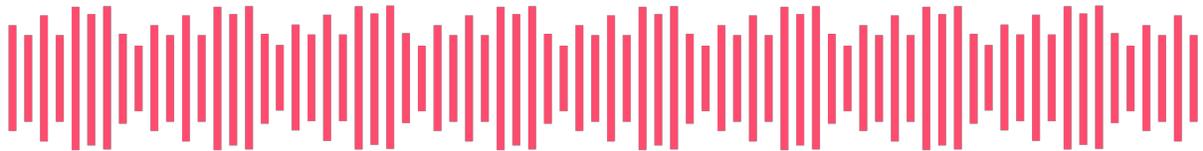


TALKING MOVES



A PODCAST ABOUT DANCE

Making Work for the Outdoors **S03 / E02**

Episode Description

In this episode, we talk to **Frauke Requardt** and **Luca Silvestrini** about making work for the outdoors.

Artists have long been making work to animate places and spaces and there is much for them to consider when they do. The work has to sit within the setting, engage with passersby who perhaps are not expecting, or even asking, to be engaged with. But with the pandemic having closed theatres down for the best part of 2020 and now into 2021, many artists and venues are looking to the outdoors as part of our road to recovery.

Frauke and Luca reflect back on over 15 years of making work for the outdoors and talk about the differences in both developing work for particular spaces as well as touring with pop-up sets and 'venues'. They speak about the experiences of the audience member – of drawing them into the narrative without having the tools at their disposal such as dimming lights and swishing curtains which are often used to create the atmosphere for the performance within traditional theatre settings. They talk about the audience who buy a ticket for and choose to see work in non-theatrical settings and those that stumble across it – and how both the performers and the choreographer prepare for those eventualities.

Coincidentally at time of recording, both artists were about to go into the studio the very next week to start work on new outdoor productions. Each gave us a sneak preview of what we can expect from their exciting new shows... and shared with us their own processes of making work in a pandemic for a world tentatively emerging from it.

Talking Moves is a Greenwich Dance production

Presented by Melanie Precious

Production by Carmel Smith, Lucy White and Melanie Precious

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Intro

Melanie:

Hello and welcome to Talking Moves a podcast from Greenwich Dance where dance artists come together to talk about their work and practice the things that matter and the issues which moves them. I'm Melanie Precious and in this episode I'll be talking to two artists about making work the outdoors. Artists have long been making work to animate places and spaces, and there is much for them to consider when they do. The work has to sit within the setting, engage with passers by who perhaps are not expecting or even asking to be engaged with. But with the pandemic having closed theatres down for the best part of 2020 and now into 2021, many artists and venues are looking to the outdoors as part of a road to recovery. So today I'm going to be asking two choreographers who have been making outdoor work for many years what they think about as they embark upon the creative process of making alfresco theatrical experiences for their audiences. I'm joined by Frauke Requardt, director and choreographer and Luca Silvestrini, artistic director of Luca Silverstrini's Protein. So Frauke, you created Electric Hotel, I think in 2009 and Luca, Invisible Dancing 2010 if that's right, and you did something called El Fresco in 2005. So you've both been making outdoor works for a long time. What first prompted you to create work for the outdoors? Frauke?

Frauke:

Well, it didn't occur to me that that was an option. And then I was sort of match made by Emma Gladstone and Kate McGrath from Fuel with David Rosenberg. He had the beginning of an idea for an outdoor show, which became Electric Hotel, and he wanted to work with dancers. So he required a choreographer that was the beginning of our now I think, 11 year collaboration as Requardt and Rosenberg. So when I speak of outdoor work I speak of the work that I do as Requardt and Rosenberg. Yeah, so he came with this idea of doing a show using a vertical plane as a playing space and was about having an audience sort of looking from the outside in as voyerists, I suppose. There was about voyeristic element about it. And I thought that immediately that there was a great potential to work differently with choreography within that kind of space. Yeah, so we came up with this idea of what then became a hotel consisting of four or five shipping containers, sort of modern style hotel that looked incredibly permanent, but it was actually a temporary structure that went on tour. And so there was this real opportunity to choreograph in a very different way, and to really

shape what the experience might feel like outside the context of the known theatre environment. So I was delighted. And that was the beginning of my outdoor work. Yeah.

