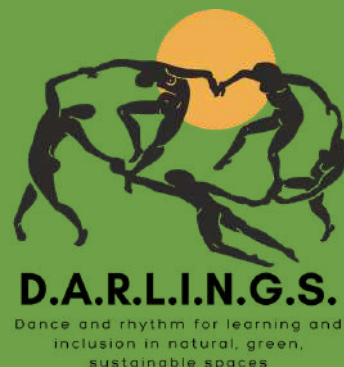


Manual Toolkit
on the Natural Movement Dance –
NMD Method & national pilots
to create performances



D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S.

Project number:
2024-1-ES01-KA210-
ADU-000256202



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Introduction

The D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. project (Dance And Rhythm for Learning and Inclusion in Natural, Green and Sustainable spaces) was born from the encounter between three European organisations — Sempiternal (Spain), Vialuni (France), and L’espace APS/ASD (Italy) — with the aim of exploring how dance, rhythm, and somatic practices can become tools for inclusion, adult education, and environmental awareness.

The guiding question is simple and radical: How can the body reactivate a living relationship with nature and community, generating processes of learning, care, and citizenship?

Through transnational exchanges, workshops, piloting, and artistic creation, the project intertwined methodology, poetics, and sustainability: the listening body becomes a bridge between the individual and the world, between sensory experience and collective responsibility.

This manual documents methods, practices, outcomes, and reflections, offering trainers, artists, and organisations adaptable and replicable tools.

About Sempiternal

Mission and History

Sempiternal Asociación Cultural was founded in Logroño in 2021 with the aim of bringing contemporary live arts closer to new audiences and fostering cultural participation. The association understands the performing arts as a powerful cultural practice with the potential to transform society. Its mission is clear: to democratize contemporary live arts through cultural mediation.

Guided by the words of Spanish philosopher Marina Garcés “Culture is not something given to audiences, but something we build together, without condescension or simplification.”



Sempiternal seeks to generate collective cultural experiences that go beyond the mere act of presentation. Instead, the organisation promotes dialogue, shared creation, and accessibility, ensuring that contemporary dance and live arts become part of the everyday cultural fabric of La Rioja and beyond. Since its foundation, Sempiternal has worked to build connections between professionals, emerging creators, and audiences, strengthening the visibility of contemporary dance and establishing networks that support sustainable artistic growth lies in curation.

Main Activities and Target Groups

Sempiternal develops its mission through three main lines of action:

1. Support for Emerging Artists and Contemporary Dance Development.

One of its central projects is La Reunión en Danza (La RED), launched in Logroño in 2021. La RED is a collaborative programme between Bilbao, Santander, and Logroño, supported by the three city councils. It is designed for emerging choreographers who wish to present their creations, receive professional feedback, and participate in training workshops led by established companies.

The main goals of La RED are:

- To identify and give visibility to new choreographers, fostering the future creative fabric of Northern Spain.
- To connect artists, venues, and audiences in the field of contemporary dance.
- To strengthen cultural cooperation between institutions, associations, and independent initiatives across regions.
- To promote artistic exchange through performances, workshops, feedback sessions, and discussions.

The organising entities of La RED are Sempiternal Asociación Cultural, Movimiento en Red – Association of Dance Professionals of Cantabria and La Fundación Bilbao.



2. Cultural Mediation

Sempiternal places cultural mediation at the core of its activity, understood as the set of actions that bring contemporary dance closer to diverse audiences:

- For spectators:

The organisation works to connect with those who have never attended a contemporary dance performance, or who, having attended, felt distant or without tools to interpret what they experienced. To bridge this gap, Sempiternal offers playful workshops of bodily exploration and dialogues with audiences, providing accessible ways to experience and decode dance.

- For aspiring performers:

Cultural mediation also addresses those interested in dance as interpreters who have not had the opportunity to access training in creation and artistic development. Through introductory activities and participatory workshops, these individuals gain entry points into the world of contemporary dance

3. Non-Formal Education

Beyond professional artistic contexts, Sempiternal designs non-formal educational programmes for adults, where culture becomes a tool to address social issues and foster personal growth. These projects place special emphasis on care, equality, and diversity, creating spaces where art is not only appreciated but also actively used to build a more just and inclusive society.

Since 2021, the organisation has offered regular classes in:

- Contemporary dance for adults
- Introduction to classical dance for adults
- Pilates for older adults, with a focus on wellbeing and accessibility

These initiatives open access to artistic and physical practices for people of all ages and backgrounds, encouraging participation, wellbeing, and community-building through movement.

Educational and Methodological Approach with Adults

Sempiternal Asociación Cultural conceives education as a transformative and collective practice, where learning emerges from participation, exploration, and bodily experience. Our work emphasizes that every person, regardless of prior training or background, can access the arts of movement—including contemporary dance, classical dance, Pilates, and other body practices—as powerful tools for self-expression, wellbeing, and social connection.

Our methodology rests on several interrelated principles:

1. Learning through the body: Movement becomes both content and methodology. Participants explore movement from their own physical and emotional realities, allowing individual discovery while fostering collective awareness.
2. Accessibility and adaptability: We design activities that respond to the diverse abilities, ages, and needs of participants. The emphasis is placed on accessibility, prevention, and wellbeing, ensuring that movement practices are inclusive and beneficial for all.
3. Dialogue and reflection: Beyond physical practice, we integrate spaces of conversation and exchange. These moments encourage participants to verbalize their experiences, connect artistic practice with everyday life, and collectively build a deeper cultural understanding.
4. Community-based dance tools: We integrate techniques and principles from community dance, encouraging participation, co-creation, and shared artistic experience. These tools support engagement, mutual learning, and collective authorship, reinforcing the social dimension of movement practices.

By combining these approaches, Sempiternal creates an educational experience that is simultaneously physical, reflective, and socially conscious.

Added Value in Terms of Inclusion

Inclusion is at the heart of Sempiternal's pedagogical vision. Our programmes are designed to:

- Open access to movement arts for those who have never participated, offering entry points to explore dance and movement safely and confidently.
- Create safe and welcoming spaces where diversity of age, body, background, and ability is embraced as a richness.
- Foster intergenerational encounters, allowing younger and older adults to share experiences and learn from one another.
- Use culture as a tool for dialogue around social issues, including equality, care, and diversity.

Through these inclusive practices, Sempiternal creates safe, welcoming, and participatory spaces where everyone can contribute, feel valued, and develop their creative potential.

Added Value in Terms of Sustainability

Sempiternal understands sustainability in both environmental and social terms. From a pedagogical standpoint, sustainability means:

- Long-term empowerment: equipping participants with tools they can use beyond the classroom to continue exploring movement and wellbeing in their daily lives.
- Strengthening the local cultural fabric: by training and engaging new audiences and practitioners, we ensure the growth of the arts of movement in the region.
- Responsible practices: we promote activities that are respectful of resources, privileging local collaboration and low-impact formats.

In this sense, education becomes a way of sustaining not only individual growth but also the cultural ecosystem and community bonds.



Creativity lies at the very heart of Sempiternal's pedagogical approach. It is understood both as a goal and as a method, guiding how participants experience the arts of movement. Our programmes are designed not only to teach technical skills but to nurture participants' capacity to imagine, explore, and create.

A key component of our approach is improvisation, which serves as both a practical and conceptual tool for developing creativity. Through carefully designed exercises, participants are given the tools and frameworks to train their imagination, explore their physicality, and experiment with movement in open-ended ways. Improvisation encourages them to generate original movement ideas, experiment with new forms of expression, and develop autonomy and confidence in their creative choices.

This process is always accompanied by sensory awareness and engagement with reality. Participants are invited to expand their perception, connecting movement with the environment and their own bodily experiences. By opening the senses, they learn to integrate observation, listening, and awareness into their artistic exploration, fostering a richer and more authentic creative process.

Improvisation sessions also function as laboratories of collective creation, where each participant's contributions shape the outcome. This approach reinforces the idea that creativity is not an isolated talent but a shared process, promoting collaboration, dialogue, and community-building while respecting individual expression.

Beyond improvisation, our programmes encourage participants to co-create experiences and transfer creative strategies from the arts of movement to everyday life. By breaking down barriers of judgment and perfectionism, participants learn to approach challenges with flexibility, problem-solving skills, and an experimental mindset.

Through this integrated approach, Sempiternal demonstrates that the arts of movement are not only disciplines to be learned but living practices that connect imagination with reality, nurture bodily awareness, and cultivate artistic and personal growth. Creativity becomes a bridge between self-expression, collaborative processes, and the wider world, enabling participants to transform both their artistic practice and their everyday experiences.

