Dance Pedagogy Research Meeting  
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Beirut, Lebanon

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THURSDAY 21th APRIL 2011

RESEARCHING CURRENT DANCE PEDAGOGIES

moderated by Krystel Khoury

09.00 – 09.15 Introduction and Welcome notes  

by Krystel Khoury (Soukoun-Dance Research Association (Lebanon)/ 
Arab Theatre Training Centre- ATTC)

After setting out the purpose and aim of this 2-day meeting, this key note presentation will draw the frame in which this meeting is held presenting the Dance Refl-action research project, its overall objectives and its activities.

09.15 – 09.45 The Bodrum 2010 summer Symposium on Dance pedagogies: reflections and outputs

by Natasja Van’twestende - Dancing On the Edge, The Netherlands

In July 2010 in Bodrum, Turkey, 27 leading contemporary dance practitioners, researchers and cultural managers actively involved in teaching/learning contemporary dance in North Africa and the Arab Mashrek (both from the region and Europe) gathered for an interactive symposium. This week-long symposium offered possibilities for discussion, learning, reflection, research and networking to create together a sense of shared context.

This symposium promoted reflective practice amongst dance practitioners engaged in dance pedagogy (in the Arab Mashrek and North Africa). It was a moment to learn and collectively reflect on each one’s experience and knowledge in dance pedagogy related to dance as an artistic and theatrical form.

This presentation will share and focus on some recurrent issues and ideas that emerged during this symposium.
Learning and creating contemporary dance in some regions of the Mediterranean area.

by Ornella D’Agostino - Carovana S.M.I., Italy

Learning and creating contemporary dance are, according to D’agostino, processes deeply interlinked and connected: separating them is almost impossible if we share the vision that dancing is the ritual of perceiving the presence of human body in space and time and translating that perception in physical statement to nourish the need for communication. Moreover, “an Alive” body means also constant movement, interconnecting different systems, against risks of isolation, sclerosis, desertification, illness and death.

The exploration of learning and creating contemporary dance in the Mediterranean areas, within the programs undertaken by Carovana S.M.I. and the DBM international network during the last 12 years, has stimulated significant changes in Ornella’s political visions, interlinking artistic and pedagogic issues to the cultural and political contexts where she continues to travel.

This contribution is a very personal narrative of these experiences that have strongly influenced D’agostino’s understanding of learning, teaching and creating body languages. It refers to shared projects that have been realized and conceived through international cooperation to overcome isolation in the Mediterranean region. Some have succeeded in achieving their goals more than others, but whether mistakes have been made or successes have been achieved, there is no doubt that all these experiences have been constructive.

In this paper, Ornella will share her memories and draw out an evaluation of those years with artists and people she met and collaborated with during this journey; but also with the ones that she has not met yet who are interested in breaking down concepts, as well as cultural and artistic barriers that divide dance knowledge and the understanding of dance into categories.

Thinking Bodies, conversations on contemporary dance

By Gerarda Ventura

All around the Mediterranean, South Europe, North Africa and Middle East, contemporary dance is still an unknown field, often seen as far from usual artistic expression, but it has different meanings in different contexts. If art and culture is a tool against dictatorial regimes – and we share witness these days of such an occurrence – how can we facilitate citizens’ approach to this contemporary expression of the human, creative capacity and need? This presentation/research paper is an attempt to understand the complex reality of dance experiences in some Arab countries by giving voice to the protagonists of these experiences. Through interviews, conducted in an unofficial way back in 2004, some artists and cultural operators tell of their training, their work in the contemporary dance field and their meeting with different realities, often inside their own country.

Proposals and ideas are the results of this tableau vivant that those conversations try to present.
11.00– 11.30  Vernacular dance pedagogy: El Funoon popular dance group

By Serene Huleileh- Arab Education Forum, Jordan

El Funoun dance group was established in 1979 in the town of El Bireh, Palestine and continues till this day as the most prominent Palestinian dance group whose work over the years has greatly influenced the development of what we can, perhaps loosely and in a "politically correct" way, call, New Palestinian Dance.

This research explores how (and indeed to what extent) El Funoun has achieved this by constructing what Huleileh has termed a “vernacular pedagogy”: "vernacular" meaning the living tradition, the oral tradition that cannot be captured in or through writing or theories. In dance, and the performing arts in general, unlike architecture, we rarely find a “vernacular representation or mode of transmission” that is relevant today. Yet Huleileh’s argument is that El Funoun has somehow managed to preserve this capacity despite, and perhaps because of, its internal struggle with the different meanings of dance in contemporary Palestine.

