

Report on Erasmus traineeship period in Berlin Dance Institute (01.10.2020-30.06.2021)

This period I spent in Berlin Dance Institute was a truly meaningful experience, even with looming dread of lockdowns and ever-strict measures against Covid-19. A new beginning in new surroundings with new moving bodies. I was incorporated into the third, graduating year, and it was a big challenge to quickly catch up with the peers; but I would say I managed quite well, and gladly I was openly accepted.

The schedule was quite intense; first a 30-minute individual warm up, followed by 3 blocks of dance classes, with yoga/Pilates/body conditioning afterwards, and then we have time and space for our own rehearsals or individual work. We also had theoretical classes of anatomy and dance history. The amazing teachers I encountered: Wendy Taylor and Sara Reddig (Ballet), Suleika Fichtner (Graham technique), Mata Saka (Cunningham technique), Susi Neff, Luana Rossetti, Manos Kotsaris (Contemporary techniques), Kathinka Sonneborn (Choreography, Improvisation, Contact Improvisation), Kate Robinson (Yoga and Anatomy), Jessica Gaynor (Repertoire); and guest teachers and choreographers Ralf Jaroschinski (Contact improvisation), Steven de Gijst (Repertoire), Yaara Dolev (Gaga technique).

Generally speaking, the knowledge of some principles I gained over the last year in BCDA was useful to implement in every single class, and connect with the new insights I gained; of my strengths and weaknesses. I encountered some techniques for the very first time, and we had a wide range of classes, so finding my body in each of them and then finding parts of all those techniques when I move. I'm still finding the full expression and extension of my movement, I'm learning to bite, to fight and to have the fire, yet I am embracing my softness and flow.

https://youtu.be/80TjO2Tvz_8

<https://youtu.be/t36earnIGLg>

<https://youtu.be/FZ2BgT-GiN0>

(Links to my improvisation videos)

Besides the technical and theoretical classes, we also have a choreography task, to make a 10–15-minute choreography, write down the concept and learn about the creation process of a piece, how to structure rehearsals, make material and communicate ideas to our dancers.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N1kY19azq1b4DzZm09bmLtyaCdNuU6Ke/view?usp=sharing> (link to pdf file with the concept)

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-HgAn90emgUM5jFMMUIo8BD8JRtsz4_z?usp=sharing (link with photos and video of the work in progress)

I found making the piece at first frightening, then slowly as I understood it as a shifting and evolving process, with showings where we got feedbacks and support, I found it enjoyable, because I took it as an opportunity to learn how to make my ideas a reality. So far, I have a solid skeleton of the piece, I still need to fill in the structure with more dance material and work on the quality with the dancers, and find an ending, but I am not worried, they have managed to embody what I asked from them. I am learning to embrace the spontaneity of creation achieved by improvisation tasks, and to be open to include unexpected situations from rehearsals into the piece, yet still to balance that with the structured and prepared rehearsals; with all to still maintain the main thought behind it all. Finding my own balance between set and free.

Besides creating my own piece, I was included in 3 other classmates' pieces, so it was an opportunity to observe how others deal with the creation process, and learn from our differences. Together with that, we had repertory classes where we could see how more experienced choreographers create, but also work on how to learn material faster, to be present and concentrated, and contribute to the choreography by creating our own sequences.

On 15th of December, we had a Christmas performance, for which we prepared for 2 weeks. It was an intense period of multiple rehearsals a day, where our maximum performance was expected. I was included in 3 pieces, by Jessica Gaynor, Joseph Tmim and Steven de Gijst. Even though it felt rushed, and we had to perform earlier than planned because of an upcoming lockdown, and the outcome wasn't as good as it could be, I appreciated that period for teaching me how to work in extreme conditions, and how to apply all the corrections and directions in the future. It was also quite difficult to have the majority of audience on Zoom, and only a small part live. But it was only the beginning of facing the Corona virus reality of sharing and communicating, even creating in the digital world again.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-I_kJbnrRH6VBWgobuquknUzaoEht5rn?usp=sharing (videos from the Christmas performance)

After that came a period of a strict lockdown, when the main form of classes was online. It was a tough time of harsh winter, meeting very few people and a halt in the normal work we were used to. It was a time of finding ways to keep the dance practice alive, and creative juices flowing, and a certain level of motivation. I must say it was hard, and I had my ups and downs, but I never stopped, and that is what I am proud of. And I was fortunate to have access to studios and keep moving.