Objectives

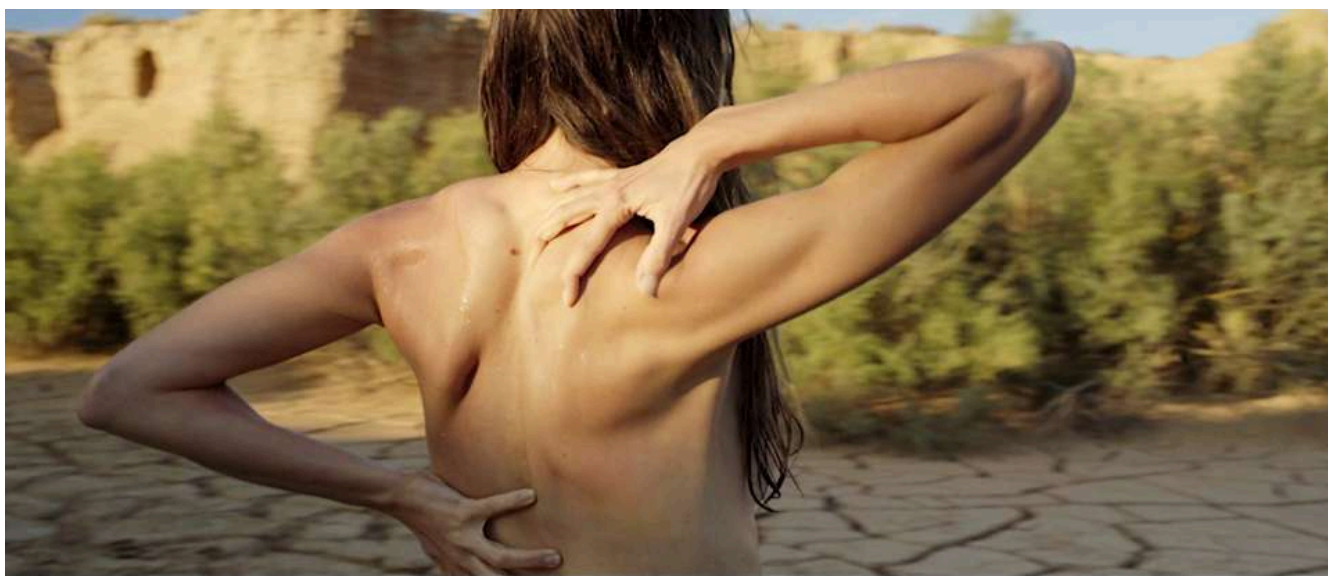
At Sempiternal, we believe in the democratization of the arts of movement, contemporary art, and culture in general, viewing them as fundamental cultural rights to which everyone should have access. Today, entering the cultural sector professionally remains increasingly difficult for those who do not come from privileged backgrounds. Our ultimate goal is to contribute to building a more just and equal society, where social background does not determine access to cultural experiences or professional opportunities in the arts. Our work combines educational, artistic, and activist dimensions. Pedagogically, we aim to open spaces where adults of all ages and experiences can engage with the arts of movement, develop creativity, explore improvisation, and connect bodily practice with reflection and imagination. We provide tools and guidance, fostering individual growth while emphasizing collaboration, intergenerational exchange, and shared authorship. In doing so, we integrate practices from community dance, using movement as a way to explore social issues and stimulate dialogue, reflection, and awareness.



Artistically, Sempiternal acts as a cultural catalyst. We connect creators with each other and with audiences, creating networks, platforms, and opportunities for visibility. Through projects such as La Reunión en Danza (La RED), we support emerging choreographers, encourage experimentation and creative exploration, and strengthen the local and regional ecosystem of contemporary dance. Our role is to generate the substrate for a sustainable cultural sector, where artists can collaborate, exchange ideas, and grow collectively.

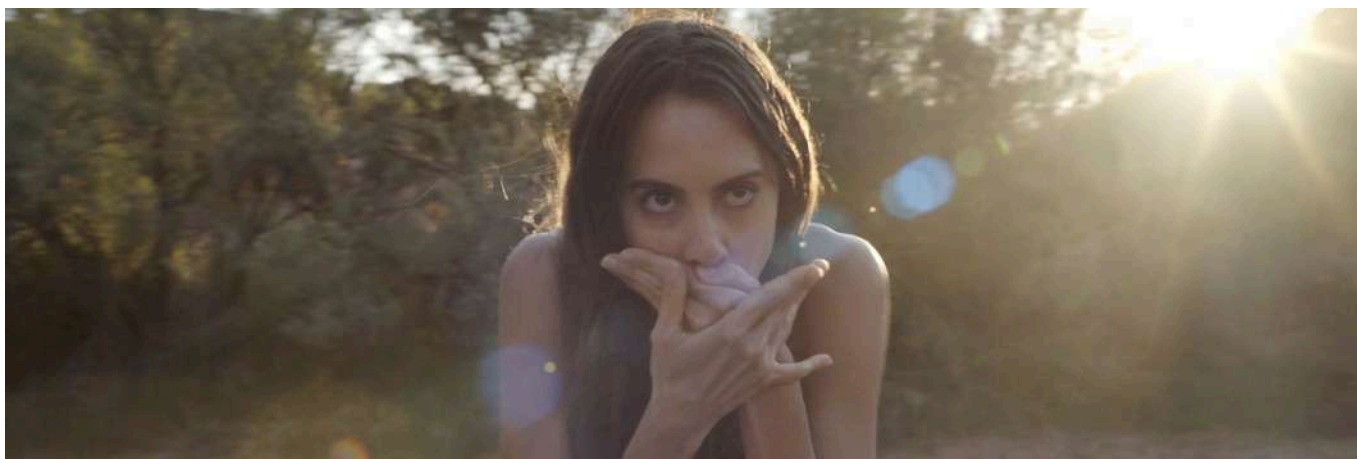
We see ourselves as cultural agitators and facilitators, not only producing and presenting work, but creating conditions for dialogue, collaboration, and professional development. Our objectives go beyond individual skill acquisition: we seek to cultivate a living, breathing cultural community where creativity, accessibility, and social awareness coexist.

Ultimately, the objectives of Sempiternal reflect a vision that marries the artistic with the social: empowering participants, supporting creators, and building networks that contribute to a more equitable, vibrant, and sustainable cultural landscape. Through education, performance, and cultural mediation, we aim to ensure that the arts are not a privilege for the few, but a shared resource for all.



Project

Sempiternal Asociación Cultural is a young and dynamic organization. Although the association itself has a short history, its team brings extensive experience in the performing arts and non-formal educational projects. The creation of the screendance Sempiternal marked the starting point for the association. This work was carried out with a vision of cooperation among artists in our region, enriching and inspiring one another. The short film was presented at several regional and national audiovisual festivals, culminating in a screening at the Cineteca Madrid as part of the CineZeta festival. This early project reflects the collaborative spirit and artistic ambition that continue to guide Sempiternal today.



One of the organization's most significant projects is La Reunión en Danza (La RED), an initiative born with the aim of supporting and promoting the visibility of emerging choreographers. La RED operates collaboratively across the cities of Bilbao, Santander, and Logroño, offering professional opportunities to young creators who wish to present their work, receive constructive feedback, and guidance to develop their careers under the mentorship of more established companies.

The main objectives of La RED are to identify and give visibility to new creators, support their professionalization outside the centralized circuits of Madrid and Barcelona, and strengthen the presence of contemporary dance in the northern region. The project also aims to connect artists, performance spaces, and audiences, fostering collaboration at both institutional and community levels. Exchange between artists is promoted through performances, creation workshops, feedback sessions, and discussions, where each participant actively contributes to the encounter. Through these activities, La RED not only develops artistic skills but also builds professional networks and a sustainable cultural ecosystem for emerging creators.

In parallel, Sempiternal has been running regular courses for adults since 2021. These courses focus on contemporary, classical dance and Pilates for older adults. Participants engage in movement-based learning that fosters creativity, bodily awareness, and reflection, while cultivating a sense of community and inclusion. Sempiternal also implements cultural mediation actions, aimed at bringing contemporary dance closer to audiences who may have limited exposure or lack interpretative tools.



These initiatives include playful workshops, participatory sessions, and dialogues with audiences, helping to decode performances and build engagement. Mediation also targets aspiring performers who have not had access to formal training, offering guidance and entry points into artistic creation.

Finally, Sempiternal is carrying out D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S., a non-formal adult education project funded by Erasmus+. This initiative exemplifies the organization's commitment to international collaboration and innovation in educational methodologies, exploring how the arts of movement can be tools for social reflection and personal development.

Although Sempiternal is a young organization with a limited number of projects to date, each initiative reflects its dedication to cultural activism and educational impact, laying the foundation for a stronger, more connected, and sustainable artistic community in the region.

About Vialuni



Mission and History

Founded in 2000 in Ajaccio at the initiative of Michèle Etti (after more than 17 years of work in Montpellier with Cie La Lice), the company has undertaken a structured development rooted in its unique territory, Corsica, renewing approaches and practices in contemporary dance. Its research is built around the relationship between the body and the environment, enriched by contributions from choreographic culture and the concept of multidimensional space.

The Approach

The act of creation is situated in the context of insularity: the strong presence of natural elements and the lack of suitable workplaces have generated numerous pieces questioning the relationship between Nature and Culture.

Dance, music, video, visual arts, words, and digital technology intersect freely, in an open-ended play, from performance to spectacle.

"Dance is more than just dance..." — Jacqueline Robinson

A fan of understated stage design, chosen to complement the artistic vision, the company is centered on a multi-generational team, with a strong focus on transmitting the fundamentals of contemporary dance. In this same movement, the relationship with the audience was "retuned": "Amateur Dance and Repertoire," "Shared Dance," bringing together young people with multiple disabilities and amateur adults, "Movements of Life" for seniors in nursing homes... These connections guided the company's approach.

The audience-receivers were engaged in dialogue with the development of the works, either through the spaces invested — in situ — or through unique stage-audience arrangements, or invited into the "making" of the performance itself.

