POWER OF KINESTHETIC LEARNING



Slovenj Gradec Slovenia

September 5 - 13, 2015



- What do you think about when you are not HERE?
- What is the difference between speed and rush?
- What does rush do to movement quality and the connection in the group?
- What can be done to stop the rush?
- What makes you physically insecure in the group?
- How do you survive?
- How do you notice if somebody in the group does not feel safe?
- What is the task of leader? What is the task of follower?
- What do you do to support the group?



These are just some of the questions that were given for reflection to participants of the training course "Power of Kinesthetic Learning" by one of the trainers, choreographer and contemporary dance teacher, Ilze Zirina. They are here on the very top of the report because the questions came after seemingly simple movement tasks and they were directly linked to the tasks. Although they were never designed to be philosophical rhetoric questions, they sound like that. This reminds us that world lies in the sand grain. Especially once we start seeing the world in its wholeness of body-mind-space-time-eternity... And just through those questions it becomes obvious how much common ground contemporary dance and non-formal learning has. This is why exactly those two fields were brought together and explored during the training course.

Report is written by **Inta Balode** (Latvia). **Inta** is a Latvian dance critic and since 2011 the editor of DANCE.LV Journal - <u>www.journal.dance.lv</u>.

Introduction

It was really a pleasure to be the reporter of the training course "Power of Kinesthetic Learning" taking place in Slovenj Gradec, Slovenija from September 5 till 13, 2015. Before going to Slovenia I was thinking about the best ways to report about the event. I could follow the day to day agenda and tell about tasks, exercises, day to day comments in circle after activities. But it did not seem the correct way because I am involved with contemporary dance for more than 10 years and I know that there is almost no way to explain the exercise, you better stop talking, do it, experience and then share.

I realized that actually what fascinates me most in programs where I have worked with youth workers are people themselves – their stories, their life choices, motivations, passions, histories. So even before arriving to Slovenj Gradec I knew that I will not report on program in some abstract way but I will talk to people to see who they are in their minds and also bodies, why they are here, what is changing / happening while there are here and what is their experience. So imagine my joy when already on the first night I realized that the group of people is so diverse and interesting. Now I got in trouble of choosing whom to talk to because there is no way to get deeper insight into each person from group of more than 20 people just during one week. I chose strategy of talking to people also because of attempt to resist superficiality that rules our worlds quite often, including my own life. This is a slight standing against trends of quantity over quality, numbers and statistics over profound change of one person. I believe that this one person is the only chance to change the world for better.



Structure of the report

<u>The report has three parts</u>. First one includes portraits of 8 participants of the project and also some images. Second part has short responses from other participants, where they name top 3 things/experiences/exercises they had during the training course. Last but definitely not least part contains answers to my questions by trainers of the course - **Ieva Grundsteine** and **Ilze Zirina**.

Part 1

My working method in Slovenj Gradec to create Part 1 was as follows (as it always happens with some exceptions):

<u>Step 1</u>. Every morning I entered space together with participants, sometimes took part in few exercises but already from the very first moment was making my choice who will be people I would like to get to know more about today. Partly reasons were purely intuitive, though I was thinking a bit about regional, gender and age balance. Sometimes I consciously choose easy path, i.e., following people I have been in contact already. Sometimes I chose somebody I didn't know anything about yet. Sometimes I followed coincidences. Anyway since morning till evening I had my eye, my camera and my thoughts on one or two people from the group.

<u>Step 2</u>. During first coffee break I approached my "client" and asked for a short conversation which I opened up with a question "What do you do in your life and why?" The following questions were influenced by answers of "the client". Also I tried not to take any notes during this conversation, to see it as short moment of small talk about life. What comes up comes, no worries if this is not all life. The length of conversation was not more than 10 -15 minutes.

<u>Step 3</u>. During lunch break or later I approached "the client" again but now with the notebook. And the opening question was "What are the exercises that had most impact on you; you liked most; you did not like or you did not get the point? What stayed with you?" The length of conversation was not more than 10 -15 minutes.

<u>Step 4</u>. I collected all the data I had, i.e., my thoughts and observations about the person, photos and videos taken, memory from conversation without notes, notes I took, statements people made, sometimes even some thoughts other participants expressed.

<u>Step 5</u>. Out of everything I had collected I wrote a short text, profile story of the person including both general things and opinions, and also comments on particular exercises during the training course.

<u>Step 6</u>. I e-mailed texts to my "clients" to ask whether there are no serious mistakes or something that shouldn't be published. Once they confirmed texts, they were ready to go.

Here they are!

P.S. Stories are listed in alphabetic order according to person's name.

ALEŠ GANGL (Slovenj Gradec, Slovenia)

Overcoming body-mind dualism is real

It is time for Aleš! When I read participants' applications, his story was the most interesting for me – philosopher, artist, interested in body-mind problem. What can be more curious for me as a dance critic coming from theoretical background, finding new mode of living through bringing mind and body together when doing contemporary dance and always keeping that little philosophical look at everything including dance. Still the project was not about me, so I was resisting my personal curiosity and probably this is why Aleš became my "client" only on the last day.

I already had a feeling that I know him quite well. I have seen how creative Ales is, how deep and special perspectives he has on things, how curious and open minded, and thirsty he is to get to know more about new things. He is also a great team player, people want to be around him and this is not based on some loud charisma or cheap jokes but on more subtle things as being good conversation partner and just being a nice person to be with. Aleš is also physically active and curious about movement. When he says he is interested in philosophy overcoming body and mind dualism those are not only words, he does it in his reality himself.

Aleš studied philosophy, now he is producing music and is also doing administrative work for a company of digital media. They do video mapping, it means producing large scale videos on the facades of buildings that play with changing building through making it to collapse, change, move through the use of videos. Aleš says it is big business for a while.

He has two music bands, one for longer time, one for not so long. Bands are supported by local community. One of them has 10 people and they also use body painting in it. Another band is new one, it is called "Philo" and this is a smaller underground band, it exists for a year only. And it has a nice image picture that we see also on T-shirt of the boss of the band.

Aleš says that **philosophy gives deeper insight on all levels even if things don't seem connected**. He wanted his lyrics to have philosophy spirit this is largely why he chose to study this field. Aleš thought it would be cool to have more layers in his lyrics. At the same time **he doesn't want it to be incomprehensible**. He says that he likes philosophy but he doesn't like stereotype about philosophers mostly meaning that they always live in their own world.



Aleš is also very interested in teaching, actually he is philosophy teacher. He is searching for teaching job but he knows that most likely there will be no way to find it in philosophy. He is also writing news for the local newspaper. His writings got quite popular after his text on a happening that took place in town. He writes something every month.

