

## Selection of Master Project Journal

*3rd try-out - Choreomaniac seeds (December-January 2024)*

### 2nd of December

*In a conversation with Pietro, he recommended the documentary of [Leonard Bernstein and the rite of spring](#)<sup>1</sup>.*

*The story behind the rite of spring, featuring a maiden who dances until death offering herself as a sacrifice for the spring. I recall the conversation with Kathryn Cok, where she talked about Marco Beasley and L'Arpeggiata - "Tarantella del Gargano" Antidotum Tarantulae (2001).*

### 3rd of December

*Looking at the research platform I encountered "The Relevance of Improvisation in Music & Dance for Society" by Carolien Hermans. [Her PhD](#) has inspired me and I'm eager to read more.<sup>2</sup> In the second phase of her research, she initiates the Touch Project after realising the vital role touch played in both physical play and dance improvisation. She noticed not much attention was given to it in the literature on embodied cognition and enactivism and decided to work with dance experts to deepen her knowledge on it and "how touch constituted a we-space". "In contact improvisation, there was much knowledge and expertise on interpersonal touch". The title is "Participatory Sense-making in Physical Play and Dance Improvisation: Drawing Meaningful Connections Between Self, Others and World".*

*While looking back to last week's performance, I identify sometimes ballet-like/elegant/thoughtful movements throughout the improvisations. Why don't I try-out "ugly" and "disfigured" movements? This makes me think a lot about choreomania and tarantella.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=oTb9w0Kfzj35Akie&v=5Kyso5VmZ6g&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>2</sup> <https://carolienhermans.nl/abstract-thesis/>

*There are too many distracting elements for me to be able to focus 100% on the classical piece.*

*I could have given much more space in the improvisations between the prelude and the nocturne in Scriabin's piece. It feels like I need to play all the time, I'm not so conscious of the sound in space, I'm just eager to fill up the space with sound. I would love to change this and be more present, allow myself not to play if there's no need.*

#### 4th of December

*Caroline Hermans - PhD:*

*Informed consent forms! Giving permission not only for images and recordings but also to use the insights (thoughts/ideas) that were shared during the artistic experiment.*

*Also, she adds the detail of giving permission to publish the photos in academic journals and reports specifically.*

#### 6th of December

*Yesterday, in a conversation with a movement artist about my performance, he shared several practices or interesting places to go to:*

- 1. The mime company called Schwalbe*
- 2. Butoh, a Japanese avant-garde dance form. Here, there is a general trend toward the body as "being moved", from an internal or external source, rather than consciously moving a body part. A certain element of "control vs. uncontrol" is present through many of the exercises. It is difficult to define, yet it is known to "resist fixity". It is traditionally performed in white body makeup with slow hyper-controlled motion.*

*And others.*

*Researching about mime and its evolution, I came across mime-dance, mime-clowning, mime-puppetry, New Vaudeville ("theater with the fourth wall down"), physical or movement theatre, etc.*

*We also discussed the differences between moving as a "natural" act and moving according to how people perceive you being moved. In other words: how differently you move when you show you're moving, versus when you just simply move. Then I shared*

*how, after rewatching the performance, I thought many of my movements were kind of imitating classical-ballet gestures and dynamics; they felt forced or not true.*

### 8<sup>th</sup> of December

#### **iii - Raw Dates Session**

*While watching an improvisation between two cellos and a dancer/theatre performer, I remembered the conversation with the movement artist about moving versus moving to show you're moving. How could I translate that to the piano? How could I possibly enhance the act of just playing? I remember the exercise of the private moment during the performance and communication course: the aim was to translate this feeling to our performance.*

*I just did a full improvisation with movement for the first time. I also used my voice in it. There was a moment in which Giuliana Nanna and I had a small contact-improvisation and I absolutely loved it. I would love to include another performer in my next try-out! Why not her?*