11.30– 12.00  Pushing boundaries and borders: illuminating the questions, reflections and experiences of developing a contemporary dance workshop program in Amman

By Rosemary Martin- The University of Auckland, New Zealand

Drawing on personal reflections and detailed case studies this paper aims to explore the challenges, rewards and discoveries of establishing and teaching a contemporary dance workshop program, ‘Introduction to contemporary dance practices’ (ICDP), over a ten month period at the Al-Balad Theatre in Amman, Jordan. An inclusive, holistic and somatically based curriculum was devised as the basis for the workshop program with each two week workshop intensive focusing on a different aspect of contemporary dance practice while continuing to develop and integrate what was experienced in previous workshops. The focus of the program was primarily to develop a safe and open working environment, where new ideas could be introduced and adapted to the individual participants own thoughts, experiences and perspectives. It was intended that this workshop series could help to contribute to developing a platform for contemporary dance education in Jordan to further evolve from, primarily through providing the participants with the opportunity to be exposed to such practices, with tentative plans made to establish the program as a long term sustainable activity.

Within this paper the value of such a dance program being offered will be discussed along with the challenges of establishing, teaching and maintaining the program. The possibilities for future directions dance may be developed and fostered in a Jordanian context through such workshop programs will also be explored.
“I Matter”: A Closer Look at Performer-Audience Connections

By Nadra Assaf - Lebanese American University, Lebanon

Communication is a basic human necessity which in all its various forms has one common goal: expressing and deciphering ideas. For many years verbal language has been the primary motivator in this field. Education in recent years has taken a move towards more global approaches to learning/teaching. Within this context, more innovative and inclusive methods of communication need to be created. Attention to the human body and its communicative properties has increased in the last decade, however it is not sufficient. Many venues in this domain remain undiscovered and researched. Dr. Assaf contends that the audience–performer connection is one of them. This paper will focus on the aspects of audience–performer connection and communication venues. The primary focus is based on the results of a survey and interviews which took place after a performer-audience interactive (15 performances) tilted I Matter. The performance took place in May 2010 in Beirut, Lebanon.

This study will investigate the meaning-form connections through analysis of the recorded responses of both the survey and focus group interviews. The responses will be analyzed based on grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006).

Our Dance Stories: personal narratives as a window on cultural practices

By Nicholas Rowe - The University of Auckland, New Zealand

Dance plays multiple roles in fostering and maintaining cultural values and relationships. The Our Dance Stories research project investigates the creative practices, learning approaches and diverse stories of indigenous dance artists and teachers around the world, as they negotiate cultural modernity and globalization. This ethnographic research project aims to develop 12 books, collecting personal narratives of dance from diverse artists, teachers and students. Each book is located in a particular geographic area defined by a body of water, as a means of challenging representations of dance and cultural practices within national/continental/ethnic/religious boundaries. Reflecting both diversity and commonalities within each region, the first three books in the series are entitled:

Our Dance Stories The South Pacific / Our Dance Stories: The South Mediterranean/ Our Dance Stories: The South China Sea

This paper discusses the initial aims of the research and highlight emerging stories that speak to diverse practices, values and approaches to arts knowledge within The South Pacific, Southern Mediterranean and South China Sea. The paper reflects upon stories of how dance is currently being created within diverse communities, and how these processes might reflect local notions of art, morals and codes of conduct. It further reflects upon the diverse ways dance is currently being taught/learnt within specific communities, and how these processes might reflect unique values and approaches to knowledge, education and the organisation of information.
The Unspeakable Act: Arab Dance

By Adham Hafez- HaRaka, Egypt

Within a very particular moment in history of changes, epistemological breaks, and unraveling that is located/mobilized within a very particular geography that is both fetishized and politicized, a research for Dance (on transmission of physical knowledge) that has issues with contemporaneity is taking place. Part of this long term research and production process this talk comes to address the unspeaking/unspeakable act of dance, and in particular Arab Dance, if such a term is of any validity. In a single process, the research deals with the Middle East/ Arab World/Arabic Speaking Region as a colonial Political construct with problematics of representation and deals with the transmission of physical information while trying to exercise a great deal of attentiveness to materialities, dense knowledge, and mesh systems that connect and complexify.