Even if all mentioned things sound a lot already besides that Aleš is also cofounder MAD (alternative youth association) where he organizes music events, leads workshops and even does Plato readings. When I ask why Aleš decided to take part in the training course I got to know about another huge project he is working on. Within digital media organization he works for they are developing video mapping about dance. His interest in dance is nicely explained in the application form: *I have always* admired and have always been interested in dance as modern and universal celebration ritual and therapeutic tool.

The dance mapping project lasts for a year already and it will include many kinds of dances projected on building – from swing and ballet to pole dancing and folk, all together around 20-30 different dances. And they will be accompanied by music of band Aleš runs. Most of the performers for videos were local dancers, folklore group was from Ljubljana. The overall message of the work will be about dialectics of archaic and civilized, in a way they are **disconnecting development and beauty from dances** they are working with.

Ales says it is a pity that there will be no contemporary dance, it is very interesting, but he did not know it before. What it is what he find interesting in contemporary dance? It is not so beautiful; it is weird in a way. And it has its unique quality. Aleš likes different stuff in different contexts. Before this training course he had stereotypical image about contemporary dance. At the same time it sounds that he has always been very close to contemporary dance philosophy – he includes performance in concerts with his band; he moves a lot, he always encourage people to find their own movement, very often - the weirdest way possible. Aleš is very much interested in the variety of the forms of expression.



When we get to the question about his dialog with his own body, Ales says that he wants to quit smoking, but otherwise he lives healthy. He accepts himself as he is; he would choose to be as he is. In childhood he had some role models. but now not any more. He was not very sporty guy - more a book guy. After getting to know Nietzsche's philosophy that put the body in front, it changed. Body and mind dualism was largely cancelled and he got connected to his body. Aleš enjoys hiking and running. In his application form he wrote: I believe physical activities are crucial for better learning and general development of any being, therefore attempts and *methods which unite both aspects of body* and mind will be practically used in my career as a teacher, musician and artist.

Feedback on some of the exercises

Aleš says he loved a lot of exercises. The most challenging ones were the ones including stretching, he could not do them. He says that it is a result of the fact that he runs a lot but doesn't stretch. He would like to do more stretching.

Aleš got here his first ideas about contemporary dance. **He is impressed about how clever it can be, and how much variety it has**. He says that in video presentations he saw the most shocking dances he has ever seen - **not beautiful, not pleasing, but very strong**.

He also enjoyed red strings exercise and labyrinth a lot; this was about more subtle kind of movement. None of exercises was boring. At times he was thinking that they are rehearsing for a result, but then he understood that this is a way to leads into the task. He was watching trainers form the point of view of pedagogy – their methods, how they work. Aleš says that **both Ieva and Ilze are great educators, they put the group together.**

Aleš is sure that he will use the acquired experience in his performance with music bands; he will also use some visual ideas. If he will have possibility to lead a group of young people or youth workers, which he really hopes for, he will use knowledge also there. Aleš has been also thinking a lot about links to everyday life, **most of the exercises were dealing so much with the moment of communication**. The training course was very useful to him.





ANDRAŽ ROGER (Dravograd, Slovenia)

Everything you do, you it for yourself

Andraž is a local guy and as it is for locals usually they get involved in more things than other participants. He helps with sound, he covers lights in the dark room, and he does translation from English to Slovenian for text for the public performance. It is obvious that Andraž likes to help. He even drives Elena to Graz very late in the night so she doesn't have to take a bus in the afternoon and miss the whole final evening. Elena cried when she got to know she will have chance to stay. Andraž says this is nothing special, besides he likes to drive and he has used to that.

Adraž likes things to be done well; this is why often he chooses to work alone, and this helps him to be sure that all is thought about. Because of trying to always do well, he feels bad if not all happens perfectly. During the public presentation he switched on wrong music, he immediately realized that and switched it off again. It was totally human situation as there were no rehearsals and that day he was responsible for too many things. Still he felt really bad about that. When he asked me if the mistake was very serious. I used my honest critic's response which is not very calming and explained what exactly his mistake destroyed. I did not feel very happy afterwards as well.

Anyway this all is to say that despite the fact that in the beginning it was obvious that the situations in the training course are quite unusual for Andraž he did a lot, helped a lot, helped with enthusiasm and he also changed a lot during a week - got more open, talkative and I got to know that he also has very nice sense of humor.

Andraž studies electric engineering, but he likes many things in science – mathematics, psychology, biology. He is also involved in youth work in Slovenj Gradec, he has been doing karate for several years and he rides a motobike.

I believe this has nothing to do with karate but Andraž says that he always tries to imagine the most negative thing that might happen. That is why he doesn't really want new things. I ask why he decided to take part in the training once he doesn't want new things so much. He says that he was curious about what it will be. When Andraž read about the course, he was thinking about psychokinesis because he did not know what is hiding under "kinesthetic". He also likes doing things, he likes learning by doing and he saw this type of training also as a relaxation for his **mind** which is boiling most of the time.



The mind is to blame for the resistance that is present almost in every new

thing Andraž meets. Also during this course he kept asking himself - how do I do this, where do I put my hands? Then he watched others and saw that he is actually not doing so badly and it gets better. Andraž does watch people also because he "profilizes people", i.e., he thinks about that their role is, what are the choices they make. Getting to know people starts form that and for Andraž sense of humor is very important.

As regards Andraž's relations with his own body he has been running, jumping, doing everything, he can do everything. And he is very often the best. He doesn't think much about this, he doesn't question and still he is often the best. All was easy for him, his motoric, body condition is good. Andraž thinks that may be this is because of his parents. When he went running, his father ran behind him. No, there was no forcing at all. The way of rising could be described as - you know yourself what you have to do; we trust you, we trust that you know what you do. And everything you do, you it for yourself. Other kids got rewards for learning well or doing well sports, he did not. No rewards, because it is for myself. At the same time Andraž got things he really wanted to have, but it took time because his parents made sure he really wants it and it is not just a spontaneous wish.

Andraž says that he gets attached to things very much, he cannot give things away or throw them out, he thinks that everything might be useful and it often is. When he says that I imagine Andraž as crazy scientist and it turns out to be correct – he has even **built a small power plant at home that provides electricity for the second floor**.

When I ask what kind of use in his life he saw in exercises during the training course, he says it doesn't happen like that for him. When Andraž does task he doesn't always think about where he will use it. **He does basics first, builds it up and later it becomes full picture**. After that he sees how he might use it. This is the same as in school – we often ask, why do I need to know this? Only later is gets clear and makes sense.



