

18M8L in Leipzig - Postcolonial views

The nourishment of an ecological dialogue insider/outsider

Ecopetry

*The feeling that everything
is going toward an end,
It's a chance to evolve as humans:
We have to be ready to abandon.
We have to achieve
a way to share.
Live together
is the core of our time.
Art shows you something else.
It opens again
the space
to play
to test
to fail
together.*

Introduction

What I discovered was a new look on the project 18M8L, some new aspects of strength I didn't realize before. This happened thanks to the look of the local professionals we met: Lisa Dressler (Schaubühne Lindenfels production management), Jennifer Krabs (her assistant), Ilona Schaal (former programme manager at Schaubühne Lindenfels and now artistic director of Theatre Rempe in Stuttgart), Ulrike Melzig (dance consultant). This was very relevant to me, as it showed me something I didn't expect. The co-design of the activities of this week together brought our partner in Leipzig (especially Lisa and Jennifer) to enhance their local relation with the dance scene in Leipzig. Building the program of our visit, introducing us to other professionals and artists of the territory, was for the Schaubühne Lindenfels an occasion to map people and activities, to meet someone they didn't meet before, to take some time to talk in depth with people they already knew.

This is a kind of *mediation role* for us the *strangers* I didn't expect.

The look of the outsider can nourish the look of the insider and *viceversa*, bringing new perspectives and contributing to the development of the local dance scene: comparing models of production, financial systems, artists and professionals' contexts and more.

This is what we were looking for with 18M8L project, which aim was to enhance the international dialogue with any other purpose but research, meet, share, cooperate.

The openness that the time and the space of research need, brings also to the opportunity of nourishing our working practice, both from the artists and producers' perspective.

Chapter 1. Our partner Schaubühne Lindenfels

A bit of history...

The Schaubühne Lindenfels has a long story: built in 1876 by Carl Schmidt as an event hall for dances (a ballroom), in 1913 it became a cinema, between 1931 and 1945 it was a place in which propaganda movies were presented, until 1975 it was a metal and stove factory, in 1987 the building was shut down due to a heater accident (you can read more details here: <https://www.schaubuehne.com/en/house/history>).

In 1993, in the post-reunification period after the fall of the Berlin wall, the actors of the Theaterhaus Jena discovered this unused building with event halls on the Karl-Heine-Straße. Among them **René Reinhardt** the actual CEO and artistic director of the Schaubühne. The idea to build a theater in the west of Leipzig was born. The first season began in 1994, with a stage production and a movie screening. In the following years, the Schaubühne established itself as a place for cultural events and theater projects outside the city center. In 2002, the owner at the time was forced to file for bankruptcy. **The purchase of the property by the operators of the Schaubühne became essential for securing the Schaubühne as a permanent cultural**

location. The **non-profit joint-stock company, which was founded in 2005, purchased the property and acts as the production house's sponsor.** This marked the start of an experiment with cultural, political and economic relevance. Today, **Germany's first "stock theater" belongs to more than 1,200 shareholders.** The Schaubühne is a **shared space** - in more than one way.

With a bar, a beautiful Foyer, a big stage, a room for video projections and offices. Theatre, cinema, dance, digital and live arts co-exist in this permeable ecosystem that really communicates with the city, invites the citizen to enter the theatre, live the bar and the spaces, but also a theatre that goes out on the streets to meet the people through very interesting digital and real projects related to the history and the identity of Leipzig, seen through the eyes of local and international artists. The project **MAY TOWN** in which Cristina Kristal Rizzo with Kenji Pasley Hortensia and Salvo Lombardo were involved thanks to 18M8L, is an example of this practice of dialogue with the city: the digital art works produced were accessible to everyone at the park through QR code.

The present

The Schaubühne is what the people who work and collaborate bring in terms of ideas, projects, activities, proposals, connections. The main objective of the Schaubühne in these last years is to involve the audience more and more from different points of view: from the selling of the artworks to support the theatre itself (for instance in July 2022 they were selling playing cards realized by an artist) to a cultural offer that realizes itself in the city, reaching the audience outside the theatre (at the park, in the streets, in the fields...).

Some of the projects and the innovations, some of the objectives are strictly related with the needs that became more urgent during the Corona time: the use of the digital to connect international community all over the world, but also to encourage and support new languages mixing theatre and digital competencies. They're actively working to reconnect themselves to the local community, to the history of the city: the next project will be around the "field of the century": a proper field not far from the theatre, where people stay, sleep, make parties... Schaubühne will create a program of activities that will interact with what's already happening in the field, and will offer this programme to the local community.