A Place: ZAD Zone à danser



Located in the heart of nature on the Pietralba hill above Ajaccio, the large studio and its outdoor seating have hosted Vialuni's research work, the LesViesDanse meetings, the Dissidanse Festival, companies in residence, as well as a variety of amateur audiences for practical workshops since 2015.

Artistic Director Michèle Ettori

After a long period of work in Montpellier, Michèle decided to return to the city of her birth and devote the best of herself to the development of contemporary dance in Corsica. She even went so far as to build one of the only dance venues on the island, the ZAD, in Ajaccio.

She continues to pursue her commitment with energy, choreographing, dancing, and teaching, with a passion rooted in her body... like great figures with remarkable longevity, such as C. Carlson, J.-C. Gallotta, M. Marin, and L. Childs, who inspire her. She draws her strength, determination, and creativity from her Corsican identity (a great-grandmother who climbed trees in her 80s!).

Transmission is essential for her, as evidenced by the company's multi-generational structure, open to the world from Corsica, integrating young apprentice artists alongside the most qualified professionals trained on the continent, as well as through the very nature of its projects.

She has participated in the organization of Dissidanse – Pôle Chorégraphique Corse-Méditerranée since 2017, and in the programming of its Dissidanse Itinérance Festival.

She has nearly 30 creations to her credit, including solo works in the tradition of contemporary dance and other pieces questioning the place of humanity in nature.

Pedagogical approach

or over twenty years, our work has consistently included vulnerable groups: young people in residential care homes, seniors in nursing homes, young people with multiple disabilities, and amateur artists.



- A festival, LesViesDanse, has brought together professionals and amateurs at the ZAD since July 2019. It welcomes artists from both Corsica and abroad, in a variety of forms and artistic disciplines. It also includes practical workshops for adult amateurs. The Yann Lheureux Company from Montpellier will be invited in 2024.
- In 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024, Vialuni was commissioned by the French government as part of the following programs: Summer Neighborhoods for deprived neighborhoods in Ajaccio (performances and workshops for young people) and the Cultural Summer, aimed at audiences isolated from cultural offerings (people in retirement homes and residents of rural areas), with several performances.
- The Ministry of Culture's national CMP (It's My Heritage!) program was implemented for young people in priority neighborhoods of Ajaccio, introducing them to heritage sites (Fesch Museum of Fine Arts) and artistic practices (dance and visual arts) from which they are usually excluded. This took place on three occasions: in 2021, 2022, and 2024.

- Successfully responding three times to the national call for projects from the CND in Pantin, Amateur Dance and Repertoire, adult Corsican amateur practitioners have danced on the prestigious stages of the Maison de la Culture in Bobigny, the Salle Jean Vilar in Chaillot, and the Théâtre Auditorium in Poitiers during the annual National Meetings in 2007, 2013, and 2015, performing works by D. Humphrey, D. Bagouet, and B. Glandier.
-
- Workshops and performances for middle schools, organized by the Rectorate's Cultural Action in South Corsica and the City Contract – CUCS Ajaccio, took place from 2002 to 2014. A Dance at School program will take place in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 in Ajaccio, featuring children from nursery and primary schools in Tiuccia and Mezzana.



- Danses de Hors (Hors Dances) was held in Ajaccio from 2002 to 2008, in schools, public spaces, the IME garden, and the Heritage Library (a partnership between IME Les Salines and the City of Ajaccio). It featured small-format works from various currents of French contemporary dance: Marion and Thierry Bae, Elisabeth Schwartz, Catherine Contour, Hélène Cathala and Fabrice Ramalingom, Yann Lheureux, Antje Schur, Claude Sorin, Montaine Chevalier, Jean-Claude Gagneux.
- A spectator awareness program, coordinated with the Cinémathèque de la Danse de Paris, toured Corsica (partnerships included: City of Ajaccio, Alibi Bastia Theater, Porto-Vecchio Cultural Center, Anima Prunelli di Fiumorbu Center, U Spaziu Ile-Rousse, U Filu di A Memoria Veru, etc.). During the presentation of certain films, conferences were given by Laurence Louppe, Bernard Rémy, Jacqueline Caux, and Nicolas Villodre. This program ran from 2004 to 2014.

- Danse Partagée, inclusive dance, a project labeled Culture and Health, began in 2018, following Movements of Life, Perhaps a Dance for seniors in EHPADs in 2014/2015, bringing together people with disabilities and able-bodied adults. Finding unity in a body that struggles, that is in pain; bringing together mind, body, and imagination; finding the integrity of the person through a trusting exchange of sensitive experiences between these different audiences — that is the challenge.

We began strongly with a performance created at the Espace Diamant, which also hosted the Parisian company Anqa, and were then invited to the Temps Danse Méditerranée Festival in Bastia. Partnership with APF Corse du Sud. In 2019 the work led to the production of a film, *Comme un sourire*, broadcast in Corsica. Since then, Vialuni has been approved by the ARS for this mission.

In December 2023, a performance titled *Présences* was presented at the Maison de quartier des Cannes for the general public, featuring three professional dancers, a video creator, a live musician, and twelve young people and young adults with disabilities (PSH), residents of the APF A Casarella and Albizzia establishments (video editing available). It was presented in Ajaccio as part of the Dissidanse Festival 2023 and 2024, and in Porto-Vecchio.

In this same context, a project is being finalized in 2024 for patients at the Castelluccio Psychiatric Hospital in Ajaccio. Other workshops are being held for young autistic people at an IME (Medical Home for the Elderly).

- Regular workshops are offered to adults at the ZAD, where the basics of contemporary dance technique are developed, along with proposals for composition and improvisation.
- AFDAS training courses are being organized with leading international artists. In 2003, American artist Simone Forti was invited, with twelve European dancers (Catherine Contour, Marion Baé, Claude Sorin, Laurence Louppe, etc.) benefiting from this training in the indoor space of the Lazaret Ollandini in Ajaccio. In 2024, in partnership with L'Aria/Dissidanse/Vialuni, Mark Tompkins and Mariana Tengner-Barros taught nine dancers.



The Philosophy of the VIALUNI Company's Dance Project

Our main objectives:

To raise public awareness about the sensitive body and art.

To carry out multidisciplinary artistic projects, combining different arts (dance movement, writing, sound, video, visual arts).

For many years now, she has been committed to engaging audiences in dance movement practices, improvisation, and body awareness, and thus to promoting access to culture and artistic practices for as many people as possible (young and old), particularly for so-called vulnerable or culturally alienated audiences (DSQ, EHPAD, IME, community centers, etc.).

Making the artistic experience accessible means allowing everyone to live their own creativity without seeking to impose models of virtuosity or aesthetics. It means offering workshops and artistic projects in which everyone can experiment and feel, starting from their own body. It is about accepting and valuing differences, and encouraging everyone to be themselves (their body, their way of being, of communicating, of moving, of showing themselves to the world) while proposing new ways of being in a group, and in society.

It is always a laboratory of experiences, bringing everyone to a state of dance — a danced movement.

We move toward the emergence and development of our own dance.

It is a moment in which each person listens to their bodily sensations (the skin envelope, organs, breathing, weight, support) through their relationship with the environment and with others.

Finding unity within a body — within a being — who may be struggling, bringing together body, mind, and imagination. The unity of the person.

A rich challenge, based on an atmosphere of attentive listening and kindness. Words, touch, and delicacy in the relationship are the ingredients that allow each person to be reached in their very flesh, both before and beyond intellectual understanding.

This is not a classical dance class; we are not searching for an ideal body or movement. There is therefore little technical vocabulary.

The focus is the path each person takes, here and now, in their individuality. And we can even go as far as a public sharing, like a collective restitution of this journey — with its freshness and its awkwardness, but also with the richness of each performer's individuality, engaged with their whole being, wherever they are.

Specific Objectives:

- Foster a sense of inner security to develop participants' openness and attentiveness (ritualized workshop, rules of play or instructions, time, space, and facilitator references). It is within this containing "bubble" that dance explorations are born.
- The unique atmosphere of this space of bodily language is ensured by a sustained quality of attention to what is happening in the dancers' here and now.
- Draw on the fundamentals of contemporary dance, more precisely "postmodern" dance (the breath that precedes each movement, weight, rhythm, music, space, support and contact, relationship to objects). This specific and sensitive approach to dance, with a holistic perspective on the individual (body–mind–language–environment), brings the dancers into the world as they are.



Creations and their dissemination

Nearly 30 creations to his credit, including solo work in the tradition of contemporary dance, and other pieces questioning the place of man in nature. At the regional level, the pieces were hosted at Espace Diamant/Ajaccio, L'Aghja/Ajaccio, L'Alb'Oru/Bastia, Anima/Porto-Vecchio, Scopre/Marignana, CCUniversitaire/Corte, Musée Fesch/Ajaccio, Musée de l'Alta-Rocca/Levie, Festival Voce/Pigna...



Since 2017, distribution has grown nationally and internationally:

L'Irregular Festival/Bourg-en-Bresse – Pôle 164/Marseille – Choreographic Meetings of Casablanca/Morocco – Dissidanza Festival/Palermo – Fuorimargine/Cagliari – Officine Rione Terra/Pozzuoli Naples Festival – Cie Evie Demetriou, Limassol (Cyprus).