Melanie:

And that's so interesting, because actually, you're creating, we're going to dig down into this a little bit later, almost like a new venue in that outdoor space. But Luca your work has often taken slightly different tact and is cited more within the setting, I wonder what prompted you to start making your work for outdoors?

Luca:

It started, actually, the first very first one, it was in 2000. Then Bettina and I, the other half of Protein at that time, we were asked to make a community based project outside in a garden in a park actually. And that was our first time to work outdoors. And it was fascinating. We loved every minute of that it was so nice to to have you're working day work, day office, outdoors. Especially was in Italy, beautiful weather and all that. And then there was a few other opportunities along the way, mainly for film. And then it came actually was thanks to David Massingham that commissioned me to make an outdoor piece for the high street in Birmingham for Birmingham International Dance Festival in 2008. And that became on display because it was for it was for the high street. And the idea was to surprise people with elements of performance. So we use shop windows and other performances, which look like spontaneous or incidental performances along the high street. And then in 2010, I got another commission from David for the same festival and this time was Invisible Dancing, which was a much bigger project with community involvement and all that. And yes, for me, it all started from the high street actually with a very populated dense sort of space very already animated space, and the architecture and the environment, the people, the spaces, the surfaces became the actual set. So I never built a set to put in us in an open space like Frauke did. So for me that those were the elements to play with actually the life of the high street.

Melanie:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And we talked in a recent podcast actually to Anthony Missen of Company Chameleon. And he talked about his decision to start doing work outdoors as being part of a mission to take cultural opportunities to everyone. So reaching people that wouldn't dream of setting foot in a theatre. And I wondered how true that was for is for both of you?

Luca:

Well, for me, that was exactly that I think I was the commission was about doing something for free to take it out in a public space and fully accessible, and trying to empower actually people. Because when you do something in someone's place, you actually celebrate that space. You empower people. So that was actually the remit of the project.

Melanie:

Driving force. And how about you, Frauke, your work's set up slightly differently. So does that play into your decision to do work outdoors?

Frauke:

I think it's a benefit of working outdoors. I'm not sure if it was a part of the decision making process, as I wasn't so aware of what would happen with that. But yes, that's definitely an interesting and lovely part to get new audiences that stumble across. For us, it's like there suddenly, a large structure that wasn't there before and attracts a huge amount of attention or with Motor Show, there were 11 cars, and people could just watch it without listening to the sound, you know, all outdoor work are headphone shows. So you can see it without headphones. And lots of people did that because the way Motor Show was presented in Brighton there was a long ledge that people could sit on. And they then became part of the scenery too. So there's an element of that even the moon in Electric Hotel, it really felt like we kind of hired the moon to show up.

Melanie:

You must let us know how much that costs.

Luca:

What is beautiful as well, that is actually the public becomes part of the show and everything that is there seems to be part of it. You know, when it's not where there's pets, or anything that can happen or weather conditions sometimes are favourable, sometimes not. But sometimes could be very lovely to have like a rainbow behind you, or something spectacular as that.

Melanie:

And so gorgeous to be animating the places and spaces with art. It makes it so visible, doesn't it as we take our stuff outside. Now, I thought I'd clear this up right at the beginning, because vocabulary sometimes means nothing and sometimes it's absolutely everything. And I wondered, when you describe your work, do you use the terminology outdoor work? Or do you call it site specific? Or is there something else? So you're responding to the setting, but actually, you Frauke, you're taking your own self contained world with you. So does outdoor work, cut it in terms of a description?

Frauke:

I do refer to it as outdoor work. Although when I think of outdoor work, obviously that's quite broad. So I do think David and I are we found a particular niche, sometimes what happens with outdoor work, I think that one of its greatest potential is that you can stumble across something. And with us, we do want people to sit down. And the sort of binaural sound recordings that we use offers an

incredible focus. And we do want people to concentrate and sit through the whole thing. Although there's a sense of spectacle, ultimately, sometimes what happens is quite intricate, and people really do have to pay attention and the headphones make it quite a solitary experience, you're kind of isolated from your mates. And that helps with some of the themes that we work with that are sort of more on the existential side isolation, loneliness, or trauma, or you know, what it means to be alive in a wider sense. And, yeah, it definitely helps with kind of focus where energy can easily be lost with your environment.