The research initially proposes to look on Dance and its mobility between learning, performing, receiving, writing or talking about it within the given particular spatial and temporal contexts. Yet, the research is an invitation to look at dense information, unrepresented information, to look at movement that evades current critical discourses, and the mesh systems that either contextualize or veil the object.
MORE ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Krystel Khoury

Krystel Khoury is a dancer, dance researcher and cultural activist. After getting an MA in Performing Arts (University LyonII), Khoury started a PhD research in Dance Anthropology at the University Clermont-Ferrand II. As a dancer, Khoury undertook intensive dance training in ballet and contemporary dance techniques from 2001 till 2004 at the Hallet-Eghayan Dance School in Lyon. In 2006, she created a dance video entitled “...”, which was selected at the VIII International Videodance Festival in Buenos Aires. Khoury was a lecturer at the Performing Arts Department, University of Lyon II (2007-2010). In 2009, she was invited to be an assistant teacher at the Dance Knowledge Seminar for New Ethno-choreologists in Trondheim, Norway. She also participated in several seminars and has published several dance articles. In addition to research, she is actively involved in organizing and managing dance workshops and artistic projects within the framework of cultural events and organizations such as La biennale of dance (Lyon, France) and The Creative Forum for independent Theatre Groups (Alexandria, Egypt). Since 2005, she is a board member of the ATTC (Arab Theatre Training Centre). In 2009, Khoury created Soukoun, a Lebanese based cultural association interested in developing dance research in the Arab Region.

Natasja Van ‘t Westende

Natasja van’t Westende is a cultural organizer and programmer. She studied Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University, the Netherlands. For her MA thesis she conducted research in Sudan on performing arts, gender, and Islam. She published ‘God Gave Me a Good Voice to Sing: Female Wedding Singers in Great-Khartoum’ in Mieke Kolk’s (2009) Performing Gender in Arabic/African Theater. She was curator for The Other Sudan: Arts Festival 2009 and has worked for War Child, a Dutch NGO, as a trainer and manager of cultural and educational projects in Sudan. In addition, she has carried out projects in the field of documentary filmmaking. Currently she is Program Manager for Dancing on the Edge, a Dutch foundation that organizes and stimulates cultural exchange between the Netherlands/Europe and the Middle East and North Africa, with a focus on the field of performing arts. The foundation’s main activities are organizing a bi-annual contemporary dance & theatre festival in 5 Dutch cities that is combined with an extensive parallel program of music, film, debates, training, research, and exchange programs as well as an educational program for schools.

Ornella D'agostino

Ornella is a dancer, author of performances, and artistic director of the association Carovana S.M.I., based in Sardinia. In 1989, she graduated from the “School for New Dance Development” of Amsterdam. The last 15 years have been dedicated to organizing artistic productions, pedagogic events and programs that combine innovative methodologies with traditional cultural contexts. Her artistic activities are combined with a strong will to strengthen political and intellectual relations within international networks, based on developing contemporary art practices. She was the president for 3 years of the DBM network and she is the president of the Network of dance companies in Sardinia. In the frame of the Carovana S.M.I. programs, supported by the European Union, she has realized various performances, festivals, workshops, conferences and audiovisual events in Italy, France, England, Sweden, Catalonia, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Jordan and Syria, in collaboration with European and Arab partners. She has published several articles about dance reflecting on the Mediterranean area for specialized magazine on cultural and artistic issues.

Gerarda Ventura

Former dancer, and since 1989 a cultural operator for performing arts, Ventura has worked with, among others, the Foundation Romaeuropa, the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, the Department of Culture City of Rome, and the Teatro Stabile dell’Umbria. Within the Foundation Romaeuropa, she established in 1995 the Dance
Promotion Institute organizing the Italian Contemporary Dance Platform. Since 2009 she collaborates with Musica per Roma for the Equilibrio Award, a choreographic competition with the artistic direction of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. She is also a consultant for the Regione Toscana Commission making recommendations regarding their annual contribution to dance companies. Currently she is dance programmer and consultant for Teatro Stabile dell'Umbria. Ventura is one of the founders of the DBM - Danse Bassin Méditerranée, and is currently the Secretary General of FEMEC – Forum Euroméditerranée des Cultures and Vice President of the Euro-Mediterranean Platform of NGOs.

Serene Huleileh

Cultural activist, writer, researcher, book editor, translator/interpreter, and Palestinian folk dance teacher, Serene Huleileh has been active in the community education and cultural scene in both Palestine and Jordan since 1990. Huleileh joined El Funoun dance group soon after its establishment in 1982 and was one of their lead dancers and choreographers for 14 years. She worked with the Tamer Institute for Community education in Palestine during its founding years (1990 – 1998), establishing several community-based cultural projects. In her capacity as cultural manager, she also organized and coordinated several cultural festivals and events in Palestine and Jordan, including the annual Palestine Music and Dance Festival and the Bethlehem millennium celebrations, to name but a few. Since 2000 she has been the regional director of the Arab Education Forum, (currently chairwoman of the board), developing projects, networks, and partnerships with and for youth, community educators, and artists across the Arab world. She also serves on the board of directors of Al Balad Theatre and the board of trustees of the El Funoun dance group.