2004 « Dit, voir » duo danse et littérature

2004/05 « Seconde Nature », quintet, danse, vidéo, architecture

2006 « Gobe-Globes », duo jeune public

2007 « Arbres, Humains » 3 musiciens et 3 danseurs

2011 « Danses/Nos Histoires » trio danse, un parcours dans l'histoire de la danse

2012 « Déplacer la table, ouvrir la fenêtre » solo en appartement

2013 « Des axes, des cercles et des roses » quatuor danse, vidéo, musique, calligraphie et arts martiaux

2017/18 « Tordre l'Eau ind'Ortu », duo danse vidéo et conte

2018 « Ciel ! » solo danse et musique

2020/21 « LDC : avis de recherches », quintet

2022 « Présences » pièce avec 3 danseuses professionnelles, un vidéaste et une contrebassiste et un groupe de 7 danseuses amateurs PSH

2022/23 « L'Aire Bleue », quartet danse et paroles

2023/24/25 « Bollì, Bollì », duo danse et musique

2024/2025 « La Performance Agricole », quintet donné dans des exploitations agricoles

2024/2025 « Echappées des géographies », quatuor 2 danseuses une musicienne et sa contrebasse

2021/2022/2023 Creations aimed at young audiences, including:

“Un jour de grands bois” (A Day in the Great Woods), a dance-theater program presented to young people with multiple disabilities as part of the Inclusive Dance program, and to children from 16 schools in the city of Ajaccio in December 2021 and January 2022.

“Petit C’est Grand” (Little Is Big), for very young children, by S. Gout, has been touring daycare centers throughout Corsica since 2023.

A dance lecture created in 2020 at the Carcassonne Festival will be performed again for STAPS students at the University of Corte in March 2023. The objective is to set both the mind and body of the audience in motion, illuminating — through physical experience and reflection — the discovery and/or better understanding of the challenges of contemporary dance in France and its influences (Germany, the United States, Japan, etc.) over the past 40 years. It takes place in an exhibition hall, conference room, classroom, dance studio, or courtyard, depending on the target audience, where we set up 12 poster panels (1 m x 0.80 m) from the CND Pantin exhibition Contemporary Dance in Questions.



About L'espace



History

Founded in 2012 in Palermo, L'espace APS/ASD is a choreographic and cultural centre dedicated to contemporary dance, artistic research, and training. Over the years it has established itself locally and nationally as a reference point for somatic and poetic body practices, rooted in the connection between body, nature, and consciousness.

L'espace was founded by choreographer Giovanni Zappulla, creator of the Danza Movimento Naturale (DMN) method, in collaboration with Annachiara Maria Trigili (dancer and co-director), composer Giuseppe Rizzo, and artists Roberta D'Ignoti and Danny Davì, representing the creative nucleus of the organisation.

Mission

To cultivate a natural, sensitive, and authentic dance capable of generating aesthetic experience, awareness, and human connection

Main activities

- Contemporary dance production
- Research and professional training
- Adult education and community programmes
- International and European cooperation
- Artistic direction of the International Festival Dissidanza

L'espace collaborates with festivals, institutions, and artists in Italy and abroad, including Teatro Massimo Palermo, Dissidanse Ajaccio, Dance Cités Carcassonne, Institut Français, and Erasmus+ partners across Europe.

Since 2021, it curates the International Festival Dissidanza, a platform for new contemporary dance languages and emerging body practices.

L'espace acts between local roots and international openness, promoting dance as ecological reflection, body poetics, and social responsibility.

Pedagogical approach – Danza Movimento Naturale (DMN)

The Danza Movimento Naturale (DMN) method, developed by Giovanni Zappulla since 2005, is the pedagogical, philosophical, and artistic foundation of L'espace.

It integrates:

- Contemporary dance
- Internal martial arts (Chen Style Taijiquan)
- Zhineng Qigong energetic-perceptive work
- Inner movement research inspired by Isadora Duncan

DMN fosters a return to the natural intelligence of the body — movement emerging from breath, weight, gravity, spirals, and internal energetic principles, rather than external form.



Core principles

- Listening (intra-body, relational, environmental)
- Breath and organic movement
- Presence and grounding
- Fluidity and natural economy
- Conscious improvisation
- Spirals, axis, gravity, rebound
- Relationship as creative field

Within D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S., DMN supported:

- Inclusion processes in adult education
- Somatic practices for environmental awareness
- Collective creation
- Body-nature-technology research
- Development of EcoSapiens

DMN proposes a dance that does not imitate nature, but emerges from the nature of the body itself, fostering ecological presence and awareness.

4. Objectives of L'espace

L'espace considers dance as artistic language, educational practice, and awareness process.

Artistic

- Research the body as poetic and relational space
- Explore dialogue between dance, sound, image, and sensitive technology
- Create works born from listening and environmental relation
- Disseminate contemporary languages internationally

Pedagogical

- Promote DMN as somatic-artistic methodology
- Provide inclusive training valuing individuality and expression
- Support autonomy, creativity, and psycho-physical well-being
- Train artists and educators through somatic and contemporary practice

Social & Community

- Foster dance as space for meeting and inclusion
- Encourage ecological sensitivity and responsibility
- Promote intercultural exchange and local-European networks
- Make culture accessible through public programmes

In summary

L'espace cultivates a dance that transforms perception, relationships, and our way of inhabiting the world.



Artistic Productions

2015 — Apollo e Daphne

Creation that explores the ancient myth through a reinterpretation of the Duncan-style language in the relationship between live orchestral music and dance, a piece in which the boundaries between theatricality, choreography, and music are redefined.

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2016 — Memories from the Future

Three women dance through a journey that explores the mechanisms of the human soul, ultimately transcending the limits of the mind and reaching toward freedom. A story that does not narrate but lives within the time of a symphony: Beethoven's Seventh.

.2017 — Natural Landscapes

A performance that draws on the natural landscapes of Sicily and Mexico to create a parallel with the emotional landscapes of the human soul, a journey marked by the rhythm of the Chinese calendar, which divides the year into five seasons. Ten dancers in discovery of themselves, a creative catharsis to be shared with the audience.



2018 — Wunderkammer

A Dantesque journey into the depths of human emotion, where three women guide the audience from darkness to light through a choreographic language of strong theatricality. A piece that experiments with and integrates sound capture and soundscape.

2021 — Dafne e Apollo

Pure experimentation blending dance, theatre, music, sound capture, and interactive video projection. The Greek myth from Daphne's point of view.

2023 — Love (H)Uman's Love

An explosive mix of punk-rock musical and contemporary dance inspired by a dreamlike language, an invocation to rediscover the true potential of the human being.

2024/25 — EcoSapiens

an exploration of the relationship between the human and the natural world, a complex journey shared with the artists who dance it, blending psychoanalytic experiences with the experimental use of AI.



Sustainability and Green Practices within the D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. Project

1 Sempiternal

At Sempiternal, sustainability is understood in a broad and interconnected sense, encompassing not only environmental responsibility but also social and cultural sustainability, in line with the values of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Throughout the D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. project, our work has focused on fostering awareness, responsibility, and care—toward the planet, toward others, and toward oneself.

In this context, we chose to focus our national pilot on women survivors of gender-based violence, addressing sustainability as a social and human necessity. By working with these women, we sought to contribute to building fairer and more balanced communities, where well-being, equality, and care become central values. During the workshops, the connection between the body, nature, and sustainability was constantly present: participants explored movement as a way to recover autonomy, to reconnect with the rhythms of their own bodies, and to re-establish harmony with their environment.

From the very beginning of the project, this approach was already present in our roundtables and story-writing sessions, where we encouraged reflection on sustainability not only as environmental awareness but also as an ethical and social principle. The story chosen for our final performance dealt with aesthetic violence—the social and cultural pressures exerted on women's bodies—which we considered an essential dimension of sustainability and bodily freedom. Through this lens, the artistic process became a form of activism, questioning dominant beauty standards and advocating for diversity, inclusion, and self-acceptance.

In practical terms, we also made concrete choices to reduce our ecological footprint throughout the project. We prioritized local collaborations and short-distance travel between the towns of La Rioja where activities took place, used multipurpose community spaces to avoid unnecessary resource use, and worked with recycled and low-impact materials whenever possible. Digital tools were employed to coordinate and document the project efficiently, minimizing printing and physical materials.

Our participation in the training courses—such as Danza Movimento Naturale and Musicalisation—also reinforced our understanding of the relationship between nature, body, and art. Working outdoors and exploring natural materials or soundscapes expanded our awareness of how artistic practices can foster environmental sensitivity through embodied experience.

Looking ahead, Sempiternal intends to maintain this comprehensive vision of sustainability. We plan to continue integrating environmentally conscious choices in our operations and to strengthen projects that address social sustainability through the arts of movement. Our goal is to keep promoting projects that not only respect the environment but also empower communities, fosters equality, and builds the cultural and emotional resilience that a truly sustainable future requires.



2 Vialuni

The geographical location of our structure, Corsica — a beautiful island where everything arrives from the outside by boat or plane — has guided all of our actions since its creation.

The construction of our wooden work studio, with high-quality thermal insulation that limits heating needs and protects against intense heat, was carried out on a plot of land surrounded by nature, through self-build and by purchasing and building collectively with several families. Rainwater harvesting allows us to water the gardens in summer, and an ecological charter prohibits the use of artificial ground coverings.

All of this greatly influenced the project. The “green” narratives also played a significant role in its development, effectively attracting participants who were interested and already personally committed to environmental preservation and minimizing their impact on a daily basis.

