

Lab Notes



contactfestival freiburg 2024

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F.A.

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Frieberg 2024

Each year the Teachers' Meeting has a different chemistry, and 2024 felt like an easy group dynamic.

What do people mean when they say you facilitated something really well?

By definition, facilitation should make something easier. Our role is to hear what is said during the teachers meeting and to respond to it quickly, even if it turns out that, for practical reasons, it can't be implemented. Unheard wishes can create frustration.

We thought of the magician tarot card, with one hand up and one hand to the ground, quickly manifesting needs.

This time was easier than our first time doing this job, partly because of our realization that this is a service role. It is not about us; it is about harmony and efficiency.

What do people mean by 'holding space'?

From therapeutic work, I (M.P.) understand it in part as creating a space for others to fill with content. It doesn't require us to be 'creative' (as we were so eager to be in 2018, the first year we did this job together). This time, we chose not to take up 'content space' like 5x5s or labs. In a way, less inventiveness from us seemed to satisfy the group more.

In group discussions, we stayed with our own energies, instead of amplifying others' energies - particularly helpful if the group energy feels restless or urgent. We can make things much easier by relieving the group from needless discussions. By presenting something as if it is not a discussion, we inhibit discussion.

It felt important to us that there is good will on both sides. People are free to change their minds without creating tension or resentment from us, their facilitators. We trust you will figure out how you want to spend your time.

The elegant design of the Teachers' Meeting and festival creates a net through the presence of the former teachers for the festival. Bonds happen through dancing, talking, labbing and sharing responsibilities for the facilitation of subgroups, and all of this becomes a moving memory or archive that holds the festival together.

How to avoid the potential for a clash of egos in the teachers' group? For older teachers, it feels important to allow relationships with former students to change and mature. For new and younger teachers, who are powerful and excellent dancers, it is great that they want to become part of this net. Rather than resting on a status conferred by being a former teacher, older teachers can see amazing dancers and feel humbled. A sense of shared ownership and belonging is why people come back year after year.

Some of our intentions:

The culture of helpers at the festival represents the economic disparity between the global north and south. As such, we built relationships with the latinx group at the festival, which has incredible dancers and teachers within it. We made it apparent in the way that we facilitated not to be 'tricked' by festival roles. We consciously put the presence of Spanish in the mix, through inclusion in 5x5s and festival rituals.

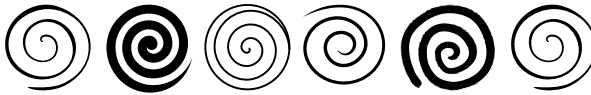
We feel precious about the festival's international diversity and appreciate the subtlety of thinking about cultural diversity. The group's diversity was not dominated by US American race politics. There was lots of cultural respect and nurturing in the group, with teachers from India, Poland, Germany, Canada, etc. As facilitators who are both longtime US expats we asked, How can we soften our consciousness about what comes through the lens of American politics, to have another understanding of what diversity can look like? We reflected on intersections between gender, sexuality, economy, race, history and language, and on volatility and good will.

We both felt at times critical of ourselves, questioning whether our way of expressing our politics isn't radical enough. As a trauma therapist, I (M.P.) am coming to terms with the way in which my work has a different scale, speed and style. We spoke of the value of nuance, softness, and making space for others to be themselves and belong at the same time.

What makes a good facilitator for the freiburg contactfestival teachers' meeting?

A big help towards facilitating is having attended the festival and teachers' meeting several times in recent years— being part of this moving memory of the TM and festival. Caring about the festival is an element of that also. Having attended several Freiburg TM's and festivals has given us a perspective on how its systems work, why they're important, and also how those systems can change and have changed over time. This also gives us some perspective on what kinds of wishes or frustrations are common and somehow expected responses to the way the structure 'has to' work, and which wishes or concerns might be expressing a need that can either be incorporated into the existing TM structure, or that can push the existing structure without breaking its basic logistical goal of supporting the participants of the big festival.