Rosemary Martin

Rosemary Martin grew up in Auckland and began her dance education at the age of 6. At the age of 16, she continued with full-time dance training at the New Zealand School of Dance and graduated in 2000, gaining a place in the Royal New Zealand Ballet (RNZB). During her time with the RNZB, Martin danced a variety of works, touring nationally and internationally, also taking up a secondment with Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo, Monaco during 2004. Upon retiring from the RNZB, Martin trained as a Pilates instructor, worked as a freelance performer and began studies at The University of Auckland where she received an MA in Dance Studies in 2008 for her thesis investigating professional dancers’ attitudes towards pain. In 2009 she started on her PhD research entitled ‘Dancing home: An exploration of cultural exchange and dance education in a globalized world’. Her research interests are currently focused on cross-cultural conceptualizations of the body; dance and post-colonialism; dance and identity; dance in transnational contexts and cultural transference; and issues related to international education.

Nadra Assaf

Dr. Nadra Assaf has a B.A. in Theater and an MFA in Dance from the USA, and a PhD in Education from Leicester University, England. Her PhD Dissertation as well as her book published in 2009 is entitled: The Meanings of a Modern Dance: An Investigation into the Communicative Properties of a Non-Verbal Medium. She has been teaching English and Dance at the Lebanese American University for over twenty years. Her recent major theater productions include: Life Goes On (2003) The Quest (2004), and I Matter (an audience interactive performance) 2010. She is the Artistic Director and founder Al-Sarab Alternative Dance School, founding member of IDO Lebanon, and a member of DBM, CORD and SDHS. She has presented papers at several conferences including: Dance: A Discourse Mode (2007- Re-thinking practice and theory International symposium on Dance Research at the Centre national de la danse, Pantin, France); Unfolding Modern Dance: Exploring the Measures of Communication in a Non-Verbal Medium (ASTR/CORD Conference 2010, What the Body Knows: Reflections on Performance Practice as Research). Her research interests include: dance as a communicative medium, women in dance, third language acquisition, and discourse analysis as applied to non-verbal mediums.
Nicholas Rowe

Dr. Nicholas Rowe graduated from the Australian Ballet School and subsequently worked as a choreographer and dancer in the Australian Ballet, Sydney Dance Company, the Finnish National Ballet, Ballet Philippines, the West Australian Ballet, the Royal New Zealand Ballet, Nomad Dance Theatre, and Modern Dance Turkey.

In 2000, he moved to the West Bank city of Ramallah and spent the next eight years working with local dance collectives and art institutions on dance performance and education projects in cities, villages, and refugee camps across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He completed his PhD on Palestinian dance through the London Contemporary Dance School.

Rowe is the author of Art, During Siege: Performing Arts Workshops in Traumatized Communities and his articles have appeared in Dance research Journal, Research in Dance Education, Dance Europe, Dancing Time, Dance Australia, the Jerusalem Times and This week in Palestine.

Rowe is currently a senior lecturer in dance and associate Dean at the National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries University of Auckland in New Zealand.

Adham Hafez

Engaged in a lot of practice and theory around complexity, mesh-systems, semiotics, rituals, transdisciplinarity and new hybrid forms, Adham creates dance performances, concerts, installations, publications, lectures, workshops, and what’s in between. He has produced a large body of work through “Adham Hafez Company” which has been presented in Egypt, the Middle East and Europe. He received his education in Western Classical Music, Opera Singing, Contemporary Dance, Literature and Critical Theory at the Cairo Opera House, Helwan University, Ain Shams University and an MA degree in Choreography from Amsterdam Theatre School. Hafez is the founder and program director of HaRaKa, the first movement research project in Egypt. He is also the artistic director of the “TransDance” festival and the founder of “Cairography”, the first publication in Egypt dedicated to critical writing on choreography and performance.

Currently, teaching dance and performance theory at the AUC, and he directs the series of Euro-Med conferences on “Change” and the production of cultural and political objects and processes.
Every act of teaching/learning involves a certain pedagogy. In the Arab countries, most of contemporary dance learning/teaching takes place in studios/schools or within dance groups and is built upon a diversity of experiences and a multitude of approaches. What pedagogies emerge out of those teaching/learning experiences and how do they effect contemporary/current dance in that part of the world?