Our proposals were met with enthusiasm: working in the surrounding nature — itself impacted by the presence of old car carcasses and other waste — observing, feeling, reflecting. The artists familiar with these practices within the company, along with Michèle Ettori, developed appropriate physical practice processes.

Most of them, of all ages, get around by bike or carpooling. And on our island everyone is thrifty and chooses local products, minimizing their environmental impact from various forms of pollution, such as plastic and hydrocarbons. They are also mindful of consuming less in order to waste less.

All the proposed practices were based on the environment: space, the various natural elements and their properties of flow, weight, and energy; the light; the topography of the site — particularly our land, its slope, and the stairs (recalling the resources of the Bauhaus school and the artists of Judson Church in the US in the 1960s) — still very relevant and effective.

Even for the musicalization work, a workshop in seawater, with ears submerged, allowed participants to listen to an unknown universe populated by strange sounds, struck all around by group members with different materials (iron, stone, wood, etc.) around the experimenter.

It is clear that we will continue in this direction in the future, more aware than ever of transmitting good, sustainable environmental practices through artistic activity, respectful of our Mother Earth. Our teaching of children, in schools and/or summer camps, is already strongly imbued with this.

3 L'espace

For L'espace, sustainability is not a separate concept but a dimension that permeates ecology, ethics, society, and aesthetics. It is a creative principle that shapes the way we conceive movement, organisation, and our relationship with places.

Our corporeal research is rooted in natural movement and in the idea of the body as an ecosystem. Dance emerges from gravity, breath, and spirals: elements that generate an "ecology of energy," where movement does not waste or force, but releases what is already present. This vision leads to an essential way of dancing in which improvisation and deep listening become sustainable practices: nothing is imposed, everything is cultivated through an organic relationship with the internal and external environment.

The scenic dimension reflects the same approach. We favour minimal scenography, made of reusable and essential materials. Real sound, voice, and the relationship with natural or architectural space take the place of complex or heavy devices, supporting a clean aesthetic that reduces impact while amplifying presence.

On an organisational level, L'espace adopts practices that place care for resources and people at the centre. We work in shared and regenerated spaces, activate local networks to reduce travel, digitise most materials, and reuse costumes and props. The focus is not on apparatus but on people and on the quality of the relationships that make artistic work possible.

Within D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S., this vision took concrete form through somatic and environmental pedagogy, reduced travel thanks to ongoing digital collaboration, the absence of unnecessary scenic materials, and the natural integration of the Final Event within the Dissidenza Festival. The creation EcoSapiens also follows this trajectory: a research on the relationship between nature and technology, where the body seeks a possible balance between the human landscape, the environment, and digital tools.

In this perspective, sustainability becomes a culture of sensing: a dance that nourishes rather than consumes, that listens rather than imposes, that regenerates resources through presence, relationship, and artistic responsibility.

What was the situation before, during and after the project D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S.

1 Sempiternal

Before D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S.

When Sempiternal Asociación Cultural was founded, its aim was clear: to democratize access to the arts of movement and to contribute to a more inclusive cultural ecosystem in its region. Although the association itself was young, its team already had wide experience in performing arts and non-formal education, and had launched projects such as the videodance Sempiternal, La Reunión en Danza, regular courses for adults, and various cultural mediation actions. These initiatives allowed the organization to consolidate its educational methodology, experiment with community dance tools, and create networks of artists and audiences.

However, despite this experience, international collaboration was still pending. The association had not yet had the opportunity to expand its work beyond the regional and national context, nor to situate its methodology in dialogue with European partners. D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. therefore arrived at the right time: it offered the chance to open the scope of Sempiternal's work, strengthen its educational and artistic practices, and contribute to a shared European framework for adult education through the arts.

During D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S.

Approaches were adapted, contrasted, and enriched through international exchange. A particularly valuable aspect of this process was the opportunity to work directly with three groups of women survivors of gender-based violence. Through the workshops, we were able to witness firsthand the positive impact that movement-based practices can have on both physical and emotional levels. The sessions provided these women with a safe space to reconnect with their bodies, regain confidence, and experience dance not only as an artistic activity but as a form of empowerment and healing. This experience reaffirmed our belief in the transformative potential of the arts of movement and gave a deeper social dimension to our educational practice.

Beyond this, Sempiternal gained valuable experience in managing collaborative processes across borders, using digital platforms to share practices, and documenting educational work in ways that can be transferred and sustained.

After D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S.

Looking ahead, Sempiternal is committed to ensuring that the experiences and knowledge acquired during D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. continue to have an impact. The methodologies developed will not remain confined to the project, but will be integrated into the organization's toolbox. The international dimension that D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. has opened will be nurtured, seeking to expand networks and continue building bridges between local and European practices.

At the same time, the project has reinforced the organization's cultural activism: its vision of art as a fundamental right and as a tool for social transformation is now supported by concrete experiences of intercultural dialogue, innovation, and shared learning. In this sense, D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. has not only been an opportunity for growth but also a catalyst for future projects that place the arts of movement at the center of inclusive, creative, and sustainable cultural practices.

2 Vialuni

This is the first Erasmus project we have participated in, and it has been a true discovery — a rich human adventure at the heart of the cultural practices of our European neighbors, in this case Spain and Sicily. The place of artistic practice is necessarily different there, as are its structures and the partnerships through which it develops.

Before D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S.

The Vialuni company, based in Corsica for 25 years, quickly understood the challenges of its work on this island — “an island at the edge of the world, an island at the heart of the world” — where, in these magnificent landscapes, the impacts of poor environmental practices appear amplified. Sustainable development was the only possible choice.

And the choreographic creations, like the outreach projects, were all built around this objective. This is evidenced by some of the show titles: Arbres, Humains (2004/05), Seconde Nature (2007), L'Eau Debout (2008), Un jour de grands bois (2021/22), L'Aire Bleue (2022/23), La Performance Agricole (2024/25)...

We also participated in numerous site-specific projects, taking advantage of certain favorable locations, notably the creation of the “Petricanti” space with other artists, on the banks of a river, which for several years hosted artistic events under the stars during the summer.

During D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S.

For D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S., it was perfectly natural and obvious to share this sensitive world with our partners. Whether with our amateur participants (including an architect working with earth, a landscape designer, a haiku writer, an engineer turned energy practitioner, a retirement home activities coordinator...) or with European artists, we emphasized listening to others and to the environment in order to build a human community that respects living together — in a sustainable daily life.

After D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S.

Vialuni will take into account all the intercultural exchanges of D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. and the knowledge thus acquired.

The cultural richness of Europe, its regional specificities, and the professionalism of the participants impressed us.

Awareness of the role of art and artistic practice open to all is very real, and the various protocols developed renew and complement our own; they will not be forgotten, and the connections will endure. Discovering the work of other European organizations strengthens our own choices and projects for the future.

We will continue to open the frontiers of art. Our territories are nomadic. Faced with economic, social, and racial inequalities, artistic practice in Europe allows us to create a more livable and sustainable space where bodies become agents of their own individual fulfillment. The connections forged by D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. allow us to act in the urgency of the moment, through responses across distance, bringing individuals closer together. For us, the journey has begun.

2 L'espace

Before D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S.

Before joining D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S., L'espace APS/ASD was already an established centre for contemporary dance and somatic research in Palermo, characterised by a strong artistic identity rooted in the Natural Movement Dance (DMN) method developed by Giovanni Zappulla. The organisation offered training programmes, community-based activities, and creative projects, while cultivating a growing interest in ecological awareness, bodily presence, and somatic education.

Despite this solid foundation, most of the work still unfolded within a local and national framework. International collaborations did exist, but they were not yet structured into stable, replicable formats specifically aimed at adult education. At this stage, several needs clearly emerged: giving the DMN method a more defined structure through dedicated training modules for adults; improving documentation and pedagogical tools; integrating existing sustainability intentions into simple and concrete daily practices; widening access to dance education for people from socially and economically vulnerable backgrounds; and building gradual, meaningful European connections suitable for a small-scale organisation.

L'espace entered the project with strong artistic and somatic foundations and with a clear motivation: to transform its internal knowledge into accessible, replicable, and truly inclusive practices for a diverse range of adult learners.

During D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S.

During the D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. project, L'espace had the chance to deepen and clarify its pedagogical approach while working side by side with European partners. This experience made it possible to organise existing knowledge more coherently and to explore new directions in the field of somatic dance education.

- **Pedagogical development**

Throughout the project, the DMN method was gradually refined. Several key aspects were structured into clear micro-modules dedicated to breathing, gravity, spirals, weight transfer and relational awareness. Outdoor practice and listening to the environment became an integral part of the work, reinforcing the connection between movement and the natural world. Particular attention was also given to somatic safety, self-regulation and consent, ensuring an accessible and respectful learning environment for all participants.

This process encouraged greater clarity, simplicity and inclusiveness, especially in relation to adult learners without a professional dance background.

- **Piloting in Palermo**

The piloting phase in Palermo involved a group of ten young adults who normally have little access to contemporary dance training. The programme combined different elements—Qigong to cultivate breath and inner focus, Chen-style Taijiquan to develop grounding and elasticity, and the DMN practice to explore natural movement, improvisation and relational awareness.

The main outcomes were very positive: participants developed stronger confidence and body awareness, discovered new forms of personal creativity, and experienced supportive group dynamics. Many recognised dance as a meaningful space for well-being, expression and self-discovery.