Feedback about some of the exercises

Andraž liked labyrinth very much. It was a nice pattern, like a computer animation - seems to be coming from nowhere. There are lot of people, minds, decisions, choices - why some move at the same time, why you feel somebody, how does the graphics of it looks? Labyrinth was like mathematics, like imaginary numbers, fractals. It would be possible to study every person, every type of personality and then you could try predicting and interacting with what you predict. You watch, analyze, try to guess and act according to that. And then you see that you are actually guessing. This is a way to control people.

Andraž did not like pictures exercise after labyrinth, it felt strange, he did not do it. With other tasks there were no problems. He says he **doesn't like to expose himself**, and he is also afraid of failure. He says that you have to try when you are alone and only after that show or share it. I ask if this means that experimenting is always lonely. He says he likes to do it alone, because then he can think about all options, about everything that can happen. In groups you sometimes jump over something and remain half way.

As regards performance in public space Andraž says that may be he would do it if that wasn't his hometown. How he would see that type of event himself if he wouldn't be participant? The same as he saw it before - what the f... is this? I don't know what they do, have they lost their minds?

What would help to introduce contemporary dance to people, to help to

understand what it is and what it does? It is hard question. Perhaps that could be done through putting in the market. **Using capital and power to show, to promote it and then people would start to appreciate**.



ANNA SOBIESZCZYK (Sępólno Krajeńskie, Poland)

Dance is a cup of coffee

I meet Anna for longer talk during one of the morning walks uphill. As we are not jogging we did not get all the way up but we still took quite challenging route and had nice conversation. I start with my simple and direct question - what do you do in your life? Anna says that nothing really right now, because she is not working in school anymore and it is first time for her since high school when she doesn't have full time job. She has been teaching visual arts and religion. Anna is thinking about change, about how it will be to change, she is thinking about moving to Italy.

I will not pretend and say straight ahead that Anna has visible difference from other participants – her left arm ends slightly below elbow, she was born like that. When I see her for the first time, I immediately think about the fact how special it is to have somebody different in a group working on kinesthetic issues. It suddenly adds special understanding of the uniqueness of each body.

I ask Anna how it was to be a teacher in a school having arm as she has. She tells happily how nice children always were to her; they were helping all the time. It was so sweet when they took care and even sometimes said that her arm is so cute, tad it looks even nicer than "a regular arm". I can fully agree, it is so amazing how much Anna can do herself, it reminds one once again that in helping relationship it is not so clear who is helping whom.

I ask Anna how she feels when she gets offered help. I ask that because I have heard that offer of help feels and is a form of discrimination, it can make feel disabled even if a person has learned to live perfectly fine. Anna says that she feels good with accepting help, and to explain that she tells story about a situation in grocery store. She was paying at the register and behind her in a cue a couple was arguing. At the same time man started to help Anna packing her things, once women noticed that she started crying and it seemed that the argument is over. This is why Anna lets people to help her, because may be they need that.



It is also quite unusual story when Anna tells how at age 18 she refused to wear prosthesis which was part of her life till then. Exactly at a time when her mother was so happy that Anna is not growing anymore and now there will be no need for new prosthesis each year, so it means they will be able to get the one which is better and is functional. This is when her daughter says - no, mom, it is enough; I will not wear it anymore. It was quite hard for her mother and in the beginning also quite tricky for Anna to get used to how people look at her. But in general she says she was quite lucky, nobody ever laughed at her, most people just ask about what happened to her arm. I believe this is largely because of the fact that Anna is so open hearted person that makes it easy for people to engage directly. During the training course I notice her honesty a lot and not only in being happy, excited and grateful but also when asking, doubting, feeling tired. I see her as an example of how to be in the world and do it in a way so you are in harmony with both yourself and people around you.

Anna tells that she has done some dancing before but not so much. I am surprised because the way she moves seems so smooth as if she has been moving a lot. Probably this is because Anna feels great here and also because she dances for herself quite a lot when she gets inspired from music. Dance for Anna is a cup of coffee when she is tired, in bad mood, she changes that through dance. In one of the discussions Anna is laughing that now through getting to know more about dance she has lost her virginity and asks herself – will I dance as I did without thinking before?





Even if our conversation was quite a lot about body issues already I still ask about it once again not to be discriminative. Anna says that she has scoliosis, this is because one arm is heavier than another. The best thing for that is swimming, which is her favorite sports. Anna warmly suggests it to me because I also share my scoliosis story once we are talking about that.

Anna is actively involved in organization called "Dorośli – Dzieciom" ("Adults for Children"). She is volunteer and mentor there and is involved both in administrative work and in creativity stimulation activities such as music, photo, painting, movies, theater and other lessons for teenagers, including the ones with disabilities.

As regards her future plans Anna is thinking if she can be a facilitator. In a way she has some experience already because while working is school she was using both formal and non-formal education methods.

Feedback about some of the exercises

Her feedback about exercises Anna starts with telling that discovering of the middle point in the body changed her perception a lot. She started seeing it on other people, in everyone around her. The exercises were intense but she enjoyed them.

Exercise in a row was a pearl for Anna – moving together without looking, following person next to you, it felt great. And she also noticed this principle later in some of the performance videos, she saw how well it works. It is about **controlling the situation through the kinesthetic** **sense**, keeping together the situation through that. It was a revelation for Anna. She saw a strong link of contemporary dance with life also when watching dance videos. She has not been watching this kind of performances before. It was very interesting to recognize exercise they did during the training course and she also loved the variety in choreography – objects, theatrical elements, solos, different use of music.

Anna would use of the exercises in her work but not all of them, because some of them can be also quite dangerous, she would not dare to do them on herself. Anna liked the energy of the group. **She liked the freedom that you can choose not to participate if you don't want, but people chose to participate.**



IGOR KRSTIĆ (Tenja, Croatia)

Most beautiful work is working with kids

I remember Igor during the pictures exercise in town. It seemed that he has never ending imagination, he found potential of story in every detail, every corner, traffic sign, everywhere. Most of this with very special sense of humor. On other hand I also got to know Igor as extremely serious, dedicated, and at times even fanatic in trying to achieve his goal, to transfer his idea and message. I am sure all participants remember Igor teaching Croatian dance in intercultural night. He did manage to stage an excerpt from huge opera show! Despite challenges Igor experiences because of his idealism he never got visibly emotional or angry, he just kept going. Doing is believing.

Igor comes from a small town. His main physical activity for 8 years has been capoeira. He was doing very well at it, he taught both children and adults, but he now took a break to see how to proceed and entered college to become primary school teacher. He likes to be physical a lot but he is also interested in thinking, analyzing of movement, understanding it more.