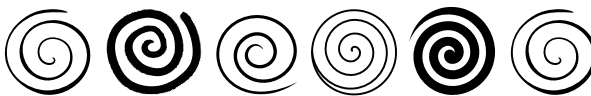




timetable TM 2024

13.07.24

Saturday 3 rd	time	Sunday 4 th	Monday 6 th	Tuesday 7 th	Wednesday 8 th	Thursday 9 th	
17:00 Uhr Arrival		9:00 - 10:00 breakfast					
	10 - 11	warm up	warm up	warm up	warm up	warm up	
	11:00 - 13:00	meeting & dancing LAB - Topics for TM	embodiment, dancing	Facilitations groups meeting & preparing	Facilitation subgroups	last info	
		TM Documentation (30 m)	discussion circles - table talks Introduction		ALL - to meet for announcements from the faci subgroups	closing the TM transition into the Festival	
		14-14:30 communal napping ~~~~~ 15:00- 14:30 lunch break ~~~~~					
	14:30 - 16:30	dancing	LAB	Napping into dancing whole group	*	17:00 Uhr Arrival for the Festival	
				Teachers-Feedback Introduction (30 m)			
		16:30 - 17:00 coffee break					
	17:00 - 19:00	LAB	FESTIVAL info groups content schedule	LAB	speed sharing LABs		
	18:30-19:30 Dinner			speed sharing LABs		Feedback TM	
			TM FACI - wishes for next days				
		19:00 - 20:00 Dinner					
20 Uhr welcoming and orientation ----- ~ 21:00 JAM	ab 20:00	5x5 (Studio 2)	5x5 (Studio 2)	5x5 (Studio 2)	JAM		
		JAM	JAM	JAM			



LABS

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

STUDIO
1

"What's
going on?"

Quintets &
Septets

Imaginal
World

STUDIO
2

Navigating
Choices

Resistance
Resilience
Responsiveness

Consent

STUDIO
3

Aging &
Injury

Small Dance
& Gratitude

Beginners

Beginners Lab

Fundamentals of CI are a distillation of an infinitely complex, infinitely incomprehensible practice. But they are necessary to reflect on ~~the~~ what are ~~the~~ or could be.

An afterthought, an after analytical, descriptive-prescriptive set of principles with which to (begin to) articulate, share, and dare we say it - yes - even teach a way into that complexity. Fundamentals

sounds so certain, established, authoritative, clear, and stable. An attempt to identify and articulate what (might be) some starting principles from which to invite into a practice. A pedagogical strategy? But not a closed set of entities / ideas.

A more fluid fundamentality. Basic principles is usually the term I use - I don't think I've ever described it as fundamentals. But why not. What are these basic principles? Centre, gravity, muscle tonus, pressure, texture. I like to ~~talk~~ talk about texture a lot in my teaching.

Manipulation Lab

Lab on Manipulation: Freiburg 2024

Asher's report.

Facilitated by Asher Levin, with Muriel Jeanne Mollet, Sebas van Wetten, Irene Sposetti and Filip Wencki.

This is my, subjective report; recollections and perceptions that I had of the lab. I have not quoted anyone directly, but tried to recall what happened, what was shared and areas of interest as they came across to me.

There is interest here both in the direct material researched; and the progress of the lab itself, in relation to labbing skills and approaches to labbing.

One way or the other, despite my initial intention to move quickly into experiments and experiencing, we talked a lot before any doing. Perhaps, in 'laying out some ground', I opened the floor for others to also share personal angles, experiences and thoughts more verbally. I found it all valuable to hear. Sebastian spoke and demonstrated in some depth about manipulating from the fascia, feeling deeper into the skin, with the fingers, to move from below the surface of the skin, but not holding muscles or bones.

Irene spoke about finding an agreed format or basis for working together (the balance between talking and doing). We agreed to go soon into action.

Irene spoke of the intimacy of touching body parts with the hands – how it has a big effect and is precious. She spoke of manipulating and 'yielding' as enhancing experiences of 'yin-yang' moments. She spoke of the joy of being more in the 'yin' element, afforded by someone being more manipulative, while maintaining personal agency. She spoke of awakening liquidity, adaptability and strong impulses.