- Sustainability and working culture

The project also helped consolidate a more sustainable working philosophy within the organisation. This included the use of minimal materials, simple and adaptable settings, a preference for shared spaces and outdoor environments, and a more mindful approach to mobility through coordinated travel and digital communication. These practices made the project coherent with the ecological values shared by the partners.

- Cooperation and exchange

Mobility activities offered valuable opportunities for exchange: partners inspired each other, shared practical tools, and experienced a form of professional growth that was informal yet deeply significant. The collaboration fostered a supportive, trust-based international connection that is particularly meaningful for a small-scale organisation like L'espace.

The final event, presented within the Festival Dissidanza, allowed the organisation to share the results of the project with its local community in a simple, coherent and environmentally conscious way.

After D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S.

After completing the project, L'espace intends to carry forward the work initiated within D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. in a gradual, sustainable and realistic manner, fully aligned with the scale and spirit of a KA210 initiative. Rather than expanding too quickly, the organisation aims to consolidate what has been learned and allow future developments to emerge organically.

- Local continuation

At the local level, L'espace plans to continue offering somatic and DMN workshops for adults in Palermo, maintaining regular opportunities for accessible movement education. Activities similar to the piloting phase will be repeated in collaboration with community centres and cultural partners, ensuring that the methodologies tested during the project remain alive and connected to the territory. The learnings and insights gathered throughout D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. will also be integrated into the organisation's ongoing training programmes.

- Capacity building

Internally, the organisation intends to refine its teaching tools, checklists and learning structures, making them clearer and easier to use. Little by little, new facilitators will be trained to support the dissemination of the DMN approach, strengthening the organisation's long-term sustainability. Simple and manageable forms of documentation—short videos, notes and activity sheets—will continue to be produced to support this process.

- European collaboration

On a European level, L'espace will maintain informal contact with its partners and remain open to small-scale forms of collaboration, such as micro-residencies, short artist exchanges and shared workshops. The organisation will also consider participating in future Erasmus+ initiatives, but only when coherent with its size, resources and working rhythm.

- Sustainable practice

The ecological and inclusive working practices developed during the project will continue to guide the organisation. L'espace will keep favouring simple, low-impact methods, promoting accessibility through low-cost formats, and valuing slowness, sensitivity and community as essential principles of its artistic and educational identity.

In essence, D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. marks the beginning of a quiet, organic path of growth for L'espace—a way to strengthen its methodology, open up to Europe with care and moderation, and continue making dance a space of well-being, connection and natural presence for adult learners.





The project activities - Piloting

THE TARGET GROUP

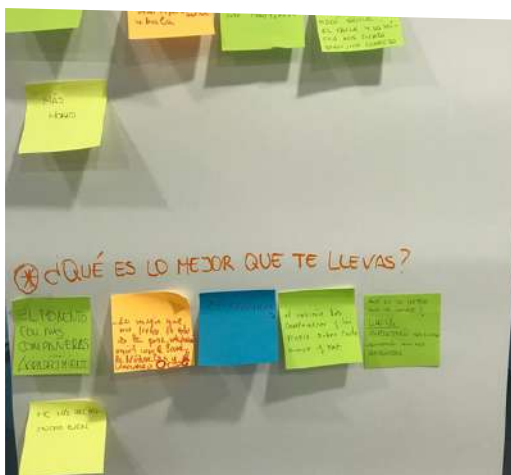
Sempiternal

The pilot phase of D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. in Spain was implemented by Sempiternal Asociación Cultural across three towns in La Rioja: Arnedo, Calahorra, and Logroño. The program specifically targeted women survivors of gender-based violence, with the aim of offering them a safe, creative, and inclusive space to explore dance and movement as tools for recovery and empowerment. In total, twelve structured sessions were carried out, creating a shared journey that gradually moved from body awareness to collective creation.

The primary beneficiaries of this pilot were the women who participated in the workshops. Many of them had endured traumatic experiences that disconnected them from their own bodies, and the sessions offered an opportunity to reclaim the body as a safe home. Through exercises of breathing, body awareness, and low-impact movement, participants rediscovered physical pleasure, trust in contact, and the possibility of expressing themselves freely. The use of circle dances from different traditions, improvisation, and guided visualizations opened pathways to both individual healing and collective empowerment.

The sessions also brought an added value at the community level. By working in small towns as well as in the capital of the region, the program demonstrated the importance of bringing artistic and educational resources closer to local contexts, beyond centralised urban hubs. Each group became a micro-community, where bonds of trust and solidarity were woven among women who shared similar life experiences. This relational dimension was particularly powerful: the pilot not only offered tools for personal empowerment but also fostered mutual support networks that can continue beyond the project itself.

From a methodological perspective, the pilots were grounded in principles of safety, voluntariness, and progressive opening. Starting with individual exercises, participants slowly moved into pair dynamics and finally into group and community creations. The symbolic progression from “my body” to “our dance”, allowed the women to reconnect with themselves while at the same time situating their personal stories within a broader social and collective narrative. One of the most significant milestones of the pilot was the community dance session, where participants translated concepts such as woman, community, dance, and well-being into collective movement scores. In this way, dance became not only a space for expression but also a platform to question social challenges and envision alternatives.



The results of the evaluation were deeply encouraging. Participants highlighted specific moments as especially meaningful: the intimacy and trust created through partner exercises, the qualities of some meditative dances, the sense of gratitude embodied in circle dances, and the opportunity to go deeper through guided visualizations. These practices were valued not just as artistic activities but as transformative experiences that redefined their relationship with their own bodies and with others.

Looking beyond the direct participants, the impact of the pilot extends to future beneficiaries: professionals working in the fields of education, social care, and the arts who can adopt and replicate the methodology; institutions committed to supporting survivors of gender-based violence; and cultural networks that now have access to a tested, adaptable, and transferable model. The pilot has shown that integrating somatic practices, traditional dances, improvisation, and community methodologies can create sustainable, replicable programs that promote well-being, empowerment, and social cohesion.

The Spanish pilots have demonstrated that dance is a tool of recovery, empowerment, and transformation by addressing the needs of a particularly vulnerable group.



THE PILOTING SESSION IN LOGROÑO

1: Introduction and First Contacts

Objectives: Build trust, introduce basic concepts, and explore interpersonal connection.

Main activities:

- Personal and project introduction with emphasis on creating a safe space
- Warm-up focused on postural awareness through movement and conscious breathing
- Arms sequence for joint mobility and choreographic memory
- Partner exercise "Palm of the Hand" – work to explore contact with others, improvisation, and leading/following
- Introduction to the circle Hungarian Czarda dance
- Reflective closing on session experiences
- Key elements: First interpersonal connection through the "Palm of the Hand" activity, allowing exploration of power and trust dynamics.

2: Deepening the Connection

Objectives: Develop body awareness and explore different forms of connection.

Main activities:

- Adapted warm-up in chairs for greater accessibility.
- Circle dance "Gratitude and Embrace" to strengthen group bonds.
- Evolution of the "Palm of the Hand" exercise including invisible connection.
- "Pleasurable movement": we seek a small, brief movement that we enjoy. The facilitator points to someone to look at; each participant imitates the movement, making it their own and modifying it if necessary to find pleasure in it. Gradually, we make it bigger until it reaches its fullest expression.
- Introduction of Greek meditative dance.

Key elements: Incorporation of the meditative and gratitude dimension. The "pleasurable movement" activity allowed reconnection with pleasurable bodily sensations.

3: Community Dance and Collective Construction

Objectives: Create a community dance experience that addresses participants' social challenges and builds collective alternatives.

Core activity: Extended community dance workshop:

- Group definition of 4 concepts: community, dance, woman, and well-being.
- Identification of community challenges and proposal of possible alternatives.
- Creation of slogans based on the previous challenges/alternatives and their translation into movement scores.
- Collective construction of movement sequences.
- Review and reworking of initial concepts.

Key elements: This activity marked a turning point toward the communal and political, enabling participants to connect their personal experiences to broader social challenges through movement.

4: Integration and Closure

Objectives: Integrate learnings, strengthen the relationship with one's own body as a safe home, and evaluate the process.

Main activities:

- Initial visualization: "My body, my safe home." Meditation to improve body safety and physical-emotional connection.
- Adapted mobility in chairs.
- Joint creation of movement scores.
- Return to meaningful activities: circle dance Gratitude and Embrace, Hungarian Czarda, and meditative Hassapikos.

Key elements: The visualization of the body as a safe home was a powerful activity, reinforcing body ownership and self-protection.

CONTAMINATION AND EXCHANGE

The work carried out by other partners within D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. has had a significant and inspiring influence on Sempiternal's own practices. One of the most valuable experiences was participating in the first training course on Danza Movimiento Naturale, based on the methodology developed by Giovanni Zapulla. This course allowed us to deepen our understanding of somatic movement and bodily connection, elements that are already central to our workshops. By engaging with these techniques, we were able to refine our own approaches, enrich our pedagogical tools, and strengthen the ways in which we guide participants to connect with their bodies and their creative potential. At the same time, the training highlighted similarities with more artistic and interpretative practices that both partner organizations employ. This created fertile ground for exchanging methods and approaches, allowing us to share and hybridize techniques in ways that enhanced both our work and theirs. By exploring different ways of combining somatic awareness with expressive and performative elements, we were able to experiment with integrated approaches that support both personal empowerment and artistic exploration in our workshops.