8 participants are invited around a roundtable to present, reflect upon and share their pedagogical practices, visions and objectives as well as to discuss more specific dance pedagogy issues in relation to syllabus or to curriculum/achievements, needs, obstacles / sustainability, exchange and specificity.

09.00 – 10.45 Participants:

Walid Awni- Cairo Opera House (Egypt)
Nawel Iskandarani- Studio Bambou (Tunisia)
Nadra Assaf- Al Sarab, Alternative Dance School (Lebanon)
Laurence Rondoni - Association descent-danse (France)
Talaat Samawi- Akito Company (Iraq/Sweden)
Sharaf Dar Zeid – Popular Art Center (Palestine)
Natasja Van’t Westende - Dancing on the Edge (The Netherlands)
Khaled Benghrib – Comapgnie 2K_Far (Morocco)

10.45 – 11.00 COFFEE BREAK

MORE ABOUT THE SPEAKERS
Walid Aouni - Cairo Opera House (Egypt)

He is the founder and director of the Cairo Opera House's Modern Dance Theatre Group. His career began in Brussels where he founded the Tanit Dance Theatre in 1980. Between 1983 and 1990, Aouni worked as a scenographer, set and costume designer with Maurice Béjart, the famous choreographer and director. Apart from dance performances Aouni directed several plays by Belgian playwrights. Between 1990 and 1991, Aouni directed and choreographed for the Cairo Opera Ballet the works Rhythm of Generations and The Three Nights of the Sphinx. He also produced Zanket Al-Namous in Tunis. In 1993, he was commissioned by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture to establish the first dance theatre company in the Arab world at the Cairo Opera House. The newly established group gave its first performances with Contradictions and The Fall of Icarus. He is currently director of the Festival of Modern Dance Theatre founded in 1998 by the Ministry of Culture and the Cairo Opera House.

The Modern Dance school

This school was founded in 2002 and elaborates a pedagogical methodology based on the one developed in Belgium and Germany in the 80's, inspired by the Maurice Béjart Mudra School. The approach uses different techniques like Martha Graham's to Merce Cunnigham's among others, to train beginner dance students. The full program lasts 3 years. The first year includes 12 courses, theoretical and practical, and the program continues with students to reach a semi-professional level. In the fourth year some students may join the Modern Dance Theatre Company or the Fursan Al-Sharq Company, both within the Cairo Opera House.

Nawel Iskandarani - Studio Bambou (Tunisia)

Nawel Skandrani is a choreographer and a teacher. She pursued her professional career as a ballet dancer in Italy, USA and France. In 1988, Skandrani returned to Tunisia to establish, as part of the National Theatre, the Studio Dance-Theatre, a structure to teach dance for actors and dancers as well as the National Ballet-Theatre, a production structure for dance. In 1992, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, she founded the Tunisian National Ballet, an institution, which she headed till 1996. Under her direction, this institution produced 13 creations signed by various Tunisian, Arab and international choreographers. She herself created 3 pieces for the Tunisian National Ballet. Since 1997, Nawel Skandrani has been pursuing a career as choreographer and independent teacher. Since 2008, Skandrani is the head of Studio Bambou, an artists’ residency located at the Fourati Farm, Boukrime – Cap Bon, in Tunisia. Skandrani is a founding member of the Tunisian Board of the International Theatre Institute, of the Tunisian Union for the Performing Arts, member of the network Danse Bassin Méditerranée, as well as a board member of the Young Arab Theatre Fund and the Roberto Cimetta Fund.

Studio Bambou: Pedagogical experience and perspectives:

Skandrani’s teaching experience started in Europe in 1980 then continued in the U.S. and Tunisia since 1986. Coming from classical ballet, it was natural for her to start with this technique. But in 1988, she joined the National Theatre where she created the “Studio dance-theatre”. This was a structure with 2 different goals: training for dancers and training for actors. Being confronted with non-dancers forced her to think and to develop another way of approaching bodies: How to deal with different ages, and all sort of shapes? Her response was to start from the specific to the more general, building up a method focusing on the consciousness of:

The isolation of the body in its 3 different components: the skeleton, the muscles, and the nervous system. The respiration (the in and out) The search for the Centre & the balance The relation body/space (directions, horizontal/vertical) The control of energy The relation with other bodies The relation with the objects The rhythm & the musicality
Skandrani bases her teaching on 2 important premises:

The technique: dance is an art of concrete; therefore both the dancer and the teaching process have to be concrete as well.