As regards Igor's experience with dance, he started dancing several years ago. First there were urban dances, then modern, ballet, contemporary. He likes dance a lot, but not so much very formal types of it, he finds contemporary dance more interesting. Igor has also danced for theater productions at the National Theater. In the beginning he had very wrong perception about dance – he wanted to be good, to be admired and to show out. But soon he quit that state. Dance has a special value, because **dance puts you in the situations where you have to explore yourself, it is a battle trying to react in each situation, in many different ones. And no choice is wrong. Dance helps to learn choices in life.** Dance is much different for him now, much deeper than before. Any dance is special in its own way. Dance in theater is spreading culture of dance. Best dance is when people go out to relax, dance, like it, feel good in this moment.





Igor has always been sporty, fit guy, he cannot think about any special issues he has in relationship with his body. Before school he didn't dance or do sports, because it was during the time of war. But in school he started doing sports, went to track and field competitions in running and other disciplines. Igor says he has been doing more individual sports. It is not because he chose to: he likes group sports and group activities very much and he think it's a great way of learning, though he hasn't had too many opportunities in practicing group sports. At times when he was, Igor's experiences in group sports weren't so good because of a lot of incomprehension and verbal fights instead of enjoying the process. In individual sports you are going on your own and you can focus yourself more on self-improvement. If you make mistake, responsibility is yours and you are aware of it - in team you can escape from it.

I am asking if he got bored from capoeira and this is why he is searching for something new. No he is not, he just likes the variety and intensity of different tasks within non-formal education trainings. He says he likes to think. At the same time Igor feels like doing also very physical exercises, hard things, sweating. If he can and wants to, why not to do that, but **it is important for him to have variety, to understand more**.

Igor says that besides sports he also likes warm weather and travelling. But then he says that most beautiful work is working with kids. And this is not something many people would say. So I asked why he said that and what he means by that. Igor says that it is very hard and responsible, but there is also the biggest possible satisfaction and reward. One would never become rich in that job but **when working with kids you are rich every day**. Igor is ready to speak a lot about what it means to work with a group of kids. He speaks about dynamics, about knowing the group well and using it for good. He tells that sometimes you have to use authority and it is important to keep it. You know what happens in group, you know why he did what he did and you can change it.

I like a lot one of the sentences Igor wrote in his application form for the training course: "First, I want to see what this seminar means to me and then see how I can present this experience to others". It tells a lot about him as a person and teacher. There will be no superficial approaching to anything.





Feedback about some of the exercises

Igor begins with telling about exercise when the task was to feel the other person by hand on the center of the body. He liked the point of it. He also liked the process of introducing this exercise - let's start with easy one and then progress step by step and develop further. At the last step of exercise when from partners in couple one was moving up and another one down, when they were changing levels all the time – this is when he realized that everyone can dance. It was a proof of that idea. If you film and then watch, there is no doubt – yes, everyone can dance!

When talking about a day in the mountains Igor says that it was a very special day for him. He liked part where the group was taking Indian path. It was nice to see how every person is important and valuable. It was first time he was doing this type of exercise. It is not about competition but cooperation – Igor likes this type of exercises. And in general he likes how all activities are releasing nice energy, how different cultures, languages function as a group.

When we are talking about labyrinth exercise, Igor says that it didn't have any meaning for him and he felt little confused. He didn't know what he had to do, he felt lost in this situation and he thinks others felt the same. Igor knows there are this kind of improvisation exercises, but there was something missing and he didn't know what. He didn't have motivation to continue.

Conversation takes place before performance in public space so I ask Igor

for his opinion about performing out on the street. He says that there should be some preparation to meet public and pedestrians. If we do something people don't understand, the message doesn't have power. It is good to make a performance, but in case only we understand what we are doing this is not sending the message in a right way. People will be confused. Of course, we can say that we don't care, but we present dance culture, we meet people for the first time. It should be something nice, not so confusing. Igor says that he is not against showing the other side as well but not during the first time you meet people you don't know.

Igor liked 25 min long activities they were creating in groups. He discovered a lot about himself. He realized that during the process every word and sentence can influence the whole thing, the way of thinking.



MYRTO PAPAIOANNOU

A teacher against competition and racism

Myrto works in primary school. Funny enough she says she doesn't do it only because of money. In Latvia we would not think teachers work for money because salaries are so low. It turns out that in Greece it is even more tricky to be a teacher because for most of them contract is just for nine months, then there is three month unemployment leave during which they earn very little and try to find new place for the next year. Usually teachers apply for several places to be sure they get a job, so they never know in advance in which part of the country they will live for next 9 months. Quite wild!

Myrto believes it is possible to change society only from young people, because old ones are corrupt and teach the same habits and patterns to kids. She says that conditions in school system are bad, it is quite a big mess, but it is good that nobody really controls her. So it is possible to bring new teaching methods in her classes with children. She sees nonformal training as a very important tool in fight against competition which is so strong. Myrto does different kind of things with kids she is teaching – they play theater, do fiestas and not only during but after lessons as well.

When asked about failures at her work as a teacher she remembers a boy who got raped at early age and after that his parents let him do whatever he wanted and did not force him to do anything. At the end at age of 10 he still did not know how to write, at the same time he got all he wanted. His parents did not realize that they are not helping him. Myrto was trying to find a way to approach him, she asked school psychologist for advice, even blamed herself little bit for not succeeding. Unfortunately it seemed to be too late and impossible for a teacher to fix what has been done before. In many of activities she has been doing one of the most important themes was fight against racism.





It is very interesting to listen to Myrto talking about working in school, there is this nice combination of non-formal ideology which is so important for her to make a change in attitudes. On the other hand there is dealing with reality, with practical and ideological obstacles and old teaching methods where quite often teacher has to think about keeping authority and showing power.

This fall Myrto will start her studies in master program in sociology and human rights, her topic is history of racism in Europe. The theme bothers her a lot, that's why she decided to study it deeper.

Myrto has always danced different kind of dances, she also does sports and she even is a football referee. What she is experiencing during the training course is different kind of movement where you have to think. She likes it as well, she has done something similar in theater trainings but not so much. In this type of learning you have to think a lot about what is your relation to other people. It really helps to learn not to think only about yourself but also to collaborate and not to compete.

Myrto tells that in Greece there is no access to contemporary dance. You have to be very good and go and study it professionally or if you don't do that you have to pay really a lot for classes. She strongly believes that people have to get to know it, to explore the possibilities it offers. Not so long ago she saw a performance by DV8 Physical Theater, shay says that even they didn't tell what it is about, she I understood it all. Also when she gets to know that I am a dance critic she is very surprised because, as she says, in Greece **critics don't talk to people**.