The second training course, focused on musicalisation with Fabien Delisle, opened another realm of possibilities. We learned extensively about crafting soundscapes and atmospheres, as well as how to use everyday objects as instruments or tools for sonic creation. This experience inspired us to incorporate more dynamic, playful, and interactive approaches to sound in our sessions, enriching the sensory experience of participants and expanding the ways in which movement, creativity, and perception can be intertwined.

Overall, the exchange with other partners has been highly generative, providing both new tools and fresh perspectives. It demonstrated the potential of mixing and hybridising methodologies. This contamination of ideas has strengthened our capacity to innovate within workshops, pilot programs, and mediation activities, creating more engaging, inclusive, and holistic experiences for all participants.



Vialuni

This pilot phase of D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. in Corsica, France, was structured around the Vialuni association in Ajaccio, in the company's comfortable studio nestled in nature on the Pietralba hillside. It is important to understand that life in the island's few medium-sized towns is deeply interconnected with the surrounding villages, and it is common for rural residents to travel from nearby communities.

The target audience was primarily seniors, but not exclusively. Ultimately, a mixed group of men and women, adults and seniors, participated in the workshop. Ten sessions took place from April 5, 2025, to July 7, 2025, culminating in a public performance.

Some participants were already involved in similar practices, while others were new to this field, for whom these sessions opened up an unexpected and joyful horizon of creative freedom. Some are professionally engaged in caregiving, working in retirement homes or private practices, and will be able to share these methodologies with their own communities.

Through the experience of the proposed exercises, their repetition, and their in-depth exploration over the course of the project, each participant progressed, accumulating increasingly refined bodily perceptions and knowledge, layer by layer, thanks to the tools derived from somatic practices and real-time composition offered to them. Confidence in their abilities, trust in the support of the teachers and group members, liberated bodies and minds—a quiet community of pleasure and recognition emerged. Dance is also a therapeutic practice.

The informal evaluation was very positive, and many participants expressed a desire to continue this unstructured dance practice, culminating in a collective creation connected to ecological and sustainable practices on an island where these issues are becoming increasingly urgent.

These moments were perceived as unexpected respites, allowing participants to reconnect with their own abilities while building bonds of trust and safety with others. These moments were described as “decisive” in their personal journeys.

A beautiful human experience, not so common these days, that will remain etched in their memories and bodies. This is what the D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. pilot program in Corsica has made possible.



THE PILOTING SESSION IN AJACCIO

1/ Objective

Dance for non-professionals!

For the Vialuni Company, this was the objective—the challenge—of this project: to go beyond the professional/amateur distinction and get seniors and everyday people dancing. Each of us, “ordinary people,” can reveal ourselves, for a moment, as “artists of movement,” moving away from the clichés of performative contemporary dance. A generous utopia, full of openness, where a dance shared by all audiences is invented, breaking free from standardized forms and recognizing and valuing the uniqueness of each person’s experience. A human adventure where dance becomes the common language.

We reinvent the concept, offering bodies a freedom full of vitality, where inhibitions can be overcome through small leaps.

Throughout the project, we draw upon key elements of choreographic culture, citing sources and circulating books and journals.

In our introduction, we share this attempt to define Contemporary Dance, quoting the renowned French critic and historian Laurence Louppe on the “values” shared within this artistic community:

“The individualization of a body and a gesture without a model, expressing an irreplaceable identity... the production (and not reproduction) of a gesture (from each individual’s own sensory sphere). Working with the material of the body, the material of the self... the non-anticipation of form, the importance of gravity as the driving force of movement... Moral values as well, such as personal authenticity, respect for the body of others, the principle of non-arrogance, the demand for a ‘just’ solution and not merely a spectacular one, transparency, and respect for the processes and approaches involved.”

Poétique de la danse contemporaine, Bruxelles, Contredanse, 1997

Keywords:

Being together; creating a community; the social role of dance; artistic experience; collaboration; educational art; innovation; democratic body; respect; from solo to group; support; gravity; score.

2/ Main activities :

All workshops are organized according to the same process, which is enriched and made more complex over the course of the project, depending on each participant's abilities, culminating in a final public performance:

- A presentation in a welcoming circle, where participants take stock of their current physical and emotional state, whether they are tired or not...
- A long and precise physical warm-up, based on specific somatic practices and on the contributions of the masters of American postmodern dance, which continue to influence the practices of choreographers and teachers. It begins lying on the floor, surrendering to gravity, rediscovering natural breathing. Starting from a "zero state" of the body, releasing tension...
- Recognizing one's own anatomy, starting with its imprint on the floor through small, successive pressure points across the entire back of the body. Then, exploring one's own body, another person's body, observing folds...
- How to organize oneself from this point to move on the floor, gliding and/or lifting different segments, then transitioning through different heights up to verticality. Modifying parameters: space, amplitude, level, time (slow, fast, very fast), flow (free, continuous, or constrained, with or without accents), and weight (from very heavy to light).
- Standing: working on the gaze, focusing on a focal point or using peripheral vision, and noticing the changes in the body. Moving through the space of others. Bringing one person into your field of vision, then two or three... Following someone... Imitating another person's gait by putting yourself in their shoes...
- Gradually, we introduce periods of improvisation: starting with what we are used to doing—walking, running, stopping, lying down, crossing, leaning, bending—then moving toward the unusual. All while remaining aware of the group's actions. Observing each other in small groups.
- Similarly, we work with the materials/objects present in the space: chairs, sticks, walls, etc.
- Observing each other in small groups, changing perspectives both by changing position in the space and by changing posture—sitting, lying down, etc.

Sharing time is important at each of these stages, observing a fundamental rule: we first talk about what we felt during the experience, then we talk about what we saw, without ever being judgmental, but by expressing how we received—through our own sensitivity and imagination—the improvisation of others, observed with respect for everyone.

- How to work in pairs, trios, half-groups, and full groups based on one or more instructions.

- Attempting unison through slowed-down work, with the person in front leading the others.

Gradually, participants are introduced to various compositional processes, with a focus on real-time composition (following the protocols of Mark Tompkins, Meg Stuart, Simone Forti, and other contemporary masters), the principle of task-based sequences (Anna Halprin), as well as the role of chance as described by Merce Cunningham.

3/ Collective and final construction

The final workshop culminates in a public performance.

We continue the experience up to the final public presentation: the piece proposed by choreographer Michèle Marcucci-Ettori and shared with the group, in a collective construction, to further affirm their identity. Each person's remarkable journey finds its culmination there, in the immediacy of their unique presence.

The discussion that follows with the audience is yet another asset in understanding what has been built and enriched throughout the workshops: the art of movement within a generally supportive atmosphere.



CONTAMINATION AND EXCHANGE

The practices exchanged during the D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. project with younger organizations and partners were valuable, leading to a better understanding of their own artistic and pedagogical approaches and objectives, thus reinforcing our own.

The first session with Giovanni Zappulla focused on the transmission of his DMN (Dance Movement Method). We had been familiar with his company's work for several years. This session was like an open door to the origins of his movement and to the physical training of his dancers.

We explored this practice, which connects the tools of contemporary dance with those of Far Eastern arts—Qigong and Tai Chi—the center and periphery of the body, space, grounding, working with weight... toward a “free” dance, recalling certain discoveries and intentions of pioneers of contemporary dance such as Isadora Duncan. From the developments of American postmodern dance to what are now considered the fundamentals of contemporary dance—weight, flow, energy, space—it is gratifying to see that dance is now enriched by somatic practices and martial arts, subtly complementing physical work in ways other than “mimetic” learning in front of a mirror. European choreographers are disseminating these practices and making them their own.

Professional dancers benefit from this, their anatomical potential preserved, resulting in fewer injuries while engaging in profound sensory and expressive exploration. Amateur dancers, too, can enter movement more easily, daring to dance in their own unique way, using only their individual abilities.

For over forty years, working with diverse audiences—children, people with disabilities, the elderly, and those in psychiatric hospitals—we have drawn upon these shared mediation practices with our European partners, recognizing that even the smallest everyday gesture can become dance, utilizing music, speech, drawing, and the manipulation of everyday objects in the various contexts in which the target audiences find themselves.

Dance is indeed a holistic and inclusive practice of care, leading each individual toward greater well-being and autonomy.



L'espace

The piloting carried out by L'espace APS/ASD took place in Palermo and involved a small group of young adult learners who face limited access to contemporary dance training and somatic education in their local context. The target group was composed of 10 participants between the ages of 18 and 30, many of whom come from economically or socially fragile backgrounds. Several participants had previous experience in movement or dance, but had never had the opportunity to engage in structured somatic practices such as Qigong, Taijiquan or the Natural Movement Dance (DMN) method developed by L'espace.

The group was selected with the aim of offering an accessible and supportive learning environment, where participants could reconnect with their bodies, develop new skills and gain confidence through natural movement, breath work and guided improvisation. The sessions were designed to be open-level, inclusive and suitable for participants with different levels of experience, emphasising presence, self-regulation, awareness and creative exploration.

Those who took part benefited from experiencing a training pathway that is generally not available in their local area. They strengthened their capacity for body awareness, grounding, listening and relational movement. The piloting also provided a safe and welcoming space where participants could cultivate a sense of belonging, develop trust in group processes and explore their personal creativity.

