

The modul-dance project comes to an end

Since June 2010, modul-dance, one of the most important EU-sponsored European projects, has worked to support the development, mobility and exchange for dance artists.

During four and a half years, the project has created a sense of commitment, a model of good practice for the performing arts and cultural management in Europe and beyond. It has used the partners' particularities and differences as a starting point to create a model for sustainable work. The artists who have received support provide a map that reflects artistic excellence and aesthetic diversity in Europe today.

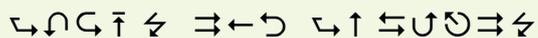
In late November, the selected artists and partners met up at the closing conference in Barcelona for three days. Titled "Conversations", it served for an open exchange of ideas, methodologies and personal relationships. A space for dialogue between travelling companions - artists and directors of dance houses - which has led to deeper and closer ties, giving the existing conversations continuity and leaving the door open to possible future relationships.

European exchange happens. Thanks to modul-dance we have established a successful infrastructure where larger - and smaller - scale organisations are able to collaborate for the benefit of artists from all over Europe.

Thanks to everybody who made modul-dance possible!

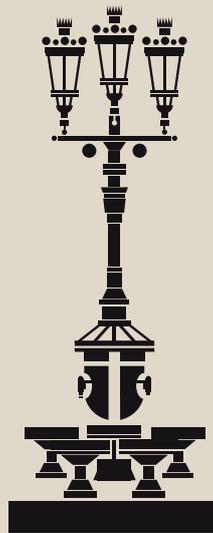
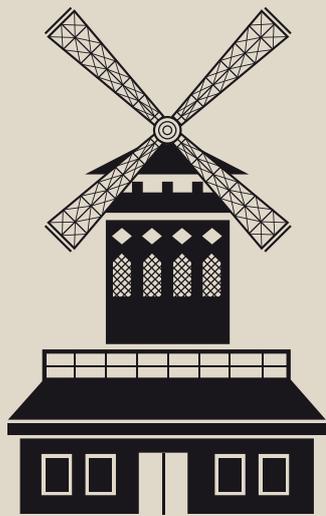


FACTS AND FIGURES

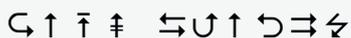


From June 2010 to December 2014 the project hosted...

52 <i>selected artists</i>	20 <i>dancehouses from 16 countries</i>	42 <i>research modules</i>
112 <i>residency modules</i>	51 <i>production modules</i>	201 <i>presentation modules</i>
500 <i>involved artists</i>	225 <i>artists on stage</i>	294 <i>presentations on tour out of the network</i>
41 <i>carte blanche</i>	6 <i>conferences</i>	13 <i>festivals</i>
15 <i>dramaturgic advice</i>	17 <i>film screenings</i>	6 <i>think tanks</i>



EUROPE, AN ARTIST'S-EYE VIEW: CITY GUIDES COLLECTION



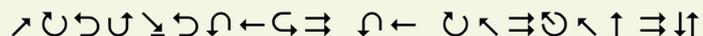
One of the modul-dance project key elements is the promotion of mobility, so that artists receiving its support follow itineraries across Europe to develop their creative work and present it to different audiences.

Each of the guides in this collection shows a city from the viewpoint of a local artist, who proposes his or her own particular route to artists in transit, seeking to put them in connection with their host city. While these city routes share some basic features, each one is different and in their differences lies a wealth of gazes, aesthetics, approximations to the local and much more. In a word, they form a mirror of the diversity that modul-dance has always fostered.

The ten city guides are available from this link:

<http://issuu.com/moduldance>

MODUL-DANCE: AN OVERVIEW



We think the best way to say goodbye to modul-dance is with a book. We are preparing a publication about everything that has happened during these four and a half years of European collaboration. It will include data, photos and articles that reflect on the model of best practices and different key aspects that will help us value the legacy of the project. The project would not have been possible without the artists and dancehouse partners, so we asked them to give us their opinion on the basis of their own experiences. All their contributions are also included. The book is about to come off the press and will be available shortly in our Issuu.

Here's a preview...

I find it very relevant to develop the idea of a modular system in the network of dancehouses and artists throughout Europe. There are many reasons for this, but I would like to emphasize the value of meeting, far more than just the product, thanks to the dialogue and reflection on the creative process and its development.

Tina Tarpgaard

selected artist in 2010 (Denmark)

Modul-dance is about trust.