1 person of the 5 original, Filip, expecting a more directly physical, experiential lab (amongst other reasons), left after 20 minutes. Another person, Muriel, only had 1 hour (of the 2 hours reserved for this lab).

We had some experience in a trio, With Muriel, Sebastian and Asher, with 2 manipulating 1 person, who tried to simply channel the wild stronger-than-usual suggestions, pulls, pushes. I loved being in the middle of these conflicting or complementary impulses and directions.

Muriel, being manipulated, requested more fleshy pulling and expressed delight and joy, even with (or due to?) some moments of a feeling of pain on her pulled skin. She was radiant after a 5 minute experience. She described it as 'like a fresh shower'. I was aware, as a manipulator, of particularly focusing on visually tracking where the manipulated person's middle was in space, and it's trajectory.

Irene, who had been watching, chose not to have a physical experience.

We talked, Sebas, Asher and Irene, taking a fascinating ramble through ideas of touch and intimacy. Through the initial conversation, I was aware that in being a stronger manipulator, some people need to face or meet their relationship to having some 'power'. There is such an emphasis in CI on listening, that often goes more towards a state of 'following', gentle, mutual co-creation. How to manage having more 'control'. Can we still deeply listen and tune in to the agreed contextual boundaries and sensitivities?

We moved on to talking about skin and clothes – why might skin contact be problematic? We discussed where on the body may be more intimate to touch than other places (e.g. the face may be really intimate, and particular parts of the face even more so). Why might we want to keep clothes on (e.g. sweat, or keeping some boundaries around genitals etc.)

I would have liked more time to experience in action. To test out new ways or combinations of ways of manipulating and being manipulated, and further sharing of ideas.

A few areas explored in discussion:

Emotion in connection to skin touch.

Emotion in connection to touching parts of the face.

Various kinds of touch, with different body parts.

Labbing skills themselves.

Memesis.

Clothes as place to manipulate or suggest movement from. Awareness of clothes one is wearing. Dancing with less clothes – pros and cons / qualities.

Boundaries / sensitivities and holding and blurring of them.

Sebas van Wetten's Report

Lab Manipulation

Lab topic : manipulation.

Facilitator : Asher.

Present : Muriel Philip Irene Asher Sebas.

Notes : Asher, Sebas, Irene.

Our discussion wondered around in a not so much structured way.

(We also had a meta talk about the art of Labbing)

We had some exchange of ideas and interests, we had a little time of moving in Trio where two people were manipulating the third, working on bones and later on fascia and flesh.

Some of the Questions and interests that passed by in our discussions before and after the moving.:

- There seems to be a taboo on manipulating. But allowing also this colour in our dance and our teaching can have a great value. Of course with the care needed to assure agency and consent.

- It seems it has grown a culture in CI to teach to not use hands, grown out of safety reasons, maybe. But using our hands in the manifold way is too rich, too beautiful to not use, to not teach: - hands to make real connection with you, my partner; – using hands in a sensitive curious way as an octopus maybe uses their arms to explore their environment; – hands as an extension of our centre; -
- The Puppet and the puppeteer. Manipulating in an imaginary way or in a real way, using the different layers on a partner (a score by Martin Keogh) touching/manipulating another in the different layers : bones; muscles; fascia; flesh/skin (brushing); beyond the skin

Muriel Jeanne Mollet's Report

Practical Try out's:

1. Warming up in a solo - I am a puppet moved through the imaginary strings from a puppet player.
2. Experimenting in a trio.

Manipulations through skin, bones or flesh.

Being in the middle and being manipulated I enjoyed the unforeseen, my body reactions and the touch of the experienced teachers/manipulators.

I felt a shyness of them really going deep in the flesh. Encouraging them, there came the new aspect of the burning, which was surprising me, natural sounds escaping from my mouth, making me laugh and being more grounded and awake in my body.

Muriel



art by Peter Aerni

Responsiveness, Resistance, Resilience Lab

Freiberg Teacher's meeting notes

Responsiveness, Resistance, Resilience was the name of my lab. These three words (what I call the three R's) have a deep resonance for me, they are situated at the intersection of somatics and politics – the place where bodily perception meets social engagement. They play a key role in my book *How to Land* and I think about them in terms of the material practices of Contact Improvisation. I wanted to enlist a group of experienced contacters in exploring how intentional physical practices can provide an embodied ground for our lives and our political activism.