When Myrto talks about her own body she says that she has always moved and danced, the only time it was not going so well was worked in Crete. She could find somebody only to eat or drink together, nobody did sports there, and she was the only one renting a bike. This is when she got her back pain and stiff neck. After that she started going to gym – not for fitness but to release tensions in neck.

When talking to Myrto I feel her energy and beliefs strongly – she knows not everything is perfect is Greece, she sees what can be done, she sees the potential to change the world in change of working methods with young people. This can bring much more group awareness into the world and replace individual competitive environment with group collaborations.



Feedback about some of the exercises

Myrto's favorite exercise from the ones we are talking about was Indian path. It was a group mission and she loved it despite she did not expect that. The group really functioned as a group for all 100 %. People were really helping each other not to fall, it gave good mood about it, very energetic. This was pure group thing.

When talking about dancing in the dark Myrto says that is was not bad for her, but not interesting. She was somehow expecting more from the dark room, to be it more fascinating, to have a task to accomplish or something like that. This was quite common for her, because **she expresses herself also in light**. It would be interesting for shorter time, some 20 minutes, for example.

Myrto was fascinated by the presentations of the activities. Thinking about priorities, thinking about many kinds of group works, how to show activities to people in a way so they understand, so they want to join. It was a good challenge and gave a lot of food for thought. Important conclusion is that **if you want to succeed you have to connect with the group**, not working with one leader. Even if quite simple, it was still like developing the whole project.

As regards body experience Myrto tells that when she dances she uses rhythm. Here they used inside power and expression. It was not easy all the time, because Myrto thinks she is not very fit. But in general she liked exercises a lot, especially because she has problems with her back, it hurts but after during exercises it feels better.

She also liked the way movement exercises were offered – it was not strict, it was very good way.

When I think about Myrto's presence in a group I would say that she was the one who was always there, actively present and ready to act, to help, to engage, to talk about it, to analyze and to heal tensions with happy laugh.





ONDŘEJ NOVÝ (Kaplice, Česká Republika)

Making impossible possible

When Ondrej saw that I am taking pictures with my cell phone he came up to me and offered cameras he has with him. Just like that, because he saw things can be done better and he saw a way to help. Still, as you seem, I mostly kept using my phone, but that's another story.

I keep seeing Ondrej's simple and very grownup attitude throughout the entire training course. On one hand he is one of the most smiling and having fun people in the group; on other hand he does everything with so much awareness, not a sign of flying over as it sometimes happen at young age when you are full of energy.

Ondrej is in high school, but he doesn't like it very much. He was too lazy to do something else but if he would need to choose now he would do differently. Still his future plans are clear – he will study animation in Prague or Pilsen. Ondrej is passionate about animation, he shares some of his works with us, and it is quite amazing how much patience this asks. But I see that the possibility to build new worlds is stronger. Ondrej says that he really likes that it is possible to do what you cannot do in film.

He is also involved in youth work, officially he is not volunteer and he is also not employed, but he helps his organization during seminars, drives participants and also teaches animation.

The organization he is helping sent him to this training course and he really likes that it is something different. In general he likes more individual movement, also slower movement, but usually he chooses to be with a group, to be with friends. Ondrej does longboarding, he plays volleyball and goes rock climbing for challenge. He was doing Tai Chi for a while, and even if he was skeptical from the beginning after experiencing how energy lifted his hands he believes that it works. Still now he chooses volleyball instead of Tai Chi. He says that **he can do slower things when he will be older**, now he goes for active ones.

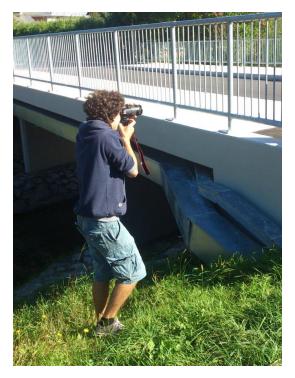
When asked about relationship with his own body, Ondrej says that they are good. Though he has a disability – one side of his body is weaker. When I cannot believe that after seeing how he moves and what he can do, he says that he was also not aware of that till age of 13 but it is even visible that muscles on side are smaller. Doctors were even wondering how he can walk when it got discovered. He doesn't feel it very much, just slightly, for example he would feel one leg more after running.



Ondrej's hobby is also techno dance - he enjoys free, random movement in front of big speakers giving vibrations. It refreshes him. There is an interesting relationship with this dance and Tai Chi where he operate with energy, both experiences are good. As I have heard from other people already about one more radical movement experience Ondrej has I go on and ask. What about walking on hot coal? Yes, he has done it, it is trance experience for which you prepare mentally. They do it with his family once a year. This year he could even dance a little bit. It is very important not to look down, it is the same thing as during the Indian path exercise group did during the training. This is important experience because it is about overcoming something that has been told as impossible. There are so much of those imperatives around - don't do this, don't do that, otherwise something something bad will happen.

Feedback about some of the exercises

Ondrej comments exercises by saying that he **liked a lot general principles – feeling the other; feeling without seeing** etc. He is absolutely happy about dancing in the dark evening. He says that it is totally his wave. He spent most of the time in front of the speakers and mostly alone. At times he danced with somebody, but then turned into being a soloist. This was much more intensive experience than anything else. In the dark, you can do whatever you want to and not feel embarrassed. In discos he still tries to look somehow within the accepted frame mostly because of friends. This is quite I surprise for me hearing Ondrej talking about embarrassment, I would never guess he thinks about that because his way of being and acting seems so pure, close to nature, not spoiled by the modes of presentation. I ask him if he had similar feeling during some of the exercises. He says that may be during some but not much. Some exercises felt little too long.





Ondrej says he feels more stretched, more free now. Though he feels some stuck *chi* in his neck, this could be because of dancing in the dark when he shook his head quite a lot.

As it is getting close to the public event in the city I asked Ondrej's opinion about performing in public space. He says that he doesn't mind doing that but he thinks **it could be disturbing for people**. But, of course, we will do it anyway. People are often too closed-minded to accept. They would think we are high. In his town this is the usual reaction – if people do something different they must be high.

Ondrej says that after the training course experienced feelings and memories will stay with him. And he will also definitely use some of the activities when working with children. Ondrej wants to try diamond exercise with his friends.

We also talked about the relationship of animation and movement, about how much patience and analysis is needed in both of them. Ondrej shows some of his works, saying that they are not so good and he would do differently now. Still for my eye they look amazing, I don't see so much technical details but I really appreciate ideas, good sense of humor and imagination in playing with everyday things and situation on the world of animation where the only limit is imagination.