The progress of the common activities is based on the results of communication, the mutual recognition of quality, the operating conditions and facilities of each partner, economic conditions and also the diversity of cultural policies in each country. In Slovenia contemporary dance is not institutionalized. The development of Slovenian contemporary dance depends on independent producers. Exchange and cooperation between different European dancehouses and the mobility of artists is very important.

Modul-dance is about business.

Mojca Kasjak

artistic director at Plesna Izba Maribor (Slovenia)

The modul-dance artists proposed by Maison de la Danse drew creative inspiration from the meetings with some other proposed artists. Discussions, workshops and ateliers have been the starting point for new research and collaboration between them, not only within the four-year project but also in the future.

Benjamin Perchet

deputy programming manager at Maison de la Danse Lyon (France)

Can we condense our artistic ideas and ambitions into our own bodies so we take up less space on an airplane and in a hotel? Our pieces need to demand less, consume less and yet still be generous. To be mobile we need to shrink, but remain large spirited.

Ben Duke

selected artist in 2011 (Great Britain)

I find it harder to establish an easy-going relation with the programmer than with other artists but within the modul-dance network it all happened in a relaxed way. I guess this is because the rules were very clear: it was all about matching.

Agata Maszkiewicz

selected artist in 2012 (Poland)

My 4 day trip to Maribor (Plesna Izba) in June was planned to coincide with the annual FolkArt Festival, which is a bit like the dance version of Eurovision in it's presentational format. Mojca had arranged front row seats for the 3 nights, and I sat there, blown away by these massive ensembles of predominantly amateur dancers (some pretty hefty guys) doing amazingly complex things, passionate about preserving their national dances. I got a private lesson from Vaska, a Slovenian dance historian, choreographer and choreologist of folk dances from the regions. It was here in Maribor where my attention began to focus more towards the crazy music of the Balkans.

My final 2-week residency took place in Toulouse in December 2013, and this time I brought along 5 dancers. It was the first time for us all to be together, and we spent the entire 2 weeks working in the studio. The facilities at the CDC were wonderful, in that we spent most of the time dancing, eating and talking, which resulted in a sense of ease in our environment and explorations. This ease allowed me to go places artistically I'd never been before. Newer, darker, funnier, stranger places. We had some visits from school children who sometimes joined in the warm ups and university students with whom we shared and discussed small segments of our work.

With *Tundra* I wanted to explore a familiar concept/myth/truth, depending on one's beliefs, to reveal the poetry of "heaven and hell" and the instability and abysses that exists within us all and in everyday life. I wanted to somehow work with the potential of an unseen world, and feeling the breath of "the ideal", without wanting to impose any sort of didactic notions on the work. But I am drawn to thinking about reason and logic being overcome by internal and external forces. By that I'm talking about intuition and the connection between our own instinct and a greater external force outside of our control and indeed understanding. Not wanting to sound too esoteric or ethereal, *Tundra* is a world that's cosmically misaligned, where time and space lose their boundaries, inhabited by characters who are confronted by fear -of themselves, their existence, their actions and of the unknown, but ultimately they want to break through those barriers to a higher plane. I've been thinking about the cyclical nature of time, and how, historically, we can see patterns emerging, where at certain times everything goes into a state of flux and volatility. It looks like we're in that state right now, and it is a time of insecurity, change and we have witnessed the exposure of a huge amount of human suffering and darkness. I'm endlessly interested in talking and exploring human nature but in particular our chaos, and struggle with desire and death. I enjoy delving into seemingly banal moments, which our mind and imagination has the capacity to make extraordinarily beautiful or horrific.

I like to allow the spectator to receive his own interpretation of each moment for her/himself, and to allow the mind to organize it in it's own way. It's an innate process that we naturally do anyway, so it's not that any special intellectual treatment or analysis is required. But the aim is to allow the arrangement of all of the components of our creation to have an individual effect or Gestalt in the eye of each spectator.

Each piece of work requires a specific language, a movement one, a visual one, a musical one and sometimes a spoken one. And so for me the "sequence of steps" has to take a secondary position to the people who are actually doing them. An intelligent performer requires much more to keep her/himself stimulated than just repetition. And so that's when the work becomes much more interesting when the performers are also creators and bringing themselves to it. I was really buzzed by the performers that I worked with on *Tundra*, which demanded a mutual act of searching from us all. They really brought themselves, their experience, memories and, most importantly, their imaginations into the room. The characters are emerged from them, which felt more truthful, than imposing mannerisms and alien stories on them. The performers are paramount to the work - they are the ones that distil, embody and deliver the energy to the audience, and I have been very fortunate to work with some really wonderful artists.