Melanie:

And Luca, how about you? I mean, Invisible Dancing is definitely, well, I would have thought is a site specific work, but you use that terminology or do you err towards something else?

Luca:

It's very true. I mean, it depends what you write or work for what, how what context. Outdoors, it becomes very easy to speak about the outdoors, because you already say to people that this is happening, what is happening. And then in terms of practice and intervention, I quite like the words like sensitive or site responsive, because you do respond to this space. I know it sounds a little bit more sophisticated, you know, people might go, what? What is that? But in a way you are responding to a space and to space and people that actually are in that in that space.

Melanie:

That's a lovely terminology, because actually site specific, you know, with the word specific, it makes it feel like it is specific to that particular town square that particular castle grounds or you know, whatever it might be, but site responsive gives you the idea of this is a touring thing, it can happen anywhere, it can be adapted for this new space. I think that's really interesting as people perhaps are listening to this thinking about how they might approach this. So of course, some of this work is ticketed, and I think particularly with yours, Frauke with a temporary venue having been created outside and I find this quite interesting, particularly with us now living through the pandemic, because I noticed that with track and trace last year GDIF, so Greenwich and Docklands International Festival's programming, nearly all of that was ticketed, whereas perhaps much of that might have been more open to people just passing by and joining in as they wanted to, but there was this need to be able to count people and trace people. And I wondered at what point in the making process do you have those conversations internally about whether you're going to ticket your work or not? Because it seems to me that it does dictate what that overall experience might be? Luca, has that come up for you?

Luca:

Well, so far, so far, or, you know, On Display, Invisible Dancing, and also Windows in Progress that we did with the Opera House in the Piazza, those were all free events. So there were not ticketed, you

didn't have to book anything. In fact we are soon to make a new work outdoor this summer. And of course, we're thinking about booking probably is going to be free. But still, because we have to regulate the traffic a little bit more because of the situation we're in. So we might need to have a group of people that doesn't go beyond a certain amount. So that's why it's becoming possibly this time around and obligation, you know, more than a choice. But yeah, before now, I never had to think about that.

Melanie:

It changes the field, doesn't it? I know, with Invisible Dancing, am I right in thinking this, you would publish times so you'd be encouraging people to come at a certain time, of course, people who were already in the high street would experience it didn't know it was going to be there. But there might be some people that had come because they knew it was going to be at two o'clock on a Sunday or something.

Luca:

Yeah, it was interesting what David actually came up with as a project because its durational, or its expanse, or that one or two weeks, the project and it actually markets itself. So the first part of the project is not marketed at all. So you find out, you discover it, and then you come back the following day. And so the the only event that was the final day was advertised that the lead up to the final day was always sort of spontaneous, and people start getting used to the idea that this show happens everyday at that time. And we're mainly playing with word of mouth, which is actually really lovely, because we could see people, you know, the audience or the spectators, or the participants becoming bigger and bigger every day.

Melanie:

It gives such freedom doesn't it? It's so liberating, I think as well to take away that pressure of the ticket sales and just be delivering performance where it feels it should be.

Luca:

Especially those people actually in the high street, you know, whether they're regular passer bys or people who are working in the shop that you know, simply go ooh there they are again, and taking a break or sort of start following because they become so familiar. And it's brilliant to see that.

Melanie:

Yeah. And how about you, Frauke, am I right in thinking that all of your work is ticketed, because of the headphones and everything else, or is any of yours kind of rock up?