The references: contemporary dance or ballet or any other technique or style coming from outside the Arab World was born in a cultural context different than the one we live in and its perception and comprehension is sometimes difficult by the dancers themselves.

**Nadra Assaf - Al Sarab, Alternative Dance School (Lebanon)**

**Al Sarab, Alternative Dance School**

Al-Sarab Alternative Dance School is a school based in Jbeil, Lebanon with branches in Bishmizzine, Koura and La Collina, Rabieh. The School was founded in January 1991 by Dr. Nadra Assaf who is also its Artistic Director. Al-Sarab school staff and community strive to: provide quality dance for the public; encourage young dancers to pursue dance as a career or serious hobby; encourage members to widen their artistic development by choreographing or creating original works; encourage friendship and unity in all work, especially artistic work; encourage community caring by participating in community events; and develop social and ethical structures that benefit the nation as well as the group. The directors and teachers at Al-Sarab share the concept that physical movement is essential to the health of the mind, spirit and body. They also believe dance to be a communicative skill; in essence a Universal Language. Al-Sarab school embraces the vision of a ‘Global Dancer’, one who can do all styles of dance and can function as a dancer in any circumstance. All dance classes at Al-Sarab are structured with this premise in mind and heavily based on Modern Dance (in particular the Horton, Cunningham and Graham techniques). Al-Sarab Dancers are encouraged to participate in local and international workshops and competitions even though the spirit of the school does not acknowledge competition. Classrooms are based on a cooperative working atmosphere which includes both the student and the instructor. Students are also strongly encouraged to grow individually as well as in groups. Students at different levels are expected to work on creativity through expressing themselves with their own choreography and also with improvisation. All the instructors at Al-Sarab work closely together to insure uniformity in discipline and pedagogy even though each instructor has his/her unique approach to implementation of the curriculum.

The school has a State approved curriculum, gives three yearly exams with the exit exam given by external examiners and offers two degrees: Prima Level Dancer, and a teaching Diploma. Al-Sarab is currently working on obtaining accreditation through NASD in the United States.

**Laurence Rondoni – Association Descent-danse (France)**

Laurence Rondoni started her dance training at the Centre International de danse Rosella Hightower (Cannes) from 1982 till 1984. She then performed for the French choreographer Daniel Larrieu till 2001. She danced with several renowned choreographers including Quatuor Knust (96), William Forsythe (97) and Alain Buffard (03). She also choreographed several works (Vice-Versa, A VUE...). In 1995, she founded with Matthieu Doze a multidisciplinary laboratory festival “Descent-danse”. In 1998, she was invited to teach at the Art National Schools (ESBAT, ESNA...) before taking charge of the ARC Danse of the National School of Cergy-Paris for 2 years. In 2002, Rondoni traveled to Egypt to meet artists and start new collaborations. She created a video “ATTABA”, a collective film between improvisation and composition based on choreographic workshops with Egyptian actors and artists. There, she met the young choreographer Mohamed Shafik with whom she created the duo BEL ARABI FEEL. Between 2003 and 2009, she developed her own choreographic work and produced several works in collaboration with Shafik: HADID (04)- Les maux de soqoot el zakera (06)- Soda Caustic (06).

**The cairo Contemporary Dance Workshop Program**

Studio Emad Eddin Foundation has been offering a contemporary dance workshop program since 2006 aiming at reinforcing contemporary dance in Egypt. The Studio’s program policy was to invite every two years an artist to lead this contemporary dance training. In 2005 & 2006, the program was developed in
collaboration with Egyptian dancer & choreographer Karima Mansour. Since 2008, the program is designed by the French dancer & Choreographer Laurence Rondoni.

Rondoni’s experience as a dancer developed in the eighties in France, where contemporary dance emerged at a time when the dance artists’ new propositions disturbed the status quo and were not always easily accepted or understood. Proponents of contemporary dance at the time took the risk of challenging conventions and perform contemporary dance on stage. Rondoni was active in that artistic movement and its spirit inspired her approach towards the conceptualization of the Cairo workshop program. The philosophy behind the training methodology was to primarily focus on the personal development of the trainees.

Together with SEE management, Rondoni elaborated a schedule based upon different stages that would be necessary to realize the program’s objectives. The idea was to choose a group of 15, who had none or very little experience in dance and from different disciplines (like writing, music, theatre, visual arts, mime, architecture, baladi dance) to form a group.