Tundra premiered at the Dublin Dance Festival in May 2014 and was packed up after it's successful 4 - show run. What next? There's a new work on the way in 2015, there'll always be a new work. But it can be exhausting always creating new work for just a handful of performances, and hoping a DVD will magically enable a longer life for it or garner interest in the next new work.

As I look back on my modul-dance experience, and attempt to measure the result my participation has had on the work, there are of course lots of interesting and fruitful moments that come to mind, many of which I mentioned earlier. But I also wonder about how the participating artists affect the partners and modul-dance as an organization. This remains a mystery to me. And although it was an enriching experience to develop the piece in new, unfamiliar places, the question of "what next" will not leave my mind.

EMMA-CECILIA AJANKI (THE MOB)



Photo: © Max Markov, Graphics: © Heidi Maribut Mortensen

Modul-dance offers selected dance artists the time, space and economic structure to develop their work. Modul-dance has decided that the creative processes they encourage artists to embark on consists of four chapters; research, residency, production and last presentation. Each chapter with it's own structure and economics surrounding them.

I didn't get to do all modules within modul-dance, but none the less, I kept the form that was suggested to me to create within. The piece *The Mob* developed through modul-dance is called *BABY IT'S YOU NOT ME*. Having only premiered the piece less than a month ago, I will try to sit here and contemplate my experiences.

Since modul-dance has been in my life since spring 2012, I start to think; which one of all the million feelings and thoughts I've had in the last two and half years do I want to write about? Professional life: opportunities to work and get to places and meet people I haven't met before, laughing, crying, work in new contexts. Private life: travelling, eating food I'm not used to eating, breathing unfamiliar air, missing home, laughing, crying, making love, missing my bed and friends + having loads of Skype dates.

How did I experience being a part of modul-dance?
What is my life now?
What was it before modul-dance?
Did modul-dance shape the piece I developed?

I will use the module titles suggested by modul-dance below to represent a timeline and map of fragments of my mind from summer 2012 to the present.

I wrote within these suggested modules to guide both me and you through this brief attempt to write about creating *BABY IT'S ME NOT YOU*, modul-dance, life and dancing.

Ok, lets go!

1. Research

MONSTER AND THE MONSTROUS. A big unknown. Stockholm, Poznań, Maribor. New collaborators. Black metal. The monstrosity of the norm. The SHADOWS of our minds. What we can't speak about. THE WHITE MALE = SCARY! Christianity really made things complicated for our bodies and us.

2. Residency

Let's embody all the above-mentioned Lyon, Dresden! We have so many answers to all our questions now! Lets make make make play play. Gold is a fancy colour.

3. Production

What the f**k am I doing? Copenhagen. What is monstrosity anyways? And who thought it was a good idea to do a dance performance based on that anyways? Oh my goddess! This is brilliant. I'm nervous now. I feel like puking. Everyone else in the team is awesome. Nobody understands me.
MONSTER MONSTER MONSTER.

4. Presentation

Are you a monster?
Is it in your nature to never succeed?
Do you have difficulties communicating with others?
Is your form constantly changing?
Is it true that you live in the shadows?

BABY IT'S YOU NOT ME is a search for the monster, a performance that materializes on stage, in the imagination of the audience and in the exchange between those two. Through an exploration of recognizable movements and inundating live music, the choreography and performance structures dissect the qualities and aspects of monsters and the monstrous. The audience is thus invited to spend some time with the undefinable and the nameless.

BABY IT'S YOU NOT ME is also a concert. In a simple, blunt yet playful way it unfolds through speech, dance and music that stays short of expectations.

Functioning as a fluent symbiotic trio, performers Emma-Cecilia Ajanki and Piet Gitz-Johansen along with saxophone player Otis Sandsjö move through elements of sound, light and body in a way that affects, confuses and blurs the experience of the audience.



How did the following aspects affected my work:

General:

What has affected my work more than anything in modul-dance could be summed up with the word "tailoring".

As I have joined modul-dance a little less than 2 years ago my main topic (apart from my project proposal) was how to tailor this opportunity to my real needs. I suspect modul-dance as a supporting network is introduced differently to different artists depending on their own home venue by which they were suggested and the role and the production conditions of that venue. In short, an interesting realization was that artists adopt the kind of approach to this opportunity that is suggested or presented by the home-venue. I am mentioning this as my situation was a bit different – suggested by Plesna Izba Maribor as my motherboard organization, yet based in Germany, in Frankfurt at the time of being introduced to the network.