*A bit later, I had a conversation with her about her background in movement and shared the physical theatre artist, Hannes Langolf, she worked with when she studied in Munich.*

### 10th of December

*Meeting with Renee Jonker:*

*Expanding on physical vocabulary: look at physical gestures that I have experienced through very meaningful events in my life. This can help to build a "bank" of movements/gestures.*

### 31st of December

*The last couple of weeks I have focused on reading more about choreomania. I have also contacted the Italian mover (Giuliana Nanna) to collaborate with her, and a pianist with a very creative mindset and knowledge on dramaturgy (María Trigueros). I would love to (re)imagine a collective happening where the rational mind is set aside, allowing the body to take center stage.*

### 1st of January

*I am time-restrained by the fact that I need to perform at the HaagsPianoHuis with a time limit. But what if I try out a long-duration performance? I would like to explore more taking the body to its limit and also see how that affects the audience.*

### 2nd of January

*Meeting with María Trigueros to share my ideas for the next try-out:*

*Movement parts in the performance: I seem to be wanting to dance.*

*More solid structure: it's better to know more where I'm going.*

*Sometimes it feels like the direction gets stuck.*

*Reduce the idea to one thing—the one that impacts me the most. A single phrase.*

*What is inside you that makes you strip yourself bare and feel "at risk"?*

*Then choose three things to evoke it.*

*Try to make the main theme or ideas pop up with objects, scenography, movements... etc.*

*She suggested trying to create a new performance from scratch with the main idea and 2-3 things to convey it. Later, I can add some of the material I already have where relevant.*

*It is true that the start of the performance is clear, but after a while the focus is lost and the aim is blurred. When she posed the question of what it was that made me want to do this performance and this research, I came up with the word liberation. Liberation of restrained self-expression possibilities in many senses. So-called choreomanias emerged under psychological distress and times of social crises. What do I want to express with the performance? What do I have to say?*

*I would want to connect with people, make it a collective thing. "Towards a collective, non-hierarchical performance". Is this even possible, or utopian?*

### 12th of January

*Thinking about the main idea of the performance, I realized that it was about collectivity as a means of liberation.*

*I want the participants to feel liberated themselves, not make them realise that the performance is about liberation through collectivity.*

### 16th of January

*I have been in bed for the past 4 days with a flu that left me with no energy. However, I've been thinking about how this shorter performance can be shortened to a key idea. One of them could be pain liberation through repetitive movement and collective experience.*

#### 17th January

*Creating a moodboard for the next performance, I had the idea of making some participants shine in a blue light, after making a choice. The idea of choice is something truly intriguing. This lighting idea is nice, but it is quite complex for the amount of time I have. As props, I can get some ropes and opened chains to leave them around the floor, to symbolize liberation.*

#### 18th of January

*On Tuesday we have the first movement rehearsal and I'm planning how to work. The dancer and I have a very good connection and we have worked together before. I envisage the colour blue for the lighting because of the liberation/trance-like ambience it enhances.*

*Music choices! Last time it was connected to the vulnerability, What about this time? I would like to have a beat as a base and some texts on top overlapping with repetition. I want music to portray trance, active meditative states, raves. Monday, I speak to Nicco and things will get clearer.*

*I have found a more precise way of phrasing my aim with the performance: for me, it's about the liberation of guilt for letting my love for classical piano dye. Liberation of feeling useless. But also (and more deeply) the guilt of being alive and not feeling alive in some of the hardest times of my life. Liberation of guilt for not being there when people are dying. Liberation or shared feeling of helplessness. There's no frustration, only surrender. A letting go of the guilt of defeat.*

*Music: In the middle/towards the end, I will play the D major section of Bach's chaconne for violin (Brahm's transcription for the left hand). The symbolism of this section is associated with a deeply spiritual dimension. It is often interpreted as symbolic of hope, redemption, or divine grace amidst sorrow. The D major section*

*might also be seen as an emotional catharsis, offering a moment of acceptance or peace within the grieving process.*

