Within Practice

Every morning, we took part in truly energising classes led by Horacio, who taught us South African dances. One of the most exciting aspects of his classes was exploring rhythm and the separation and connection between the upper body and the legs. His feet seemed to bring countless rhythmic patterns to life in every class. One day, he even demonstrated how these rhythms could be reproduced using the voice if, for some reason, the legs were no longer able to do so.





We did many breathing and vocal exercises while dancing. Horacio believes that the voice is part of the body and that we must learn to use it. In one class, we also explored how pain and muscle soreness can be used as a source of creativity, as Michael Jackson did, for example. We created a short movement sequence based on five people describing where they felt muscle soreness while performing a gesture. We then developed a rhythm from these gestures and performed the sequence together. It was a very exciting and inspiring exercise.

We often worked in pairs or groups, which made the process particularly inspiring. Horacio would usually teach us a short movement combination, which we tried to master with varying degrees of success. Once we felt comfortable with the steps, we began incorporating free movement of the upper body. This developed into full improvisation, where the legs had to perform the steps with metronomic precision and follow the beat while the upper body remained free to explore and express itself.

The classes were extremely intense, which made breathing and breath control particularly important. We usually ended each session with a roughly ten-minute cool-down consisting of a tribal-inspired breathing and strengthening practice. This was followed by holding an arm position for approximately five minutes and finally allowing ourselves to flow down to the floor, gradually grounding ourselves and coming to rest.







Skånes Dansteater Workshop

During the three sessions of the Skånes Dansteater workshop, we explored a wide range of practices, which were also brought together in the practice presentation. One of the main topics was “translation”: the difference between simply copying a movement and translating it to suit our own bodies. For example, in a dance company where disabled and non-disabled dancers work together, the choreography is not created by asking everyone to perform the same movement within the limits of their individual abilities. Instead, each dancer interprets the movement and transforms it to suit their own body. This approach allows everyone to participate in their own way while contributing to a shared artistic process. On the first day, we explored this idea through several exercises. For example, we had to choose someone in the room, observe their movements, translate them into our own bodies, and then introduce what was described and after do a radical changes.

I found this particularly useful for my diploma project, in which I would like to explore dancing with fire. I know that my dance partner is afraid of fire, so I do not want to create a choreography in which they simply copy my movements with the fire while performing the same actions without it. Instead, I want them to interpret and transform the movements that the fire and I create, adapting them to their own body. I believe this could lead to a much more interesting and meaningful artistic result.

At the end of each session, we spent approximately an hour discussing our experiences. I learned a great deal about how we should approach working with disabled people. Since we are not medical professionals, we should not diagnose people or define them by their medical conditions. Instead, we should focus on their actual needs and experiences. For example, we should understand that someone may need assistance because they cannot climb stairs independently, rather than automatically focusing on a possible spinal condition.

We also began each session with a paired exercise in which we asked each other questions for two minutes. We had to share something we liked and something we needed. This was a surprisingly interesting exercise that led to several moments of self-reflection. During the practice presentation, I understood more clearly why we had been doing it: the aim was to recognise that it is not only disabled people who have needs, but every single person. This helps create a more equal environment in which disabled people can also feel more comfortable and understood.

On the second day, we practised a technique called “Skin Practice”. It was an improvisation in which everyone kept their eyes closed throughout the exercise. The practice had three stages. In the first stage, we explored the space between our bodies without actually touching the other person's skin. We had to discover the closest possible distance between our skin and theirs, just before physical contact, and explore that delicate boundary through improvisation.
In the second stage, our skin came into contact, and we gently and softly explored touch through caressing movements while dancing. In the third stage, the touch became more powerful, with each movement and stroke almost felt deep within the flesh. After gradually building up the experience through a long improvisation, we moved backwards through the three stages, gradually reducing the intensity of the contact. Finally, we separated from our partners and improvised alone, drawing on the sensations and experiences of the physical contact we had just explored.

On the final day, we experimented with audio description. While dancing, we tried to narrate our own movements and then those of the dancer standing next to us, verbally describing what was

happening in real time. Skånes Dansteater uses this technique to make dance performances accessible to blind audience members.

Afterwards, everyone wrote down a short sequence of movements. Standing with our backs turned to one another, we each performed the sequence using our own bodies, interpreting it based solely on the audio description. It was fascinating to see which elements were similar across the group and which were interpreted in completely different ways.

We also introduced an improvisation game built around the phrase “What if…?” Whenever someone said a sentence beginning with these words, the entire group had to respond physically to the suggestion. For example, if someone said, “What if everybody jumped together?” we all jumped; if they said, “What if everybody went to the floor?” we all moved down to the floor.

During the final practice presentation, the three dancers who was lead the workshop combined and mixed all these different practices. It was fascinating to see how the exercises and ideas we had explored individually could come together in a shared artistic process.











