

TTT Budapest, 12 - 21 April, 2010 – Report – Eva Karczag

TTT Budapest, 12 - 21 April, 2010

Seven individuals, united by a common language. No translation needed. Discussion can proceed quickly into areas of subtlety and precision, where questions are welcomed, thoughts are shared with generosity, and parameters are nudged wider open. Curious, because we are speakers of Hungarian, English and German, but although we do use the spoken and written word, the common language we speak is a particular form of movement, a philosophy of teaching and learning, thinking and creating. We are teachers and performers, and we are here to learn from each other. Our discussions and play are grounded in our practice.

This was the set-up of the Budapest ttt: two Hungarians, two Germans, one Swiss, one British, and one Hungarian/Australian - a further demonstration of the extent of the reach of this 'alternative' work we do.

We began with history. At our first meeting, on the first day, each of us introduced him/herself, and named connections -- some of us knew almost everyone, some of us knew almost no one. But connections began to be drawn as invisible threads that started to crisscross the space around and between us.

History

I speak Hungarian, and have my own history in Budapest. From my two periods of study at the State Ballet Academy (Allami Ballett Intezet) in the 60s and early 70s; to my meeting with Gyula Berger in the 80s, whose abstract movement choreographies and small scale productions were a breath of fresh air in an otherwise bogged down and out of date dance scene; to teaching at Angelus Ivan's school at Csanady utca in the early 90s; to teaching and mentoring the many Hungarians, Eszter Gal and Gyula Berger among them, who studied at EDDC in Arnhem, The Netherlands; to taking part in the first, and in numerous successive, Budapest Contact Festivals, organized by Eszter Gal; to performing in a number of the city's alternative performance spaces – always observing, and noticing how over the decades, the nature of dance in Budapest has changed . . . is changing.

The Budapest dance scene has grown into the present, and is looking eagerly into the future. This was made clear by the many various situations the ttt group visited and experienced in our tightly packed, very intense 8 days, as we moved around Budapest dance schools and performance spaces. We were given an introduction to each place by someone who works there, and is intimately involved in the running of the place – a taste of what happens, and how – day-to-day functioning, aims, challenges.

TTT Budapest, 12 - 21 April, 2010 – Report – Eva Karczag

Spaces and the work happening in them

We were all impressed by the old factories and disused buildings we were shown, that had been taken over by groups and individual artists, as well as by the wholehearted enthusiasm of the people who work in each place. Ivan Angelus at the Budapest Contemporary Dance Academy, Gyula Berger at L1, Katalin Lorincz at the Hungarian Dance Academy, Zoltan Nagy at SIN Cultural Center, Gabor Goda at Artus, ?? at Godor, and others, all spoke with passion about the spaces and work they have helped bring into existence and are keeping alive. Also impressive is the way impresario figures who own some of the locations, are supporting the arts, not only by providing spaces where work can be made and performed, but also through the thoughtfulness they place in preserving original architectural elements, thus ensuring that future artists and audiences continue to remain aware of the history of these newly renovated buildings.

Performances

Even missing two of the planned performances, we had a full schedule, including taking part in the improvised evening performance at SIN. We saw, and experienced, a willingness to experiment, to involve the audience in process (e.g. the post-performance discussion at Artus, the pre-performance task at MU). It seems that Hungarian dancers, choreographers and organizers, although at times shackled by the vagaries of funding and the rules and regulations tied to any financial support received, are willing to explore, to go out on a limb for a vision, and even, as, for instance, in the case of Andrea Hod, who is creating and performing work with a group of 4 committed dancers, find ways to work despite a lack of funding, simply because they must. It is fortunate that enough of the alternative spaces are able to give support through providing rehearsal studios and performance opportunities.

This drive to work reminded me of NY in the 70s, when people did odd jobs in order to be able to survive and be able to dance and create, and work happened in any kind of space that was affordable. This is refreshing in a time that's generally driven by product and success.

Classes

We attended each other's classes, so dialog and the opportunity to be inspired, happened not only verbally, but also through the material of our bodies interacting on a physical level. These classes were open to the general public, and the classes at BUTI and MTF, to the students attending these schools.

Organization

The organization of the project through Workshop Foundation was excellent, and our host, the Budapest Contemporary Dance Academy, was generous in providing us with

TTT Budapest, 12 - 21 April, 2010 – Report – Eva Karczag

everything from studios to scissors and tape. From our first meetings with Petra Peter, Gergely Tallo, Angelus Ivan and the Hungarian contingent, it was clear that we would be given whatever support we needed in order for the research to be a valuable and satisfying experience for the participants, with the assumption that if we became excited by what we were discovering, tangible traces of this excitement would remain, to be spread among the Budapest dance community. When we progressed to developing the structure, Petra contacted the many parties concerned, and arranged with them our rather out-of-the-ordinary schedule and journey through the city. It was gratifying to hear that our plan was met with interest and a willingness to welcome us, by all host venues. We received detailed instructions about navigating the city (e.g. addresses, phone numbers, travel, restaurants, money, etc) meticulously compiled by Dora Tamasi, making it easy for those in the group who were unfamiliar with the city. And we were fed well, with thoughtfulness about lunches and dinners on days when time was tight, or we happened to be in spaces far from good eating possibilities. It was clear, (perhaps a consequence of Hungary's reputation for good food and wine), that the organizers knew, that in order to work well, one must eat well too.

Overview

My own feelings about the Budapest ttt can be summed up by three words - support, support and support. This was made manifest in a number of ways, including:

- Support through our history as a route leading to our present, and as a diving board to our future;
- Support through our dialoguing, how sharing insights allows all of us to grow;
- Support through our shared practices – warming into dancing, training, creating, performing, the support we give each other when we bring reflection and individual learning (self reflecting) into the studio;
- Support of physical presence from within the group, and Gill's virtual support (see Gill's 'A View from the Balcony');
- Support through sharing networking.

Unlike many art forms, dance tends to be a communal activity, but in many situations still has the competitive edge that limits information sharing and can stunt growth. During the Budapest ttt, the operative word and experience was generosity, of information, of body and of spirit.