### 20th of January

*Conversation with Maria Trigueros.*

*Ambivalence of piano: it frees, but it chains. When does the music arrive?*

*The theme of guilt is usually more talked about by women than by men.*

*She recommended reading Emil Cioran - On the Heights of Despair (1934).*

*Piano improvisations: as a gestural response to my movements. They do not come from a need from themselves but as a secondary effect of the state of movement.*

*Text in between techno and piano as an intermediate affect (?) in case the emotional transition doesn't work.*

*Everything has to be connected.*

*Meeting with Nicco:*

*He really liked the idea. In terms of the music, he said he has a drums/bass he can use to maintain the regularity of the beat. We also discussed how to launch the words and further the small repetitive text, and found a solution: creating a launchpad project with my iPad, where I can save all the audio files and then connect it to Nicco's computer. In this way, I can also improvise with the words and electronics, as I can also edit the effects I use for each word and play with the frequency and density of the soundscape.*

*Approximate timings for each part:*

*Movement improv, techno/trance/meditative pulse, words or short phrases - 10'*

*Bach + short improv 5'*

*Audience performative conversation 10'*

*I've also thought that after the 10' movement improv in which we would tire ourselves and hopefully the participants, we could start "collapsing" slowly until we're lying on the ground, and encourage the rest to do so. While on the floor, play Bach.*

### 21st of January

*Meeting with Giuliana, the movement artist*

*Thinking about performance:*

- *Giuliana shared that she loved the project because she works in a similar way, in which first she encounters the problems, then the questions, and then there's a liberation of these.*
- *how can we make people engage with our movements in the same way Hecker describes "by mimesis", without touching the audience?*
- *Start dancing 10 minutes before the start so we are already exhausted when it starts?*
- *Movement in the first scene: I don't imagine it being a party, but a liberation scene; a letting go of the tedious guilt in which collective emotional catharsis is felt.*
- *During the movement try-out, we jumped for 9 minutes from stillness to a bigger gesture progressively. We reflected on the difference of movements and the tool of exhaustion as liberation. Giuliana stressed on the power of seeing someone get exhausted and the difficulties of trying to get the audience involved in this context, as what the audience would get out of it and the way they would experience it would change completely. What do I want the audience to get, to feel? Construct from there. There is a contradiction: I want the audience to experience themselves the liberation but I'm "forcing" them to jump. I want the audience to feel the guilt and letting it go, but in trying to engage with the audience we are careful and very attentive to them, which means that then we stop trying to take ourselves to really feel liberated. She believed that the audience is going to feel liberated if we ourselves do, and it will be more enjoyable for the audience if they just watch.*

22nd of January

*Meeting with Renee.*

*In reflecting on the contradictions felt in my performance idea:*

- *Thinking of ways to make words more metaphorical, less direct.*
- *Phrase at the beginning could be changed to "what is bothering you?" Guilt is a very heavy word.*
- *Weight: carrying a precious object like a vase filled up with water and jump with it. Metaphorically and symbolically, it takes you closer to this understanding of the situation.*

- *Choice at the beginning: very good idea!!! Differentiation between people will nourish my feedback session enormously*
- *If I work with weight, is jumping necessary? Moving it by itself is tiring.*
- *We could give heavy objects to the participants and if they attempt to leave it on the floor we scream “NO!” to make it clear they cannot. When can they leave it? What makes it possible for people to liberate themselves from the weight?*

### 23rd of January

*Thinking about the clothing/styling of the performance, Giuliana and I came around the idea of Christian processions in Spain and Italy and how that relates to the chains and the idea of guilt.*

*Meeting with Giuliana.*

*She believes approaches cannot be mixed. If our aim is engaging with audience, our attention should be on them. They become the object.*

*Sound: 10 min audio track with increasing amount of text (?) Transition to floor is a decelerando from the beat in Nicco's drums.*