What happens inside the theatre: Schaubühne hosts Katapult, Euroscene Leipzig and other festival also related to video art and documentary. They offer the space for residencies to theatre and dance artists, and of course they present shows.

Chapter 2. 18M8L in Leipzig

The dialogue and co-design of this action started in Autumn 2021, from the dialogue between me (TIR Danza creative producer) and Ilona Schaal: 3 artists were involved in a project of digital residency of the Schaubühne **STIGA MAY TOWN**. Cristina Kristal Rizzo with Kenji Pasley Hortensia (TIR Danza) and Salvo Lombardo (Chiasma) started this process of research with other international artists from Chile, Colombia, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Namibia, Panama, Poland, Tanzania, USA, Leipzig in January 2022 (Soheil Boroumand, Alberto Bustamante, Johannes Gabriel, Eucaris Guillen, Meigl Hoffmann, Angela Kobelt, Kay Liemann, Juliana Márquez Villacís, Lisa Schiller-Witzmann, Pedro Sepúlveda Cruz Coke, Bastian Sistig, Thadeusz Szabo, Isabel Tuemuna Katjavivi). The residency ended in June 2022. Here you can find detailed information about this project: <https://may-town.net/>

The digital residency was curated by Julia Asperska and it brought to the creation of digital and real artistic interventions for the exhibition **MAY TOWN IN ZETKIN PARK** that opened on May 21st 2022 and ended in July 2022: the finissage of the exhibition in the park was one of the activities of this visit on July 29th. Cristina Kristal Rizzo and Salvo Lombardo were invited to participate in a talk moderated by Julia Asperska; the theme of this talk and of the residency itself was to reflect on **postcolonial themes**.

The digital-analogue exhibition followed traces from 120 years ago, when the park was laid out for the STIGA, the "Saxon-Thuringian Industrial and Commercial Exhibition". Progress was celebrated with a gigantic industrial palace, exhibitions and all kinds of entertainment venues. And the superiority of one's own culture, which was believed to be real. In the "East African Village", "cast" people from Africa showed their supposed lives and, as involuntary actors, conveyed an exotic image of archaic foreignness and backwardness.

The park this summer again became a stage, a display for positions and world views and for postcolonial perspectives on history and the present. The cube at the park entrance near the roundabout/Anton-Bruckner-Allee was the starting point for this. The entire project was a production by Schaubühne Lindenfels

as part of the theme year 2022 “Leipzig – City for Education” and part of the cultural project “125 Years of STIGA”. 21 May to 31 July | Clara Zetkin Park. Participating artists.

And if this was the heart of our visit, the concrete output of a shared project, the opportunity for the artists to go further in depth of an already existing research (for Salvo Lombardo) and to focus some aspects that already implicitly existed in the work (for Cristina Kristal Rizzo) many other things and activities happened around. I select some aspects, meetings, activities that were particularly relevant to me.

Chapter 3. Visiting LOFFT

On July 26th we visited LOFFT-DAS THEATER <https://www.lofft.de/> that is located in a very interesting area of the city, the Spinnerei <https://www.spinnerei.de/> cotton industries buildings transformed in art galleries and spaces for culture.

We met the artistic director and CEO Anne-Cathrin Lessel with Philipp Hecht (Marketing and Public Relations). The LOFFT celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2022; it is a place where audience and art interact with each other, creating opportunities for encounter where dance, theatre and society can be considered away from the stage. Analogue and digital spaces of interaction, where people can reflect, discuss and share experiences together. Between theory and practice, diverse needs can be addressed: the haptic, practical, discursive, the critical, the complicated and the easily accessible. In the form of talks, workshops, parties and explorations away from the theatre, we encourage independent discovery of the performing arts. Because theatre only becomes possible through the audience. **The LOFFT was founded by 5 theatre makers from the off scene of Leipzig 25 years ago, just to share a space together.**

Anne Cathrin Lessel is a young woman, she’s been the programme manager of the LOFFT since 2011 and she became the artistic director in 2019.

The LOFFT has an annual coproduction national call, and they promote a platform for emerging artists: they support 3 local artists for 2 years offering space, money but also marketing and development consultancies to enhance their careers.

The LOFFT is active in many networks on a local, national and international level; their aim is to support mainly the independent scene. They present 150 shows in a year, they encouraged the creation of a mixed able company and they offer the space to a very important dance school of the city (founded 50 years ago) with dance classes from 3 years old.

They were very proud of this audience development action they had in 2021: the theatre TANDEM. They selected 5 couples of spectators, one used to go to theatre and one who doesn’t usually go to theatre; the couples were invited to some show and their dialogue concerning the shows became a podcast.