The next step was to develop a protected working space so that free expression could be shared through a process of discovering oneself as well as oneself in the presence of others. The pedagogy that was chosen was the one of encounter: meeting individual and diverse worlds in order to discover one’s own. Most of the experienced artists who came to share their stories, their different ways of working, writing, inventing their world belonged to the 80’s generation that gave birth to a new movement in dance. Different moments were dedicated to evaluation and exchange, and some experimental works were presented by the trainees in the “open doors” event organized in Cairo, Alexandria, and France. Today, 4 years later, the outcome is students who are capable of dealing with dance techniques in relation to whatever creative work they are involved in and invent methods to respond to the desire of transmitting their own material. This experience was first and foremost a human adventure where “things of life” intertwined with “things of art”. In that sense it is unique and will not be reproduced as a system.

**Talaat Samawi- Akito Company (Iraq/Sweden)**

Dancer, choreographer, actor, and director, Talaat Samawi is also a trainer in modern dance techniques and yoga. Born in Babylon, Iraq, in 1967, his family left Iraq in 1979 to live in several Arab and European countries until they finally settled in Sweden. He started in the theatre and moved into the field of dance. In 1991 he established the “1001 Nights popular arts group” in Sweden and it was the first space for Samawi to develop his own specific “modern” form of dance. In 1994 he established the “Surra – man-Raa” modern dance group in Sweden, and in 1996 the name of the group was changed into “Akito for dramatic dance” which also became a network of young dancers and actors involved in this new form of dance which began to spread within the Arab world through summer training programs organized in Iraq (2000), Morocco (2006), Algiers (2008) and Tunisia (2009).

**The Talaat Workshop Program/Akito Company’s pedagogic and artistic approach**

Since 1996, and following long travels around the world, I have reached a basic understanding of the specificity of Iraqi art and culture. My ensuing workshops focused on the body as a raw material from which we can develop different complementary dimensions that help us reach our aspired objectives of the creative process. The body has its own physio-chemical properties as well as legendary, historical, religions, social, political, and cultural features. I researched, experimented, and reflected on ways to transform this body from raw material, a tool, to an independent language that can evolve and develop along with other art forms without which it cannot exist. In this process I used several techniques (such as Yoga, modern dance, acrobatics, mime, improvisation) as prototypes that allow us to explore the dark and forgotten areas of the body to develop the concept of modern Arab dance. This is what I was seeking, in practice and theory, to reach a practical and tangible specificity that will open to the artist a wide world of creativity and connectedness with the human experience.

The Akito group for dramatic dance was established in 1994 in Gotenburg, Sweden with a network in Iraq, Morocco, Algiers, and Tunisia. From the outset we realized the importance of training and the technical development of the body, movement, and formation for the actor-dancer/ dancer-actor. For this reason I
have developed the “Talaat workshop” program which uses techniques of modern dance, jazz dance, acrobatics, improvisation, mime, and yoga, based on the conviction that the body is a universal language that brings humanity together. Research in this workshop is still ongoing on the specificity of the body, movement, and space as well as the technical, aesthetic, linguistic, and spiritual dimensions of modern Arab dance techniques in relation to our language, our body semiotics, and religious rites. All of these elements are historically entrenched in the Arab body and soul bringing us closer to who we are and enabling us to connect with the other so that we can all become rivers that feed our common universal cultural ocean. Through my workshop and productions I am searching for my modern cultural specificity through a combination of technique, thought, and art. Dramatic dance is a term coined in Iraq in the nineties of the last century following discussions amongst critics and academics about what to call modern Iraqi and Arab dance which is a combination of theatre and dance, and views the body as an image of the mind and spirit and an expression of a collective and individual memory.

Sharaf Dar Zeid – Popular Art Center (Palestine)

Sharaf Dar ZAid has been a dancer with El-Funoun Palestinian Popular Dance Troupe since 2001. In 2005, he became a Dabkeh dance trainer at the Popular Art Centre (PAC) Dance School. He is the coordinator of the PAC Dance School since 2008 and is currently in the process of developing an academic curriculum based on theoretical and practical materials. Dar Zeid has a BA in “Business administration” from Birzeit University in 2009 and, besides his work at the Popular Art Center he is the Artistic coordinator of El-Funoun Dance Group. He was offered a scholarship to pursue a Master degree in “Art Management” in Holland for 2011-2012.

The Popular Art Center Dance School

The school organizes Debka training classes on a regular basis, in addition to Ballet, Salsa, Jazz dance, and other forms of contemporary dance to give children and young students the opportunity to learn about different dance forms and cultures. The school also organizes complementary training in Drama, rhythm, physical fitness, and training methods. The Popular Art Center commissions debka trainers to travel and teach in different Palestinian villages, towns, and camps and assist in the establishment of Debka groups wherever there is an opportunity and interest, based on the premise that dance, in all its forms, is essential to community development and cultural regeneration.