The 27 of us began by gathering around large sheets of paper with the words Responsiveness, Resistance, Resilience on them. Everyone filled in their own word associations for these terms and then we did a verbal score reading the words together in whatever order struck our fancy. We wrote and spoke in small groups. I also introduced various physical practices (opening the pores of our skin; aikido arm; tracking skin to bone in a dance with a partner) to show how these ideas can be physically embodied. I am also aware that these terms mirror what I think of as the three essential practices of CI: somatic awareness, physical skills of supporting weight and falling; and an improvisational mindset.

Letter to Ann Cooper Albright by Nica Portavia

Ciao

Dear Ann,

i hope you are doing well. landing between new students and a new academic year.

I bought your book, and is deeply resonating with my way to see things. I m touched. Inspired.

Feeling less alone in this endless practice of dance/life.

I was participating to your lab. that was inspiring. simple and deep.

I love to practice simplicity in the structure to work with the complexity that every human being is carrying.

The first part when everyone was reading the words had a performative power that touched me.

I wish one day to organize something like that.

As you propose an intensive a space, where we build thoughts/words/dance. Not just dance that sometimes is bringing words. I see it as a co-creation, may the universe is listening!

I was participating to Leland lab as well.

Was interesting to work with the his topic, sometimes there were to much h words for me :) but was a good activity for a body-mind awareness.

The teachers meeting was a thing.

At the beginning i was feeling those group of privileged people , masturbating in circle. Talking about things that are barely touching or that barely they give space to be touched by these things. And I'm referring to the world outside.

If we are not impacting with the world with the present how can we teach a practice that is asking us to stay in the present, to answer to at every now, to re-direct, re-imagine, shifting.

We work with the spherical space, and this is so big, so political. We are dancing in a round globe and we are interested in exploring a spherical space, so multiplying horizons, open them.

And I felt that not all the teachers are taking care of this space, that there are a lot of I instead of WE. And I would love to really understand what we can do to do it together. I felt more togetherness towards the end of the TM, maybe when there was more tuning between us. And I wish for more deeper moments. The 5x5 can be one of the things to keep and explore more.

I don't like this aspect of Ci that pretend that we are friends and creating community just because we are all together in a dancing space. CI is not a magic pot. Is just a place that is giving empowerment to all the singularity to become together. It Is a process. Of recognition of listening of observation, of breathing.

I don't dance CI because i love sociality. I dance CI because I'm curious about humans, our development, our ways to find strategies and imagining.

Building it together is a dream and so I'm not sure that between us that was the same understanding of the word 'together' 'making it together and for all'

I loved table talk. Is a door into another communication between bodies.

I love the topics and I wish for more time to talk.

and I felt that from any kitchen table, from all the conversations there were many 'dancing scores' that would be lovely to practice in the dance space.

There was the funny/scary moment on the table that I've initiated about dancing in the world, the guy that arrived telling how much was shocked because he received his first No from a woman.

I feel that in this sense we need to do more.

Bringing more awarnabout the quier culture and the consent practices.

I'm reading a text about an LGBTQ antology by Arabic author, is so beautiful.

and Susanna Song in her book 'Polyamory and Queer Anarchism: Infinite Possibilities for Resistance' writes : the term queer implies resistance to the 'normal', where 'normal' is what seems natural and intrinsic.

queerness as an illumination of a horizon imbued with potentially.

I hope to meet you soon again and have time to share. I wish to come to visit Oberlin one day.

I'll be in the US in January, visiting Portland with Karen, performing and teaching.

Sending you big love



Consent Lab

Kaisa's lab notes

LAB Documentation, Monday 5.8.2024 14.30-16.30, Freiburg Contact Festival

Title of the Lab: Consent

Inquiry of the Lab: How to teach consent and choice in subtle ways?