The results will continue to benefit not only the direct participants, but also the wider community surrounding L'espace. The improved pedagogical tools, teaching methods and somatic practices developed during the piloting can now be integrated into future workshops, community activities and adult education programmes run by the organisation. In this way, the piloting contributes to expanding access to somatic and ecological dance practices in Palermo, supporting well-being, inclusion and long-term engagement with culture and contemporary movement.

THE PILOTING SESSION IN PALERMO

The pathway was conceived as a gradual process, designed as a progressive transformation of attention, breath, and presence within movement. The pedagogical structure integrated three main axes:

1. Qigong Practices

Sessions were dedicated to developing:

- awareness of the breath
- internal perception of energetic flows
- connection between mental focus and movement

This work provided participants with a solid somatic foundation, preparing both body and mind for the sensitivity required in DMN.

2. Elements of Taijiquan (Chen Style)

Specific exercises and short sequences were introduced to:

- cultivate grounding and fluidity
- recognise elastic force and spiral force
- develop continuity of movement and relational listening

Taijiquan served as a natural bridge between energetic awareness and physical action, facilitating access to the movement qualities essential to DMN.

3. DMN Practice



The practice of Natural Movement Dance was offered through a gradual progression:

- foundational exercises on presence, weight, and breath
- study of spirals and natural rebound
 - fluid-dynamic connections between body segments
- group listening and relational field awareness

The work finally evolved into guided and structured improvisations, allowing each participant to reinvest somatic skills into artistic creation, giving form to their own images, memories, and emotional resonances.

Outcomes and Impact

The piloting enabled participants to:

- access a type of training that is generally not available in the local territory
- strengthen presence, listening, and bodily trust
- develop tools for individual and collective creativity
- experience dance as a space of care, dignity, and possibility

The experience confirmed that the somatic approach of DMN—combined with Qigong and Taijiquan—can become a vehicle for empowerment and inclusion, offering a replicable model for vulnerable and marginalised educational contexts.

Essence of the piloting

Rediscovering the nature of the body to rediscover one's place in the world.

In a territory where opportunities are often lacking, dance becomes an act of resistance, growth, and community.

The Exercise

Axis Construction and Breath-Centering

Objective: Organise the body structure, promote grounding and active quietness.

Principles

- alignment of body volumes as a living architecture
- weight released toward the forefoot to activate deep musculature
- release of superficial musculature
- opening of articular spaces (hips, spine, chest, atlas)
- breathing that follows and reveals the structure

Practice

- standing, feet parallel and soft
- perceive forefoot–midfoot–heel support
- let the weight drop without collapsing
- inhale “from the ground,” rising along the spine
- exhale allowing the weight to “fall” into the earth
- observe the natural settling without correcting

The body finds its axis not by “holding,” but by letting the skeleton support and the breath guide.

2–4 minutes



Spiral and Weight Transfer — “Inner Wave”

Objective: Generate organic movement through weight, spiral, and continuity.

Principles

- movement starts from the centre and expands to the limbs
- weight transfer as the origin of the wave
- spiral as the body’s natural response to gravity

Practice

- begin from the pelvis
- shift weight from one foot to the other without forcing
- let the wave of weight generate torsion and spiral
- do not lead with the arms: follow the wave

The body does not “make a spiral”: the spiral happens because there is weight, continuity, and joint space.

3–5 minutes

Gravity, Elasticity and Natural Rebound

Objective: Dialogue with gravity, activating deep reactivity rather than superficial tension.

Principles

- feed on gravity instead of fighting it
- allow the body to react spontaneously
- deep fascia activation as a response, not an imposition

Practice

- small soft falls (forward / lateral)
- let the weight go
- allow the body to return on its own, elastic
- imagine water adapting and returning

Gravity does not pull us down: it teaches us natural return and relationship with the ground.

2–4 minutes

Energetic Listening and Sensitive Contact

Objective: Develop subtle perception, relationship, empathy and co-regulation.

Principles

- listening to the energetic emanation of the body (Qi)
- progressive contact: energy → hand → whole body
- resonance, not imitation

Three phases

1. Energetic listening without contact
perceiving distance, field, internal movement
2. Hands on partner
mutual guidance, role exchange, tonic listening
3. Whole body
free contact, body parts interacting

Relationship begins before touch: contact is presence, not control.
5–8 minutes

Elemental Improvisation and Natural Rhythm

Objective: Integrate previous principles into a creative and poetic form.

Principles

- rhythm arising from listening, not imposed timing
- inspiration from natural elements
- movement quality coherent with internal sensation

Practice

- choose an element (wind / wave / root / leaf / rock / fire)
- transform density, rhythm, tone, direction, breath
- build micro-phrases in relation to space and group

Nature offers maps: we embody the quality, not the image.

6–8 minutes



CONTAMINATION AND EXCHANGE

The D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. project unfolded through three international mobilities — in Spain, France and Italy — each conceived as a progressive stage of research, exchange and methodological deepening. Every meeting contributed to a shared journey in which bodily practice, perceptual sensitivity and connection with nature intertwined to create continuity between training, somatic experience and artistic creation.

The first mobility, held in Logroño, marked the beginning of the process. Here, Giovanni Zappulla introduced the partners to the Natural Movement Dance (DMN) method, rooted in internal disciplines and in the exploration of natural movement. The sessions focused on Qigong practices to refine listening, breath and attention, Chen-style Taijiquan exercises to explore continuity, spirals and elastic force, and progressively structured DMN improvisations. The work was enriched by theoretical input, feedback exchanges, and spaces for observation and pedagogical dialogue. Annachiara Trigili played a crucial role by supporting the transmission of the practices and facilitating the group's bodily and relational elaboration. This first phase planted the seed of the project: reconnecting with nature through the body, rediscovering balance, fluidity and presence.

The second mobility took place in Ajaccio, where partners were guided by Michèle Etti and Fabien Deslisle, artists and researchers working at the intersection of movement and sound. In Corsica, the process shifted from the body that listens to the body that resonates. The group explored practices of bodily and environmental listening, the use of voice and breath as sonic material, improvisations and perceptual walks in nature, gradually transforming natural sound into music and sensitive landscapes. This stage expanded the work initiated in Spain by deepening its poetic, sensory and acoustic dimensions, opening a more intimate dialogue between gesture, rhythm and environment.

The final mobility is hosted in Palermo and serves as the moment for public sharing and dissemination. Here, three final videos — one per partner — are presented as artistic outcomes of the collective journey, alongside EcoSapiens, the piece created by L'espace during the piloting phase, the Manual Toolkit, and moments of open dialogue with the artistic and educational community. The integration of the event within the International Festival Dissidanza amplifies the visibility of the project and fosters a broader cultural exchange.

Overall, the mobility process has generated a shared language that bridges bodily practice and somatic listening, a transmission method grounded in the interplay of body, nature, sound and relationship, and a European network destined to grow through new projects, residencies and educational programmes. Ultimately, it has been a journey from the body to nature, from nature to sound, and from sound to community.

Conclusions



The D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. project has revealed the profound transformative power of dance when approached as a practice of listening, presence, and human connection. Across Spain, France, and Italy, different methodologies—DMN, somatic practices, community dance, movement–sound research—met, influenced one another, and gradually shaped a shared language in which movement, nature, and relationality became both educational tools and poetic forces. For all partners, the project affirmed that dance is far more than technique: it is a culture of the body rooted in awareness, dignity, and ecological sensitivity; a path capable of restoring individuals to themselves, to others, and to their environment.

In Palermo, the work deepened the Natural Movement Dance (DMN) approach, demonstrating its ability to create accessible and inclusive spaces for adult learners and vulnerable communities. In Spain, the process evolved into a delicate journey of reconnection, where movement supported women survivors of violence in recovering autonomy, safety, and joy in inhabiting their bodies. In France, the project opened a space where presence, vulnerability, and the “democratic body” could emerge, dissolving hierarchies between professionals and non-professionals and reaffirming that everyone carries dance within them. Through these diverse experiences, D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. became a bridge between practices, contexts, and people—a space where each partner could adapt, reinterpret, and enrich the common principles of embodiment and empowerment.

The project also generated intimate and poetic discoveries: moments of vulnerability and humour, collective strength, shared breath, and gestures of mutual support—elements that words often fail to express but that dance reveals with clarity. These are perhaps the most lasting results: the recognition that art and movement can serve as powerful instruments of expression, healing, and community-building. At the same time, partners acknowledged that artistic practice cannot be separated from the social and political spheres. In a historical moment marked by uncertainty and fragmentation, projects like D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. offer a concrete response—cultivating resilience, participation, and critical openness while resisting the homogenisation of body and thought.

Looking forward, all partners share the intention to continue this work: integrating the methodologies developed into local training programmes, strengthening the European network that has emerged, and expanding future collaborations toward sustainability, inclusion, and creativity. The practices tested—DMN, somatic awareness, movement–sound research, community dance—will continue to grow through workshops, artistic projects, community actions, and educational pathways, ensuring that the seeds planted during the project keep flourishing.

Ultimately, D.A.R.L.I.N.G.S. does not conclude with its final event. It continues as a living seed—a source of presence, humanity, and connection—destined to grow in bodies, communities, territories, and future European initiatives. Dance becomes an ecological and human act, a quiet yet powerful gesture that restores relationship, imagination, and possibility.



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