This presented me with an interesting insight at the very beginning, starting to understand that although modul-dance is an umbrella for independent dance artists, with a concrete proposal and a fixed system of nominating, awarding membership and supporting the production of their work, it is also an experiment, experiencing it much more alive when understanding it as proposals and suggestions, trials, showings, gathering and exchanging rather than rules and regulations, requirements and criteria.

Development / Modular system:

Personally I have struggled with understanding the scope and the concrete possibilities the network can offer. Although very suggestive with its name, modular system was something that seemed to me a "solution" to something. It sounded as if there was an estimation of the then current productions and residencies and perhaps an observation that the artists lack a clearer vision or articulation of their process, therefore a modular system could be something to give a little push or present a suggestion/advancement of their methods and processes. It would simultaneously help the productions houses themselves to get more suitingly involved. It seemed as an encouragement to deepen one's interest and work and go pass the one-month processes where things are rushed and squeezed in. That is how I perceived it at the beginning. In that regard I must say that "insisting" on one project for 2 years proved to be very fruitful in defying the normal time-conditioned production modes. However, I had some issues with it; extending a project over two years, with a residency in every 5-6 months affects the continuity heavily. My personal practice already incorporates involvement with a specific project for longer period of time, so sustaining the focus and engagement with the subject is not a problem. The purely practical level, hardware of it however is – the project grows and changes thorough time and the venues cannot always meet these new requirements of one's development. I found myself often compelled by the conditions to rigidly insist on my initial proposal, when in fact the phases of research or residencies brought about new, more suitable pathways to pursue, demanding different conditions than speculated at the beginning.

I have envisioned my proposal with three people at the beginning; I have then started a research phase alone, continued with a residency with two other persons, the next one with only one, ending with another research phase where I was working with a group of local dancers. An obvious break in continuity here was due to many reasons – the conditions and possibilities of the hosting venues, the misalignment of the time schedules with the performers I have invited to work with and similar. Although not leading me to the desired outcome, each of the opportunities was still a step forward, expanding and enriching my proposal. Tensions between the aforementioned factors resulted too often in a compromise I had to reach within myself to progress instead of an act of balancing.

Speaking of different phases (research, residency for example), as much as it seems like a good model, it hasn't proved to work well for me. A matrix how a process is unwinding comes across as a valuable suggestion, yet it is something individual, very specific in each case. As it may be beneficial for a group of partners supporting an individual artist to bring about a full-fledged production, I found the modular system a bit over emphasized as it had little correspondence with the phases my project would have undergone otherwise, more organically I assume. On the other hand, it has worked wonders to be practicing such adaptability – using conditions to serve you and not the other way around or simply looking for the best in every opportunity. To conclude on the modular system, I have found myself to start considering the needs of my project and design necessary stages a bit late in my “modul-dance time”, focusing more on how to meet the ends – my needs and venues' offers. So after a year and a half of residencies I am only now at the stage where I'm clear with what is absolutely necessary for the project to be realized and what is less urgent and can be compromised.

Community of artists / Network of trust and collaboration:

Another point I would like to comment on is the community of artists. I have to say it was something I would have wished for more opportunities to engage with others. Meeting people at conferences made sense for me when the format was flexible enough to allow both – a presentation, performance as well an insight into individual's ways of working. I have been inspired by so many artists, connected with few and will for sure keep in touch with them in the future. It has been of great help to meet the rest of 50 something artists and exchange a bit on our development during the modul-dance support. This was the eye opener on how to use or benefit even more from the network, how to “tailor” it individually as I mentioned before. It seemed to me a bit like hearing the testimonies of other's “rules of the game” they have created for themselves.

Also very important was connecting to the programmers or let's say everybody else involved that are not the supported artists, from different environments. It was definitely “insider's” information in sense that I got to learn how production is approached to and tackled. What is the venues' approach, values, requirements and criteria, how they treat the audience, and similar for sure expanded my own understanding and influenced not only my future management skills, but artistic approach to some degree as well – be it opening it up to new factors considered in what contributes to dance-making, be it becoming more protective and appreciative of my own artistic visions and beliefs.