Facilitator of the Lab: Kaisa Kukkonen

Participants: Peter Aerni, Francesca Freewer, Otto Akkanen, Catherine Kych, Anjite Schur, Barbara Stahlberger, Haley Gawthrop, Oliver Shaffer, Arash Khakpour, Elise Mae Nuding, Sophie Bransfield, Dieter Heitkamp, Melanie Seeger, Lee Wholl, Ali Schwartz

Documentee: Kaisa Kukkonen, Ali Schwartz

Flow: Circle with task 1: to pose questions about the lab theme

Task 2: Movement as Reflection (moving how ever you want, in contact or not, whilst verbally reflecting-- discussion, free reflection, continuing to pose questions)-- 20 mins

Task 3: Gathered again as a whole group in a circle. Pose more questions.

Task 4: Split into groups of 3-4 and share how you facilitate or teach consent, sharing strategies.

Task 5: Gathering in the whole group, sharing some highlights from small groups, and/or general reflections.

Reflections:

Questions 1

- what are we talking about when we talk about consent? In this context of CI festival?

Sexuality? Intimacy? Non-verbal?

Teaching contact?

When I am in a dance – when I am in a dance, how to I know, how to read what the other wants?

- How to deal with two-modes of being an dance person and dance partner at the same time?

- How do you define your role as an active dancer and a receiver in the dance?

- What consent is implied when we are in a contact improvisation space? If any?

- In facilitating as a teacher, how do I make sure I don't need anything from the students?

- How do I start questioning my role as a teacher?

Where is the line between discomfort and harm? how much harm or discomfort ok and also valuable?

- What do I need to teach for people to be able to say no and take care of their boundaries?
- How are we with the experience to be misunderstood as teachers?
- How can we support students that are being misunderstood?
- When is the binary of yes and no – becomes unhelpful in facilitating the ability to navigate?
- When is the binary of yes and no useful to teach
- What are the concrete ways to practice listening, non-forcing things in the dance?
- How can I cultivate respect within my body to prepare for a consensual dance?

Answers, excersices, thoughts from small groups:

Reflections from small groups about teaching experiences and final circle reflections:

- normalizing mid-dance check-ins from the facilitator
- no silence agreements, always ok to check-in
- duet, role of verbalising yes / no in a pause:
yes – stay , no – dissolve and come back to same partner exercise
- "not now" as no
- as human beings these conversations can become very complicated,

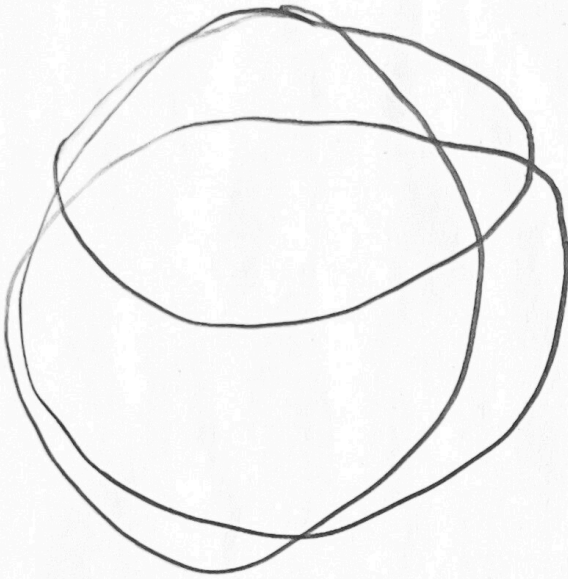
so important to have a clear purpose to support the process

- Do you agree with what you're doing right now?
- Strageties for checking in with yourself:

How to take responsibility and be ready for the things you're doing

- reminders: you can leave the dance
- power relations affect how to dance
- consensual use of fight energy

Navigating Choices Lab



sphere of choices

How can options arise?

Which "I" is making the choices?

Where is choice located in the body?

Where is it enacted?

Does 1 part make a choice & the rest follow?

inertia aftershocks

noticing
'shoulds' - compulsion expectation
habit

Dancing w/ beginners

"Good Dance" more ^{suggesting?} manipulative?
^{agency?}
empowering

CHOICE

sphere of
influence
tendency
atmospheric
nondirectional

future
Present
past

Plan
NO choices

limitations
agency
Free will

Control
active / passive
Following

struggle
release

complexity
attention
impulses Focus

- What am I connecting to
- When I make a choice?
- How much is the I involved
Is it limiting or expanding
my awareness?