SANTA SAKELA Being together is the only way

Santa is one of my very first "clients" this is how I start calling people whom I choose to interview. The choice is quite random, but maybe I noticed Santa because she carried out a bug who was lost in our working space. And even more because of her careful listening to the partner in some of the exercises on the first day. She was there, totally present, listening carefully and being among people with warm inner smile. At the same time caring, tolerance and peace has nothing to do with sleepy and always agreeing position. At times Santa spoke up very clearly and articulate, and took clear and strong position.

Santa studied economics and work in the call center of one of the biggest banks in Latvia. She likes her job. In her free time she is passionate about hiking, ice skating and other outdoor activities. She is also active in youth organization "Jaunie Vanagi" organizing and taking part in national and international projects dealing with topics as democracy, antiracism, children rights, green movement, team work etc. This is a second year Santa is international projects coordinator. She has played improvisation theatre but she almost does not have any dance experience.

Santa believes that **body language is the most powerful "ice breaker"**, she has experienced how much moves of the bodies can connect people who don't know each other. In future she wants to gain more knowledge to start organizing her own international projects and she thinks to include more actions with kinesthetic learning.





Santa hasn't had any special issues with her body. The only thing was adding 10 kilos while she was eating wrongly during her stay in Greece. Her mother was very surprised when she saw her. Santa got fast back to normal. But when she was a child doctors didn't like her small weight. Then she started doing some sports enjoyed that and because of regular activity she added weight and things got much better. Santa has been doing lots of orientation sports. This is a great way to see your own country. This is also where she met people from her organization "Jaunie vanagi". Movement led her to youth work. Why she does youth work? Because it is cool! It is cool because you start to understand world and people much better. You grow your own tolerance a lot. Why youth not retired people? Because they would not listen to younger people yet.

Santa says she has learned tolerance to race, to sexual minorities through youth work. Tolerance comes through getting to know more, understanding, getting to know people. I am asking if movement might be next step, may be it is the next level of complexity when you can theoretically accept, for example, gays and lesbians, but being involved in physical exercises with touch and contact is another thing? Absolutely, she says, this is the same thing as with people in wheelchairs. **There is no other way to get to know people in wheelchairs as be with them.**

Santa has never danced professionally; sometimes she dances in folk club "Ala" in Riga. She is interested in what to do with a group with movement? For herself she is also very much interested in going to dance to same place where there is no must to perform in concerts.

Feedback about some of the exercises

During the training course Santa found exercises with a partner and group work as very useful. She stresses eye contact within a group, it is really needed and she thinks that she is not the one who is very good with that. She has to practice. Santa also liked "facebook game" a lot – it was interesting to create people's profiles together instead of trying to guess something people whom we really don't know.



Santa could not find the deep thought behind the photo making exercise. It was good for team work and team building but it was somehow too long even if with lots of fun. She also tells about how she misunderstood one of the movement tasks - she thought palm should lead not shoulder. Movement exercises are interesting and open up new things and asks to pay attention to different things. As in the one with red strings she was thinking that strings can break any moment. In general it is all very much about group dynamics outside the **comfort zone**: the surface covered with small stones was tricky for feet.

Santa feels like taking many exercises back home with her - group work on uneven uncomfortable surface, the task of rolling down together with a partner, also sun salutes were nice. In general Santa felt safe during exercises because she has being doing tasks with eyes closed, it was within the comfort zone.

What was in challenge zone? Photo exercises when during long time you have to invent something new. Also leading another person with shoulder or with hand was tricky, she says she is not so deep into it, it would be good to try more, to get into it.

Santa pays a lot of attention the group dynamics. It seems to be good for her. She says one of the participants who took part in youth workers training for the first time asked if there are always so strange tasks within non-formal learning. Santa feels that she thinks about those processes in the group she never did before. This is because she is getting ready to be a trainer herself. She still has a lot of doubts is she can do that, she wants know enough before getting into actual work. Of course, it is possible to learn by doing but she doesn't want to spoil people's week. Thinking about group dynamics is new for her. She is noticing that she is really interested in choices and propositions other people have. Probably this is why she is not coming up first with her own initiatives. She wants to see others; she is getting into trainer's mood.

When asked about some most and least favorite moments during movement exercises Santa says the she really liked to learn how to let her arms fall. And she liked labyrinth experience. She doesn't like when her feet get touched, it tickles a lot no matter how hard she tries.





SAŠKA KLEMENČIČ (Maribor, Slovenia)

All life busy with understanding

Saška is my "client" of the first day. Most likely I notice her because of her peaceful look at everything that happens. She keeps little bit more distance as others, may be because she is little older or this is just the way to be in the world – first see and then jump more in.

Saška's comments and feedback on activities and exercises are always very special. She has an amazing ability to describe, analyze and categorize things. And the best about it is that this is not something abstract but comes from certain tasks and immediately is related back to life. I am sure this comes from her practice as life coach, from learning NLP, control theory and I am sure I forgot many. Here is just one example - Saškas comment on exercise with red strings which she found very interesting: *I am in* the moment, I have control. When I rush I lose control, there is no more quality. I don't feel others and myself. What is going on in me, how can I observe others? Leaders have to control themselves, and others and the situation. Followers have to control more themselves and other little bit. Every small step has a meaning!

Besides Saškas training in different "getting to know life" methods she also has a special condition since childhood which also defines a lot. Saška tells me that she has only eye since childhood. For me it was not obvious at all. She has always been very sensitive, she **started thinking about sense of life at very early age**. Saška has been dancing a lot and she loves that. She likes two kinds of dance – Latin dances and free dancing in meditation. Latin dances give her joy, makes to feel free and in meditation she feels and expresses herself, finds emotions, inner power and peace. Saška is familiar with contemporary dance in its form as free expression (she has been taking *Biodanza* and 5-*Rhytms dance classes*). Though she has not been going to see performances so much.





When Saška tells that she studied NLP, I ask the more stereotypic question I have about the method - is it to control other people? She answers that this a question of ethics. It is similar as with exercises we did today – they the same thing – leading, making to follow. With NLP technics we can manage our emotions and thoughts, to make them positive.

How to accept yourself – has always been an important question for Saška. And to answer that she uses a lot of movement for herself and also in courses she lead. Dance is communication, she sees link between people in dance and wants to explore that more. **Why dancing is better with one person than another?** How to develop that understanding in movement? What lies in the basis of those better relationships? Saška wants to work with dance teachers to explore those issues, to provide people with chance to understand how communication in movement function.