The LOFFT also hosts an association of young students: they work for the festival and as the artistic director said they are the ones who make the real scouting action of the new generations.

Chapter 4. Choreographers talk

In the same days we were visiting Leipzig, Elena Francalanci a young emerging choreographer based in Berlin originally from San Romano (a small village between Pisa and Florence) was spending some days at the Schaubühne researching with a drummer for a new production. We had the occasion to meet her and also to attend the sharing of her research. Lisa and Jennifer organized also a talk between the choreographer that I moderated on July 28th; with us also Ildikó Tóth, a choreographer based in Leipzig that worked as a dancer with Forsythe, founder of the association 4furtanz: <https://4furtanz.de/>.

Elena Francalanci is a very young emerging choreographer and dancer with a classical ballet background who works in Austria and Germany. She doesn’t know if she wants to describe herself as a “choreographer”: she works with different languages (dance, installation, video, sculpture) and she says “I don’t like to fix movement and I work more with tasks and images combinations”.

I remind her a definition of “choreography” by Alessandro Pontremoli: for him a choreography is “a project of the bodies moving in space and time”. It’s a very open description of the actual practices in dance, in this *third landscape* of the choreography.

Salvo Lombardo is based in Rome and he considers himself a choreographer, referring to this open definition: his first medium is the body and he’s also a curator since 2019. His association Chiasma is supported since

2018 by the Italian Ministry of Culture as a dance company; for him, Chiasma is a hub in which all the choreographers involved work and learn together.

Cristina Kristal Rizzo started her career in 1994 in Italy as an author and co-founder of Kinkaleri group: 6 people from different background producing a lot of stuff, shows, dance-pieces, videos. They considered the choreography as the possibility to use dance in a wider idea; the artists involved shared administration and organization and they really worked as a collective, they didn't sign the creations as authors, but collectively. She worked with them They worked together until 2008.

When they started, the globalization was also starting, the beginning of Europe, the changes of technology in promoting and communicating the works. They travelled a lot and they had rehearsals in big squatted places. At that time, she says, it was possible to stay independent and have a dialogue with the system.

In 2008 she felt the need to go and try to be alone, the system started to propose her things, she made many solo works. She studied from 1990 to 1994 at the Martha Graham full formation in New York.

Now she feels she is a researcher. 4 years ago, she changed her name Cristina Rizzo in Cristina Kristal Rizzo: "I want to underline and be critic in an ironic way with the fact that we're pushed to be individuals that produce things".

She prefers to work as a freelancer instead of leading her own association.

"I define myself as a dance maker; I think that dance in its essence has the potential to be political and I'm developing a thinking about dance: I wonder how the bodies can get out of normativity, in which way dance can be an act of freedom and of presence? I like to develop technologies: explore the body-mind connections it's possible to develop in relation with space and time, and with the ones who are watching you. I don't want to propose my image of the world, but I want to dig into the world and make something different. I think we have to be more affirmative and I think we need an institute of choreography for few people – just for those people who wants to research".

Ildikó Tóth lives, produces her own works and tries to encourage a local network of Leipzig based artists.

She started dancing at age of 6 in the DDR time in Germany and she finished her education in Holland; thanks to a scholarship she studied also in New York.

She combines release technique with improvisation. She worked as a dancer in the Forsythe company in Frankfurt and later as a freelancer in Germany. In 2019 she made a piece with a colleague.

She loved to be on stage because she can't renounce to the relation with people and the peculiar time you live on stage.

She doesn't want to create a statement, but a world to offer to the people. Answering at the question if she would define herself as a choreographer she says: "Call me whatever, what I need to put in an application to receive money".

She founded an association in 2012 with some colleagues trying to bring a necessary contribution to the city, as she says "There's a lack in Leipzig to be a dancing city: there's a need for spaces, trainings, lecture formats..."

She had to face to some prejudices that affect all the freelance dance artists: "When you talk with the people, they think that if you're freelance means you aren't good enough to stay in a ballet company".

In Germany they don't have any funding for associations but just for projects: there're institutional fundings for theatres, festivals, not for artists associations. "There're 15 spots in the city, and if anyone get out of the bus, you can't enter. There's an application you have to make every year.

We've a studio we could rent for the last 2 years thanks to the Covid money; we offered residencies there, but without that money it's impossible to maintain the studio."

In Leipzig she says you don't have the culture of modern and post-modern dance, and there's no dance academy. She organizes a festival made of workshops at the end of September.

A positive thing: the support of the theatres to dance in Leipzig is really strong.