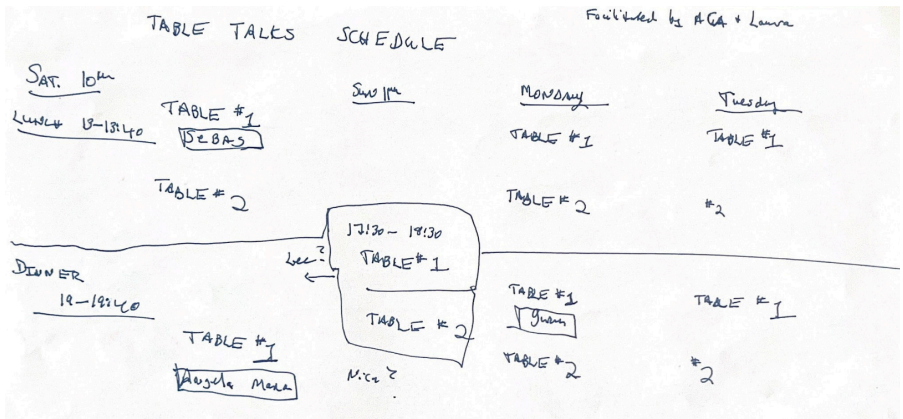
TRIOS 2 dancing 1 observer → SHARE 23

SCORES

each trio shares a score, watered while
dances dance

1. Duets. Where is your choice from - pleasure,
pressure, expectations
2. over / under look / Not Look
3. Continuous reporting - what's
happening? what choices am I
making?
4. Pausing - moving = choice - asynchronous
pause = listening pausing
- imagining that I'm
pausing while moving

TABLE TALKS



Discussion circles Table Talks

NICA PORTAVIA

We are living in a shacking world moment. *How to dance in a shacking world*
Dancing is f with the world
As teacher I don't want create 'bubbles' but I want to keep feeling all the impacts about what is happening outside in the world and bring it into my dance, into my teaching, creating more awareness and solidarity.
I'm interested in sharing how we are creating space that are not bubbles but space where the present is danceable?
Are we encouraging the creations of bubble where all conflict are asked to sit apart?
How we integrate, dance, teach, research the present time?

The topic of relational knowledge. Is a topic coming from different fields, sociology, psychology, anthropology ect
The relational knowledge is talking about doing together as best way to transmit.
So the idea is to have more horizontal way of teaching and learning and understand what we can do together that we cannot do alone?
What we are doing together?
We are teaching CI, the practice of meeting, what is creating this togetherness and how is impacting the dance?
Are we really together?

SEBAS VAN WETTEN

'Dealing with looking up to perceived "better" dancers / teachers'
Talking, discussing, labbing??

Subtopics/aspects I now think of:

- empowerment
- shhhhhhh : sharing shyness
- dealing with your "Super-Ego" = uncovering internal voices, self-judgement ; echoes of 70-80
- building courage, resources
- stepping up / stepping down, vs. stepping together = dancing
- 'Star-dancer' / 'Star-teacher'
-

Format:

no idea.
Circle or table discussion; maybe also other forms of addressing this topic.

ANGELA MARA

For the teacher meeting, I would be interested in following discussion topics:

CI and ageing: Exclusion of older people

CI and diversity: how can we be more diverse

Discussion Circle / Table Talk

In the past years the festival used to host a talk that gathers all of the festival participants together.
Instead, this year we would have **multiple and diverse CI-related discussions/topics happening throughout the festival**, facilitated/hosted by one or several of this year's Freiburg Teacher's Week participants.

WHEN:

These talks will **take place during the meals**:
at 13:00-13:40, at 19:00-19:40,
and on the **experimental day** at 17:30-18:30.

WHERE:

They'll take the form either:

- of a **table talk in the eating area**, on the last two tables in the back-left side (marked by a paper on the table),
- or else as a **discussion circle in the park**, close to the eating area.