*Chains in trousers? Sound of chains.*

### 26th of January

*Meeting with Giuliana and Nicco.*

*Today, again, a lot of things went unexpectedly. Having thought that ideas were much clearer, I thought this rehearsal would go much more smoothly and we could even try some run-throughs, but that did not happen.*

*Giuliana shared her experience in theatre and performance with the use of objects and was sceptical of the use of beautiful vases filled with water. This was for many reasons, but the main one was the enormous meaning an object must have when in scene. She stressed the importance of choosing the right object and having the necessary amount of time to work with it. She expressed that in the short amount of time we have, she would rather wait to get some feedback from the audience on the elements that were already there (which are a lot), and experiment with the object in the next try-out in two months.*



*Another problem derived from this was the choice at the start. If there is no object, there is no reason to make a choice. Furthermore, as there are already too many elements, we think it is better not to add text on top of it.*

*More importantly, we spoke about the contradiction between wanting the audience to experience the performance in an “(en)active” way and, at the same time, focusing on really expressing the feeling ourselves. In other words, focusing on the audience or focusing on ourselves. As discussed with Giuliana, one cannot live with the other, a choice must be made. Consecutively, if we decide to focus on exhausting ourselves, we cannot be attentive to the audience and its reactions, as this then greatly affects our performing.*

*Another idea was to use the chains but in an indirect way. Giuliana thought about hiding the visual element under the clothes but letting them produce sound, would be more effective. By creating a movement built up increasingly around exhaustion without the audience realising that it's being very difficult for us, and by waiting until the very peak to uncover the weight/load we were carrying, it increases the effect of the object on the audience.*

### 28th of January

*Today was the last rehearsal before the performance. We tried out two run throughs. It is very special to experience the transition between no chain sounds and very loud chain sounds in the increasing movement of the first scene.*

*We tried out with the 10 minute timing and we felt we really had to speed it up and take it to a much more extreme level, as the 10 minute window is very short. We also worked on the technique of a peripheral focus with the eyes so that, even if you are looking at someone, it seems like you're not actually looking. This “lost” look will be shifted towards a very present look in the eyes of the audience once the liberation (transition to scene 2) has started to take place.*

*Wearing the chains is actually very painful, and our increasing movements makes it exponentially harder, both physically and mentally. However, feeling the pain helps us*

*in our meditative journey towards a cathartic liberation. It resembles the penitence rituals and Holy Week processions in Spain and Italy in which redemption/liberation comes through pain. We also shared how beautiful it was to feel the vibrations of the chains and the ease -the lightness- after stopping to jump. After enjoying this silence and starting humming, I almost started to cry.*

*Finally, I shared how much sense it made to collaborate with just one other person, even though I initially wanted to involve many collaborators. By presenting the smallest form of a collective—just two people—the interplay between the individual and the collective becomes much more tangible. As an audience member, you can focus on the individual experience of one performer and then shift your attention to how the two performers energize and influence each other. As a performer, working with only one movement collaborator allows you to enter a deeply personal, meditative state while still maintaining a strong connection. Together, you can reach a shared, cathartic, and ecstatic moment in unison.*