Natasja Van’t Westende - Dancing on the Edge Foundation (The Netherlands)

Dancing on the Edge Foundation

While the main activities of Dancing on the Edge are to present and promote dance and theater artists from the Middle East region, the Foundation also invests in dance training in the area. This comes from the conviction that the great creative resources that are present can be enriched when training opportunities are made more consistent and available. In addition to organizing training programs in the Middle East region, DOE has the long-term aspiration of contributing to the setting up of structural training centers and institutions. As the latter is a complex and long-term enterprise, Dancing on the Edge has concentrated so far on sending trainers to different countries to give technique classes and/or workshops. In addition to training for dancers, opportunities for choreographers to develop their talents are provided by organizing residencies in the Netherlands in collaboration with production houses in Amsterdam, The Hague, and Rotterdam. Both the training and residencies organized by Dancing on the Edge have led to fruitful connections and have resulted in a real two-way exchange which has enriched the cultures of the Netherlands/ Europe and countries in the Middle East. Professionals and public in the Netherlands have had the chance to see works of talented dance artists, and those artists have been able to benefit from the connections and experiences provided.

Training pedagogy for Dancers
The performing arts have an incredibly varied scale of forms, styles and genres. Unique to dance (and mime) is that the body is the instrument that the artist uses to convey her/his message. Dance training requires a number of structural elements, most important are a studio with a proper floor and a teacher, but also preferably mirrors, Barres and musical accompaniment. In terms of the techniques to be taught, the possibilities are endless, but the three constant essential factors in maintaining physical condition for dancers remain a proper structure/space, trained teachers and consistent, regular classes. A differentiation must be made between regular training in a technique (such as ballet, contemporary dance, or others) and workshops concentrating on a specific style, technique or subject. Although there is some overlap, the first is necessary to train the physical capacities of the body and a dancer’s control over them, and the second is more for the purpose of gaining initial or a deepened knowledge and insight in specific areas. Training must happen on a regular basis whereas workshops are usually short-term. The ideal situation is where a dancer can have regular training as well as a series of workshops.

The Foundation does not seek to impose any kind of training or programs but rather responds to requests by local groups for providing teachers and expertise. Owing to the fact that the director of Dancing on the Edge, Gary Feingold, is also director of the Netherlands’ largest open professional training institute (the Henny Jurriëns Foundation), a large network of teachers is available.

Khaled BenGhrib- Compagnie 2K_far (Morocco)

Benghrib is a performer, choreographer and a dance teacher based in Casablanca. After his studies at the Conservatory of La Rochelle where he met Colette Milner, Regine Chopinot, Christine Gerard, Didier Deschamps, Khaled’s artistic path led him to work with Carolyn Carlson, Philippe Genty, Hedy Maalem, and Jean Francois Duroure. As a performer and pedagogue, Khaled is involved in the creation of a program - Dance at school – in France in collaboration with national education authorities and the DRAC that seeks to establish a graduate diploma for the option Dance and a training AFDAS in the Nièvre in collaboration with French visual theatre maker Philippe Genty. Benghrib conducted several workshops and master classes in different cities in Europe, Japan and Morocco. He also signs several choreographic works Tolati, Commun Desaccord, La Summa, Western Palace, The Smala B.B, Trip-Tik, Marrakech Toys presented in different international platforms in the united States (Washington), Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco. He also directed 3 short experimental films -3Suites#06.

Benghrib’s dance pedagogy

Benghrib’s “method” is based on the identification of the individual and their environment to link emerging creative works and highlight their specific characteristics while inscribing them in broader underlying issues. This approach aims to enable students to take ownership of the keys to reading or listening to a creative work and understand it in a way that will be subsequently reinvested in understanding and analyzing their own work.

Benghrib’s pedagogic process begins with curious exploratory workshops with rules and / or constraints, revolving around the fundamentals of contemporary dance, and the basis through which the imagination of the individual takes shape in his/her dance movements. The process also takes into consideration the organic resources: weight – the dynamics - the feelings - the flux and reflux of energy - breathing - looking - These organic resources are those of a body of matter carried by the poetry of elements and supplied with terms of action relating to the cultural environment and the laws of Physics, Chemistry and Philosophy of Nature: The individual finds bodily sensations already proven that fuel his actions with quality and form. This game between antagonists boosts the abstract and imitative within each individual thus allowing the dancer to cross different emotional states OR BE --- passed through --- by - them.