The location of a talk will be specified on the proposal.

The talks will be **moderated/facilitated by one or more of participants of this year's Teacher's Week**.

We encourage the facilitators to moderate/facilitate a discussion about a **topic around CI**, that you feel is **relevant for these times**.

There are three general possibilities of a table talk / discussion circle being facilitated:

1. Introducing a topic/theme to hear everyone's voice about it, moderating the exchange
2. Introducing a topic & content. Then invite questions/an exchange of opinions
3. Inviting participants to share their own burning topics and moderating their exchange

ACA - 1st

Laura Dohler
Sarah Young
Ricki Nobine
Anne Cooper
GURU SURAJ.
dieter heithamp
Gesine Daniels
Kira Kirsch

Elise Mae Nuding
Sophie Brandfield
Ali Schwartz
Olivia Shaffer.
Antje Schuk

Roxanne

Nico

MarC

Angela ~~Andrea~~ Mera

Peter

Simone

Arash

Andrea

NO. _____
DATE. _____
SIGN
INS

Participants:

Kaisa Kukkonen
Andrea Keiz
Dieter Heithamp
Sarah Young
Eryn Rosenthal
Simone & Alan and/or
Joshua Morten
Asher Levin
Susanne Marten

Lab Document
Sunday 17th
4 August 2024
"What's going on"
Facilitated by
Susanne Marten

- 5 min individual writing
- 20 min dancing
- 5 min writing
- 20 min dancing
- 5 min writing
- all reading what they wrote, underline what you like to share verbally in the group
- round of sharing one by one
- open final conversations

We enjoyed!



Photos, Freiburg 2024

AWARENESS & SUPPORT TEAM

This is a group of about 6 teachers that wish to bring awareness to and support the physically, emotionally, or sexually distressed or hurt people during our festival — in and outside of the dance floor.

The awareness & support group members are not necessarily expected to resolve issues, problems or get into therapist position. They are expected to hold space and help people to regulate themselves and be able to move on.

Please find down the description of 2023 that was created for this group. It clearly explains the intention and the involvement of teachers and participants. What can be done, and under which circumstances and how will be discussed and co-curated by the members of this team.

The team will decide how to handle situations before the festival starts. This team will also invite participants of the festival with experience in Physical First Aid, Emotional Support, Conflict Resolution / Mediation to join the group. And study with them how to hold this space together. Every year each member contributes to how this group functions.

We aim to gather the group before the TM and have a zoom with Defne Erdur (the initiator of this group back in the years).

Bulletin Board announcement for participants (2023):

AWARENESS and SUPPORT

This week, we expect to have pleasurable and joyful times. However our practice can sometimes be challenging, risky and overwhelming.

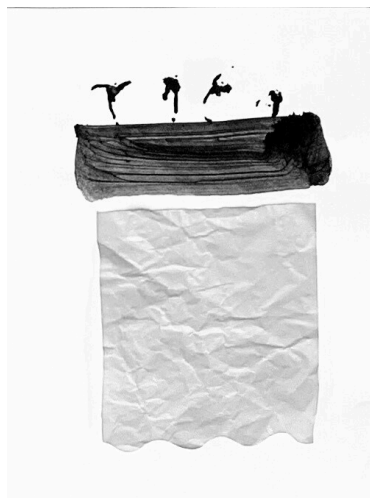
We might get distressed and could feel hurt physically, emotionally, or sexually. This year we have a team of teachers who wish to bring awareness to and support such issues during the festival — in and outside of the dance floor.

Therefore, at any moment,
if you feel discomfort or confusion during or after an interaction;
if you feel that your boundaries got crossed and you are not able to address it;
if you feel you might have crossed someone's boundaries and you do not know what to do about it

...you are invited to approach a member of this Awareness and Support Team and ask for support to process.

Whatever you share will be handled with care and will stay as confidential as you wish.

If you have experience in Physical First Aid, Emotional Support, Conflict Resolution / Mediation and would like to join the team please let Defne know and learn about the protocol.



art by Peter Aerni