Lately Saška works more with adults but as her education is pedagogue she has worked in school for long time. During the training course she wants to complement her knowledge about movement, to see different approaches. After she could use that in work with groups.

Exercises of the first day helped her to understand that she has worked a lot with herself, to get to know herself and accept, but there is more work to be done in feeling others, feeling the group. This is very useful. Reflection about experience is very much needed, because then you can use in real life as well what you learnt. As I saw Saška keeping some distance at times I ask whether some of the exercises were too confusing and what she does in case it is like that. Her strategy when she feels shy, lost and confused is distancing herself, observing, **collecting additional information to understand**. Saška says: *I am all life busy with understanding*.

When I read Saška's application form for the training course, I realized once again why this course started to happen thanks to initiative of Ieva Grundšteine. Saška wrote: I am looking for this kind of workshop already 10 years, because I love dancing and I love coaching and I have some Ideas, how I could help people by selfdevelopment trough combination of dancing and coaching, but I always feel that I need some more knowledge; so I think, that I can get this on this seminar.



Feedback about some of the exercises

Saška tells about exercise outside on the grass where task was to lead with shoulder and follow with palm. She says that it was interesting to follow herself and the other at the same time. She was observing how focus was changing. It was difficult to keep concentration on both. It made to think about **making harmony simultaneously with myself and other one**. How to make it smooth? It is possible to do the task well but it needs training.

During the hugging exercise Saška did not want to think even if she usually likes to think a lot. She did not need it today. As time went, she felt more comfortable and then she could start thinking again.

Taking pictures task in the city was very creative and fun. It was dealing with a questions - how can you see yourself? How creative you are? Some parts of your nature can come out in this task.

As regards future Saška says that she could use most of the exercises in her work. She is doing workshops for youth and adults for personal development and self-expression trough dancing and she has also been doing mental coaching with young sports dancers. She is doing some similar things already, especially games for trust. Saška sees a lot of potential in exercises, they develop sense about self and others discover borders.







Part 2

My working method to create Part 2 was as follows (as it always happens with some exceptions): on the last night and departure morning of the training course I approached participants with whom I haven't had longer conversations. I gave them a small chocolate with Riga photo on it and said that I am sorry I couldn't interview everybody. Then I asked if they wouldn't mind sharing their TOP 3 events / exercises / thoughts / jokes / experiences etc. from their time here.

As regards pictures – the double portraits came out form one of the days of training course where participants were both in performing and watching roles, so the images represent their faces of watching and being watch. I know that not everybody were happy about how they look in close-ups, but as found all the faces beautiful and special I decided to put them here. But as the training course was not about heads only but more about the full body, there are also some where it is possible to see more or less the whole person.

Here they are!

P.S. Answers are listed in alphabetic order according to person's name.



DIMITRA SOTIRAKI (Thessaloniki, Greece)

- 1. Fun and new experience of stepping out of comfort zone.
- 2. Felt like home. One of the best projects.
- 3. Wish to stay in touch.







ELENA ČISTJAK (Riga, Latvia)

- 1. Following gives more to a person than leading.
- 2. In past music was the one that gave dance to me. Now it could also be silence and actually you are getting energy from a partner. Selfdiscovery.
- 3. I met several very bright personalities I would like to continue communication with for longer time because people like that if they would stay longer can change my life. But I also know that I will not continue reflecting, it would happen if we would share everyday thoughts. Now we met and we go further. If we would stay together that would help to develop.





EVANGELOS PAPADIMITRIOU (Komotini, Greece)

- 1. Flexibility in the body would like to work on that more with Ilze.
- 2. I liked a lot pictures exercise.
- 3. Teamwork in families and other group work.





IGOR NIEMYJSKI (Sępólno Krajeńskie, Poland)

 What will stay with me are thoughts about people's behavior, cooperation and various personalities. I like to observe, compare with other people I already know or I will meet in the future, and to discuss with my parents who work with various people. I take advice from them.

- 2. I really liked soundtrack of the training, especially one song played time to time by Ilze. It was so emotional for me; that confirmed once again that electronic music also have influence on people. A lot of people claim that electronic music isn't real, that it is made on the computer and can't touch emotions. I know it's possible and I will spread a word about it.
- 3. Creativity. I am always so happy when I have chance to be surrounded by such creative people. They give me power to pay attention to my dreams and not to forget about them.





INDRA KRĒGERE (Tukums, Latvija)

- 1. Dancing in the dark.
- 2. Performance at the church, except games.
- 3. All games.







JAKA CESAR (Slovenj Gradec, Slovenia)

- 1. All the evenings with group, making new friends.
- 2. Adrenalin park on the mountain and especially swing.
- 3. Archers' joke told by Renaud "I am Robin Hood. I am Wilhelm Tell. I am sorry."





MARIJA HEFER (Čepin, Croatia)

- 1. Hiking.
- 2. The late night hanging out, playing games.
- 3. Meeting interesting people.





MARKÉTA KÖSSLOVÁ (České Budějovice, Czech Republic)

- 1. People around me
- 2. Labyrinth
- 3. Ilze's quote: "If you wait for invitation, you lose your own path"







MICHEL RENAUD (Strasbourg, France)

- 1. Ilze's morning exercises.
- 2. People here my favorite thing always is enjoying moments with people.
- Too little time on eco-farm, I enjoyed it a lot.





PAOLO ZUCCHI (Milano, Italy)

- 1. Dancing can integrate different cultures.
- 2. In non-formal learning you can learn more that in formal.
- 3. Ice-breaking is important and it was done very well.

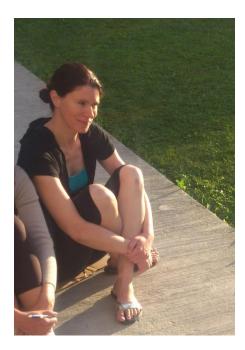




SABINA RABZELJ (Krmelj, Slovenia)

- 1. To discover my new awareness of myself. To be more aware of me and others; do things together. To be in the moment. There was so strong connection as there was no life before.
- 2. To make a street performance. Fantastic experience.
- 3. To have crazy games in good sense. So much connected through this. All the program.





SINTIJA ŽĪGURE (Rīga, Latvija)

- 1. Performance in the city center, labyrinth at the church, relationship between church and people, I felt in it for all 100 %.
- 2. Dancing in the dark.
- 3. Last day of the project form morning till evening.





Part 3

My working method to create Part 3 was as follows: after we returned home I emailed the same questions to both of the trainers - **Ieva Grundšteine** and **Ilze Zīriņa**. So despite the fact that both of them have different profession – Ilze is chorographer, dancer and teacher and Ieva is non-formal education expert, trainer and facilitator for youth workers – they had exactly the same questions. I hope their answers explains why the collaboration between contemporary dance and non-formal learning is so successful and mutually enriching.