#### 12th of February

*Audience feedback during the conversation in the performance:*

*“I thought it was very brave to go for really a full performance”*

*“I was surprised and intrigued”*

*“I liked that you had noisy jackets”*

*“I wanted to join the jumping”*

*“I found also myself very brave”*

*“I also wanted to jump”*

*“I saw myself raving, in a rave”*

*“I was worried you would get too tired at some point”*

*“My memories are a lot older, and I was thinking about Pogo”*

*“I was intrigued by the sound of your voice after jumping”*

*“I liked the illusion of the lights”*

*“I loved the eco [referring to the sound of live electronics]”*

*“Gives an idea of some kind of twilight zone”*

*“I wondered what it meant”*

*“I liked how you pushed your own boundaries”*

*“What were the chains in Niccolò’s pockets?”*  
*“I thought you had money in your pockets instead of chains”*  
*“I was trying to figure it out”*  
*“Are the chains meant as a metaphor? This is what I was wondering about. If so, it’s quite [true/cruel]”*  
*“I have the feeling you were freeing yourself from things”*  
*“What things?”*  
*“Maybe expectations?”*  
*“I’m surprised, a lot. But I think your reflections [referring to the participants] are a present for all of us”*  
*“I feel very touched by the connection you’ve created in this room”*  
*“Me too”*  
*“Me too”*  
*“Me too”*  
*“All of us”*  
*“I can maybe joke now, not me!”*  
*[everybody laughs]*  
*“You were very gentle dropping the chains”*  
*“I wanted to party, but then I enjoyed the contrast with the stillness”*  
*“I wonder if we would’ve felt very different if this conversation didn’t happen but we kept in silence”*  
*“Is the heat difference a part of the performance?”*

*It all felt like a piece by itself, with participants questioning and answering amongst themselves.*

### 20th of February

*Today I met with Giuliana to evaluate the last try-out and reflect on it.*

*No one came after the performance to give feedback!!! Maybe because they already shared. In a sense, it’s purer and raw, it’s not intentionally scripted, it spontaneously happens. As Giuliana shares, what happens in the circle is real, because why would you talk in front of all these people if you really have nothing to say? Furthermore, it dissolves the need, the convention, of having to congratulate the performer afterwards.*

*Giuliana suggested maybe it would be nice to try in the next experiment not asking people to talk and to see what happens.*

*What about if we explore boundaries with language and not talk at all?*

### 24th of February

*I received some feedback from Sophie. She had already been in the previous try-out and gave very good feedback on it. This is what she wrote this time:*

*Ok. What has really stayed with me even now is the first part of the performance. It was really powerful. It could have only been that and it would have been just brilliant! The sound of the chains was incredible. And the moment you went into countertiming on the jumping was genius to me.*

*When you took off the chains there was something in me that wanted you two to take the chains off each other. I guess there's was something about it that made me relate to shackles of womanhood somehow and wanted you to support each other in taking them off. I don't know what the intention was, but that was what I was reading into it.*

*Whereas many others mentioned they felt it was a party and wanted to join I think I always perceived a pain in the process. And yes, maybe I wanted to dance too, but not from joy per se, I think I wanted to join what felt like an effort to let something go, shake something very heavy off. And the revelation of the chains confirmed that to me.*

*I think I had a similar discomfort as the first time with the end of the performance where we're asked to share. Even though I get the impression many people really enjoy it. I do like that there's an explicit time carved out for reflecting how you feel and maybe some people need that.*

*I always enjoy your playing as well. It's a moment of the performance in which I feel I can drift a bit. Though maybe conceptually I maybe didn't see the narrative very coherently?*

*There's something in all of your performances about questioning the idea of the performer. What are they for, how do they interact, what do they bring? I liked how all of you approached that topic differently.*

*The dancing part also made me think of FKA twigs' new album Eusexua and how she talks about that the idea for it started at a rave and she tried to capture this sense of freedom of hours of dancing and developed these pillars for reaching a form of higher self that she called eusexua.*

*This was my response:*

*HUGE THANKS! This is so beautiful; I love the perspective you bring to my performances and your feedback is always super helpful and insightful. I also think you got exactly the feeling we wanted to convey at the beginning with letting go through exhaustion and pain. The piano playing you refer to somehow seems disconnected, but these kinds of soundscapes are the ones I would always try to evoke when playing the piano when I didn't want to subject myself to the classical repertoire/method. So, in a way, liberating myself from all those loads allowed me to look at that little girl who would love to spend hours on improvising this music. But I do get your point and maybe this does not get through to the audience.*

*I cannot appreciate your words more and you taking the time to reflect on it! Thank you very very much.*

*I did not know about FKA twigs', I'll have a look!*

*See you soon for a coffee or beer, hopefully!!*