

Experience report

Duende 2021

Choreography and concept: Linda Blomqvist

Performers: Pär Andersson, Mikko Hyvönen, Linda Blomqvist

Music: Franz Edvard Cedrin

Producer: Sara Bergsmark and Marie Proffit

Summary of the process experience

I already had some research time in the spring 2020 and fall 2021 before getting into the studio with my collaborators Pär Andersson and Mikko Hyvönen. We started off by discussing the concept of the piece, particular interests and references and the term duende.

With that in mind, we dedicated the first two weeks to exploring and experimenting with different movement and voice tasks and practices as well as creating movement material and learning material that I had prepared in advance.

The second period of the process (week 3, 4 and 5) was mostly about finding a structure, fine tuning the dramaturgical curve, transitions, understanding the tonality of different scenes and articulating a specific presence and the relationship between us, the space and the audience.

In parallel to this I had an ongoing dialog with Franz who would join our rehearsals from time to time and we would also frequently send him videos of what we were working on. He would interchange between composing music based on descriptive scores, set movement material and freely compose music more based on his own understanding and interpretation of the universe of the piece.

It was an efficient and informative process where I felt like my artistic practice and expression could really evolve, become more refined and fine tuned.

Overall I feel very satisfied with the exchange and the new experience and knowledge which I have obtained from this process.

Detailed description of the process experience.

Throughout the process of Duende we were looking at the capacities of dance as form and expression through the spectrum of emotions. We drew knowledge and inspiration from the tradition and form of Flamenco by using its main parameters; singing, dancing, rhythm and playing music – to shape an explosive landscape of vast emotions and experiences. We further explored notions like togetherness, collectivity, and community which can be experienced in flamenco and is essential to the work.

With this project I wanted to embody and convey heightened emotional states through dancing, singing and music. A sort of storytelling that evokes imagery, colors, textures and smells. A collective creation out of singular and personal stories. There was a desire to travel collectively with the audience. To go on a journey, together yet alone since things land differently in each and everyone of us.

The process of the work implied introspection, while the work itself is highly expressive in ways that can be cathartic, contemplative, life affirmative and with a sense of joie de vivre. It moves swiftly between dark and light, high and low - covering a broad spectrum of emotions. The piece asks the performers to expose themselves not merely as subjects but also as matter and beings by lending themselves to the dances and songs to convey emotions and stories. It deals with existence and what it is to be human.

Throughout the process we tried to explore the relation and the discrepancies between the personal and the collective, the personal and the political. We practiced tapping into emotions and letting emotions move through and out of us.

Flamenco is an expression of diversity and heterogeneity and shows the magic that can occur when things get to mix, blend and morph into something entirely new. Duende marries a rigorous formalist approach with improvisation, spontaneity and expression and explores the potentiality of moving through form and abstraction as methods to carry and convey pure feelings. My intention was to facilitate a space where we we could explore and expose what it might be to exist, how it feels and how we can navigate in this world.

The musical form of Flamenco is peculiar; how it can dwell on a single phrase and then completing what follows in a rush, how it uses suspense, building to serial climaxes, hesitating, holding back, plunging forward. There are no choruses, refrains or hooks. It's forceful and marked by dramatic shifts in mood, volume and

tempo. By examining the structure of flamenco music we built numerous sequences/movement phrases that were made into different variations and put together into intricate, layered structures as trios, duos and solos.

We articulated different solos that stemmed from each dancer, by looking at each individual's dance history, specific skills and affinities and used these to find different expressions to build dance material from.

We also worked with practices based on improvisation where we explored singing, dancing, rhythm and playing music - autonomously and in relation to one another. We looked at the act of dancing and singing for someone as a gesture of sharing and giving, thinking about each dance and song as a gift.

Essentially we were seeking to find Duende; an aesthetical notion that can appear in certain moments in artistic activity, when something else takes over, when something speaks through you; a heightened state.

The practice of being open, receptive and listening to what the piece needs/is becoming and adjusting to this is essential to all my works and was really solidified in this production. I see it as a three-part collaboration: a collaboration between myself, the people I work with and the piece itself. It's a moment of symbiosis.

The research took place at MDT, Dansens Hus, Hallen, Turteatern and Riksteatern in Stockholm. Duende has been presented at Atalante Gothenburg, Dansehallerne Copenhagen and will be presented at MDT Stockholm, Dansstationen Malmö and Norrlandsoperan Umeå this spring.