However, not only community of artists, but the whole modul-dance community is something I did not expect to start to feel part of. Having heard negative experience of the past generations, jokingly naming it a “market for the programmers”, I had my doubts of course, left a bit confused about what to expect. In retrospective, believing one only gets what one expects, I did get confusion, but also and most importantly got the support to develop my work. Both through time & space enabling 'em to work as well as developing skills needed for independent dance maker to create and expand. Although the premiere is not on the horizon yet, I can see already the development of my work and the side-effects of it on a broader scale – how I communicate and integrate in my current environment. All these changes and opportunities were however possible only through a good personal contact I had with each of the partner, mostly finding a common interest and therefore a good connection purely on a personal level, engaging in a chit chat, synchronizing energetically more than any kind of pre-concieved plan and aimed for connection.

The only thing left to add is that this experience has vastly influenced my “positioning” in the most broad sense of the word, to even think of it as a part of my vocabulary when reflecting on my work, it had been testing the range of my permeability – how, when and for what purpose am I exposing my artistic process intentionally or unintentionally and it added sparks to the already ignited desire of mine to have a future opportunity to be part of a tighter artistic community, where the flow of exchange is the motor, curiosity the fuel and integration and support the destination.

FOCUS ON DANCEHOUSES

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DANSEHALLERNE COPENHAGEN

Dansehallerne is a vital hub and national competence center for dance as an art form. The purpose of Dansehallerne is to strengthen, develop and disseminate dance as an art form and to ensure the visibility of dance and its location in cultural life. Dansehallerne presents national and international dance on the two stages in the house and provides a framework for the professional contemporary dance community through; information center, studios and artistic development. Additionally Dansehallerne offers dance as an art form for and with children and young people in partnership with municipalities and schools. The headquarter of Dansehallerne is located in Carlsberg City and has a small office in the heart of Aarhus. Dansehallerne is an independent institution with an operating grant from the Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Copenhagen.

We have been very excited by the possibilities that modul-dance made not only for us as an organization but also for the two Danish artists Tina Tarpgaard and The Mob, who became modul-dance artists during the four years. Mostly we hosted residencies, both long and short, with Tina Valentan (SLO), The Loose Collective (A), Alessandro Sciarroni (I), Luca Silvestrini (UK) and Jurij Konjar (SLO). This proved very exciting for both us as an organization as well as the local dance community, as we did not have a culture of residency previously. This positive impact on the organization has resulted in continuing with the concept of residencies as formed by modul-dance. Although we are piloting this as a model of reciprocity with K3 in Hamburg we expect to be able to increase the number of Dancehouses we have this arrangement with over the next three years.

As well as these residencies we also hosted performances by Kaori Ito, Jurij Konjar, Alessandro Sciarroni and The Loose Collective.



DANCEHOUSE LEFKOSIA CYPRUS

Dancehouse Lefkosia is a new infrastructure organization founded officially in August 2012, by three organizations Dance Gate Lefkosia, Dance Lab and Lefkosia Youth Ballet. Dancehouse Lefkosia's purpose is to bring together the whole dance community in Cyprus, for the development and promotion of the art of dance on a local and international level. Its chief aim is to provide dance and dancers a home/a building and a structure that fulfils the needs of professional contemporary dancers, dance companies, dance students within a wide range of services. Furthermore it aims to provide the possibility for rehearsals, performances, classes as well as information and consulting services for young dancers. Amongst its programmes will be opportunities for residencies exchange and dialogue with other dancehouses from the European and International Dance scene.

As a Dancehouse dedicated to dance as a today's artform, L-DH will ensure that the space - the building - is open offering its facilities for collaboration and dialogue with the other related performance and contemporary art-forms for the purpose of performances, presentations, exhibitions, concerts of contemporary music etc.

Partners

adc Geneva CH (associated partner) - Art Stations Foundation Poznań PL - CDC Toulouse FR - CND Paris FR - Centro per la Scena Contemporanea Bassano del Grappa IT - Dance Gate Lefkosia Cyprus CY - Dance Ireland Dublin IE - Dansens Hus Stockholm SE - Dansehallerne Copenhagen DK - DeVIR/CAPa Faro PT - DDRRC Athens GR - HELLERAU-Europäisches Zentrum der Künste Dresden DE - Kino Šiška Ljubljana SI - Maison de la Danse Lyon FR - Mercat de les Flors Barcelona ES - Plesna Izba Maribor SI - Danshuis Station Zuid Tilburg NL - Tanzhaus NRW Düsseldorf DE - Tanzquartier Wien AT - The Place London GB

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PRODUCTION

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PRESENTATION

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