After this introduction, a discussion started. I want to report this part of the talk through few sentences: the empty spaces are for you. The white empty spaces are here for you to be filled with your thoughts, for you to answer the question the artists posed, to reply with your own questions. It doesn't matter from whom the sentences arrived: they were just shared, they're a common patrimony, different voices in a same places, despite the identities, create a unique kaleidoscopic discourse.

In Berlin everything is full, also the studios.

How much art is becoming something you have to specialize into?

It deals with the capitalization of everything.

In Italy you can't ask money as an independent artist, as an individual.

If you have an association, you can try to push the system, you can try to become a counterpower.

The theatres don't support and produce dance in Italy: the festival, the national choreographic centres, the residencies, other companies support and produce dance.

The lack of political culture and education in dance put the artists in a different position for their creation: they're asked to educate the audience and this is not the artists' aim.

Foresythe had 10 people in the audience and it was possible for a stadtttheatre to support his work, now you just have to sell tickets.

If I look at the work by Florentina Holzinger I think everything looks like it's possible.

I feel it's not the time to pretend for yourself to be revolutionary toward the capitalistic production: in my opinion it's more interesting to change perspective.

I'm more interested in discover new contexts more than new spaces.

It's not the time to destroy all the categories of the languages.

Now it's the time to reflect on HOW I make things not about WHAT I make.

I'm in a nomadic disposition of the body all the time because I can work just in the system of the residencies.

Why should I be obliged to stay in a relational aspect instead of just make my research and stop?

Here we have these opportunities to produce: theatres, residencies, co-production through open call, project funding on state, city, federal level. Specific national and international co-production. Goethe Institute to support travels. Sponsors and private investors for theatres.

When you apply for a call, you're requested to write a concept from a theatre science point of view. The ones who read the projects they don't know the language of dance.

I discover that we share the same questions on what we do and how we do what we do. We're a wider community. It deals with Europe: what could we ask together?

I feel less alone.

What could we bring into it?

Could we listen more on how people work and support the way in which they want to work?

What can restart and refresh the system?

How could we share an economy?

I can take care of the fragility of the processes and less visible results.

Chapter 5. Some notes from the liquid time

The time of the visit is also the time for a coffee, a beer, a walk, an unexpected meeting at the Spinnerei where we participated with a group of international people from different backgrounds, interested in the transformation of an abandoned building, a festive time at the Spinnerei with concerts and open galleries,

the time of our lunch and dinner together, crossing the park, visiting galleries, spending time with a friend and her children, start talking about a new project to realize in 2024...

This is liquid time you can't frame before, but you just have to live in the moment it happens, and it's possible just if you leave some empty spaces here and there. I will try to share with you some of these impressions.

A colleague from Leipzig worked in Italy few years ago: she says when she went to the theatres, she didn't see anything interesting, just "old stuff" so she had and still has the impression that in Italy you find innovation just in the festivals, not in the theatres. But why? She asks.

In Germany you have the opportunity to apply for funding also as an individual artist, you don't need to belong to any association and it gives you more freedom than in Italy. At the same time, as an artist you start and restart each time from a "ground zero" so the artists feel very precarious their work, they can't have a continuity in the years as we have in Italy if we're supported by an institution for 3 years or more... But still I'm wondering if it's really true that the artists feel less precarious in Italy: yes, you can have a support for 1 or more years, but you have to present a project, so every 3 years is possible that you lose your money. The difference between the support to subjects and to projects isn't totally clear to me.

Germany needs international projects and European money to nourish international dialogue through projects, because the local fundings also for the theatres ask the institutions to produce and support national artists (German based with a residency and a bank account in Germany).

The Corona money was distributed through projects in Germany: artists and institutions were pushed to apply for these fundings, there was a lot of money, but given with a capitalistic approach: produce, consume and stop.

If you want to produce dance in Germany you can ask to: the Federal cultural foundation and to the Government. They support individuals and programmes.

The national theatre in Leipzig supports dance productions with 5 residencies every year, 20.000 euro and a space to rehearse. This will be possible in Italy before or later?

Interesting projects we met through the people we met in Leipzig:

Breaking the spell - <https://www.muenchner-kammerspiele.de/en/14154-breaking-the-spell>

(visiting countries to research and be in dialogue, it supports the relation between city theaters and individuals artists);

UT Connewitz: <https://utconnewitz.de/> (shared agenda of events);

You are warmly invited: <https://www.youarewarmlyinvited.com/> (shared knowledge between artists).

Last but not least: I didn't expect Leipzig was such a green city, and that so many cats live in the streets and in the buildings.

Silvia Albanese TIR Danza