Here they are! Ieva on the left; Ilze on the right.



IEVA GRUNDŠTEINE (Riga, Latvia) and ILZE ZĪRIŅA (Rauna, Latvia)

Could you share your Top 3 of moments, situations, exercises, off-schedule events during the training course? Moments when you said "yes, yes, yes!" And maybe you thought that this is something to remember for future, this is to be used because it works just great.

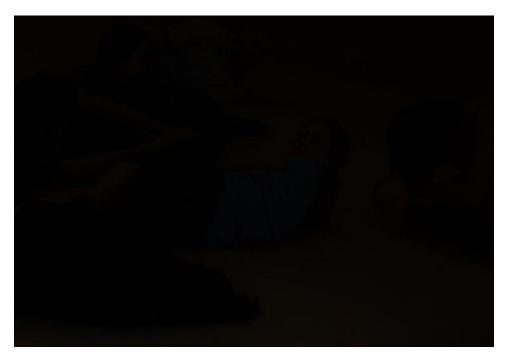
IEVA:

- Dancing in the Dark I definitely want to repeat the idea (even with the same playlist) for other projects.
- The farewell evening organized by participants it was very moving in many senses.
- The part, where the participants created their own activities involving movement/dance.

ILZE:

- It is possible during short time to take people away from personal, emotional and suspicious attitudes toward touch.
- Darkness reveals truth more than light and details in the dark become crystal-clear. For the next times to come it would be worth working on complete darkness, in order to get demons closer.
- Movement quality is not to be learnt only in studio and through movement phrases. Even not through improvisation. Things like respect for detail, persistence, ability to listen to the partner, ability to stay TILL THE END, coordination, memory can be learned not only while playing with friends but also during everyday routine. We just have to be aware of that.

I would also remind that the above mentioned conclusions came just from the experience in Slovenia. In order to recognize them as functioning weapons the first two need to be tried again and again.



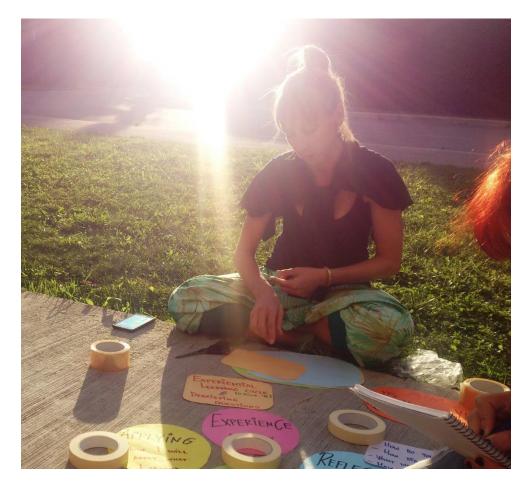
What it is what gives you the biggest satisfaction in your work? For Ieva as facilitator, for Ilze as dance teacher and choreographer.

IEVA:

Even if sometimes it seems as a small drop in the ocean, I have the feeling that with this kind of projects, we ARE slowly re-starting the world and making it a better place. In my trainings I am always inspired by people - seeing how open-minded they are to step out of comfort zones and discover new things, sensing how positive emotions and energy are exchanged, creating new things together and bringing it all back to their countries and sharing with others.

ILZE:

The biggest satisfaction is when shape is born from contents. Form of work that remains in memory has its roots in solid and deep ground.



And on the other hand, are there any moments when you want to quit it all? May be not completely and forever but still...

IEVA:

As I mostly created the projects I do myself, every time a training is starting I am very excited about how it will go. The only down side of my job is that sometimes it is so intense (travelling from one project to another and meeting new and new people), that I miss having MY OWN daily routines at home (my space, family & friends, food, jogging, bicycle, etc.). Trainings are so demanding that every time after it I am like a totally squeezed lemon and need 2- days to recover.

ILZE:

When stress takes over imagination and curiosity.



Could you name one aspect which in your opinion very nicely comes together both for non-formal learning and contemporary dance values? And one thing where ideas are different. At least from what you have experienced so far.

IEVA:

I appreciate a lot that both in non-formal education and contemporary dance the PERSON really counts - finding our own way of self-expression and being is very important. There are no right or wrong ways of it - only the own way. I also like a lot the cooperative way of working - supporting each other and providing a space to grow together instead of competition.

Something that differs - I really appreciate the amount of creativity and being out of the box of people who are in the contemporary dance - we in non-formal education also definitely try it, but not always manage, so, I get always so inspired to work together.



ILZE:

From what I have experienced so far I can say that similarities include openness to the world and sharpening of the senses. Also self-analysis is shared (talking in circle) – because of Ieva I understood that especially for beginners sharing experience in talks is as important learning process as movement itself. And they need to be helped with precise questions. The more experienced ones are better in talking with themselves and for them an awareness that there is no always rush with answers helps to learn. Though in the beginning some borders are needed in order to start developing. Putting the study topics next to the life themes is another aspect both contemporary dance and non-formal learning thinks a lot about. And also learning by doing.

As regards differences in contemporary dance we don't always try to answer the questions: "What does it mean? What sense it has?" May be there is more trust into intuition. Knowing that sense "sits in the middle and knows". Too big clarity can easy lead towards illustration and superficial interpretation. Also dancers are not so crazy about energizers. Dancers don't want to stop moving, but they get very fast tired of talking. People in non-formal learning get tired while moving but the resources of topics for conversations are unlimited. People in non-formal learning context use lots of paper and they sit on chairs, but we, dancers, like being on the floor and we carry water bottles with us. Little bit more personal questions, but may be it is fine with you to answer. What are your relationship with your own body? Have you ever had or have any issues with not accepting something? Too short, too tall, too fat, something missing etc.

IEVA:

When I was growing up, for sure I was not that satisfied with my own body (too short legs, too big nose, etc.) wishing to fit more the conventional beauty standards, but with time it changed a lot and I see it as part of ME and being different from others that I love. I appreciate a lot to connect to myself through different physical activities (dance, jogging, yoga; hiking in mountains) and feel that I am not only in my head, but also body [©].

ILZE

I feel sense of guilt in relationships with my own body. He silently whines every time when I am stretching my hand towards chips, pastries, coffee, wine or beer, but then he becomes silent and does his job. And I keep getting on weights.



Thank you!

See you in next training courses!

where dance and movement meets non-formal learning

where people meet people

where world gets changed

where

body and mind become friends