In that time, I made a few short dance films, when I had time and space in the studio, and it was mostly instant creation with a minimal preparation. I also attended a screen dance workshop and created a short film, and it was a first occasion where I went location scouting, had a person recording me and prepared scenes and choreography for the shooting. It is not a professional film yet, but I had a little taste of what it is supposed to be.

<https://youtu.be/zKmnVcbrm3E> (link to the short dance film)

From March until May I was involved in a project called [A.PART Festival for contemporary dance students and alumni 2021, organized by ada Studio Berlin, and curated by Julek Kreutzer, Diethild Meier and Alex Henning.](#)

[“Using the theme of “PATCH//WORK” – bringing together what \(at first glance\) does not fit together – A.PART assembles not pieces but various artistic perspectives. Paired up in teams of two, the invited artists* engage in an artistic, performative and personal dialogue over a process of two months. They do not know each other before, but might collaborate, coexist, disagree, waste time, found a company, stay strangers or become friends.](#)

[As many aspects of our work have become sheer impossibilities -- closeness, sweat, breath, physicality, touch, intimacy, contact -- we are setting on the conviction that ‘together is always better than alone’, on solidarity, team spirit, and curiosity. In times of increased uncertainty, we set out on a journey with no expectation of a fixed outcome, convinced that artistic practice has a value in itself.”](#)

<https://apart-festival.blog/>

With my tandem partner, Iris, I entered into a sharing dialogue, where we were simultaneously meeting each other and our artistic practices, inspiring and helping one another; me with her solo project and her with my piece. Our primary internal communication platform was Zoom, but we also met in person and even had studio time in BDI where we could just move with each other and cross the virtual borders. We had

regular Zoom meeting with the whole team where we would speak about the process, we had time and space for some tasks, some thoughts. The blog was created as a medium to communicate with the audience, and we could post together or individually. Whenever we had meeting in person as a whole group, it was so obvious that we all have a desperate wish to meet everyone else more, and that we want to connect deeper than what digital world can offer us. The bright side were the last two weeks we had studio time in ada Studio, which we could use alone or in couples, and invite two people. Iris and I both had slots alone and together, which we used both for personal work and moving together. In the end, we realized that actually this isn't the end – we just started something, made connections and scratched the surface of the possible future collaborations.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-R4J2ynKeDl4fYnmUe7IvPCgbo958vCW?usp=sharing> (photos from studio time of me and Iris)

The Covid regulations in Berlin were quite strict, so no workshops or meeting new people or initiating new projects were possible, so it was really a time when most of the things were self-oriented, or based around people I already know from school.

Besides the festival, around the beginning of March we could finally start going to school normally, and we had our semester exams on 1st of April. After that we had a period of normal classes, a bunch of rehearsals, and in the end of June, before the summer holidays, we had a showing of our pieces, as works in progress, a piece from Jessica Gaynor and materials from Joseph Tmim. It was a nice way to finish of the period, and we were finally allowed to have some live audience.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_BgYbwximgD8NiQAkzEiykkwQpIprtKC?usp=sharing (videos from the showing in June)

When I reflect on this period spent in BDI, I must say that all the people I met at school, my classmates and teachers, the directors and choreographers, greeted me with open arms, and gave me full support in school life. It gave me momentum; they all inspire me and I am grateful for the time I spent there. I am looking forward to the rest of the time I have to move in Berlin!

