.

«Usually, the interaction with artists is linked to an event that takes place at a specific moment and which needs assessment», claims Daniele Del Pozzo, Gender Bender's artistic director. «However, this process has put the judgement aside to foster observation. I felt that I was part of an industry in which the product does not disappear together with its rushing factors.»

If the lockdown changed dreams and hopes, directing life towards a purely material direction, in order to watch the final products of *Corpi elettrici*, it will be necessary to go on the opposite direction: it will be necessary to watch them against the light, see the underground life in them, that which cannot be seen but which is still there. By doing so, the voices of household items, news broadcasts, birds, atmospheric conditions, and faraway planets turns into the breath of the impulses that are able to bring to life the faraway echo of desires, abstractions, conceptions, and memories. They are pieces of lives and bodies that have a hard time showing themselves completely, something keeps them from doing so, something gets in their way; it causes delay and hides it. However this means that this totality is not denied, it was rather modified, it will not be found *here* and *now*, but over a broader range of time, a time which is less worried about the certainties, confirmation and truth: a rediscovered time, a time for reiterative findings.

This is more than just showing a quarantine product on streaming services or an act of resistance in times of Covid, the videos are the track of a «non-volatile» experience – as Cattivelli says – «each video adds something to the other one, watching them separately would be like watching a mutilated piece.»

In fact, more than experimenting with new artistic possibilities, publicly spreading the videos and discovering that the project will have a live-action sequel after the 18th edition of Gender Bender (probably also in other festivals), the thing that made the biggest impression on the participants and that made them agree unanimously was the pleasure to meet each other. Is this a symptom of the compulsory social distancing or is it a social agglomerating force that existed way before the beginning of SARS-CoV-2?

This fact is important, rather than naive, since it demonstrates that there is an underlying need to be together, to start meeting each other once more, and to remember that the need to give the priority to the process, rather than to the result, is not only a requirement of the performing arts, but also a deep and unconscious need for every human being.

«I was really enthusiastic about being able to have a conversation: tell each other things, in spite of everything, meet other people and get to know the way they think» explains one of the dance makers. «I didn't think much about the video, in fact I used the camera as a hidden camera to record yet another meeting.»

That virtual room did not replace, nor could replace, the value of a direct experience, where everyone is next to each other, but it demonstrated that there is a possibility that hadn't really been taken into account, maybe because of the hustle or because of economic reasons: the possibility of giving oneself time to listen when you don't have an answer, to

stop hiding behind a role, a public image or the expectation for a certain result; the possibility to discover that, at the end of the day, the biggest limit is the one that, knowingly or unknowingly, we impose to ourselves and to those around us. In fact, in this way we can determine the real extent of our actions.

Credits

Corpi Elettrici is a special project by the Gender Bender Festival and the Bologna conservatory “G. B. Martini”.

A project curated by:

Daniele Del Pozzo and Mauro Meneghelli, artistic directors of the Gender Bender Festival
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The works

Ares

Choreography and performer: Silvia Sisto

Sound composition: Marco Menditto

Being Ok Loosing Electronic Red Object

Choreography and performer: Roberta Racis

Sound composition: Salvatore Bovalina

Catarsi

Choreography and performer: Fabio Novembrini

Sound composition: Marco Melilli

Corridoi

Choreography and performer: Siro Guglielmi
Sound composition: Lorenza Ceregini

Cortocircuito

Choreography and performer: Fabio Novembrini
Sound composition: Olmo Frabetti

Dilatato Ipnotico (Con Fratture)

Choreography and performer: Fabio Novembrini
Sound composition: Gioele Billi

Erobolebo

Choreography and performer: Roberta Racis
Sound composition: Biagio Cavallo

Flipper

Choreography and performer: Fabio Novembrini
Sound composition: Matteo Davoli

Gaze

Choreography and performer: Silvia Sisto
Sound composition: Alireza Farajan Hamed

M.N.W.

Choreography and performer: Roberta Racis
Sound composition: Dario Boschi

Neptune Moon

Choreography and performer: Silvia Sisto
Sound composition: Alessandro Cherubini

Office

Choreography and performer: Siro Guglielmi
Sound composition: Vicky Koushiappa

RW

Choreography and performer: Francesco Saverio Cavaliere
Sound composition: Yuri Casali

Still Here

Choreography and performer: Francesco Saverio Cavaliere
Sound composition: Pier Francesco Amadei

Stormi Elettrici

Choreography and performer: Roberta Racis
Sound composition: Maele Allorio

The Porch

Choreography and performer: Siro Guglielmi

Sound composition: Cristian Albani

Titan

Choreography and performer: Silvia Sisto

Sound composition: William Succi

Urano

Choreography and performer: Silvia Sisto

Sound composition: Mitja Bichon

Wall

Choreography and performer: Siro Guglielmi

Sound composition: Ladan Abedini

Woodland

Choreography and performer: Francesco Saverio Cavaliere

Sound composition: Simone Domizi