Frauke:

They have all been ticketed, although some tickets have been for free depending on the festival that's presenting. And so in the past, we have found that the tickets that were for free, they were sold out straight away, but the people didn't rock up. So there was a bit of an issue attached with commitment, which is slight shame, because obviously, it's great when stuff is for free. I'm all for that. And I love that there's something about taking ownership of a show that is you know, reliably presented at a square at a given time each week. And we were kind of at the beginning of doing that we did some r&d in four stations, we did it without permission to say was a little bit under the radar. And we had like a couple of people in Big Bear costumes. And that was delivered via an airport wire tapper that delivers performance and sound at a particular time. So you could you know, buy a ticket for very little, but everybody else would also see it. And it was kind of working with the choreography of the commuters. So you can imagine that that one had been exploded by the pandemic. So because at Liverpool Street Station, for example, there has what's that called, but you can look down yeah, like a balcony. And then if you time the performance, right, the six o'clock train would leave and lots of people would walk particular way. And our performers were just a very small synchronised movements and all of a sudden stand out and then disappear in the crowd. And for some reason, this kind of appearing and disappearing was incredibly emotional and beautiful, like this sort of bigger pattern or picture emerging, and moments of connection, but then fall away, and then you just really can't find them anymore.

Melanie:

We've missed so much haven't we. I wanted to ask you a bit more about that spatial relationship, actually, between the audience and the performer that you talk about that has been integral to your practice. And you've talked to us about the sound already and I imagine that that's an incredible tool that you use for drawing people into your work. And I was wondering how you might do that outdoors when the proscenium and the structure of a venue has gone. You know, that enforcing of everyone to sit down, sit still the lights come down, it makes you focus. But you're doing that in a very clever way using sound. Could you tell us a little bit more about that?

Frauke:

Well, yeah, so this binaural sound recording really puts you into the situation you want people to focus on. So it's done with this head that has a microphone on each side. So you can discern very accurately where the sound comes from. And so the whole of Electric Hotel is basically performers passing the sound from one person to the other, and you can follow the sound or the steps. It feels incredibly live. Although it's pre recorded, lots of people assume that the sound is somehow created with microphones inside, which would be a nightmare, I think. So instead, we have a different nightmare, I suppose with the performers listening to click, click, open the door, click, click, close the door. I was looking at the video earlier, just to remember, you know, it's 10 years ago, that show and Kate Jackson was in it. And she had to burst a bubble gum, she had to blow a bubble on cue. So I just remember that was her rehearsal she was just making bubbles on cue!

Melanie:

And so is that how they work then? The dancers have got just a click track that they're working with. Amazing.

Frauke:

They have a bit of music, they have a click track, often they have David go one... two... Yeah, that's what happens to a greater or lesser extent with Electric Hotel it was very, very precise. Because the frame and where people were situated really lends itself to being very accurate with that, for the rules were an audience was standing in the middle, and it was in the round where people had to move with the action, it was a bit harder to really, you know, get the binaural sound right. So we played more with music and songs. But there was also that element. And in the Motor Show, it was very easy to make people look at the right car, you know, it was about the interior spaces of cars. And it was very easy to know if you're on the outside or if you're in a small interior space.

Melanie:

Yeah. And Luca talking about that relationship between audience and performer. I want to ask you about something. And the question comes from a memory I have of a project we did together, which was in Bath when we worked for a day, maybe it was two days with some local students to make some site specific work in the town square. And the process was a masterclass for me, because you painstakingly talked through the way in which you could reach and engage with people who were perhaps just sat in the town square, innocently having some lunch they weren't asking to be, you know, entertained. And the way you approached that interaction was an invitation. So it wasn't an infringement on the privacy in any way. But it was incredible to see how hard getting that right was, and we were able to see how hard we saw some of the students having a go. And some very annoyed members of the public coughing up. I wanted, where did you learn to do that? And what would you say are the ingredients to that successful invitation to someone that might not be asking to be invited into your cultural experience?

Luca:

Yeah, I think it actually, I didn't remember that project, probably removed it. It is interesting because Invisible Dancing, we've been doing it for 10 years now, you know, quite often, I don't know how many iteration of the show we did. But some of those performers were there from the first project, they became so good at it to really understand when is the right time to offer the invitation or move away or not reacting or just pretend nothing is happening. And actually we have created a scenes or situations in which is it just about that pretending you're not there. So if someone start looking at you move your focus away, so they think you're just another person in the street, the first section actually is about trailing the public. So going on the public trails of energy, which is not copying, which is not mimicking, but it's just using the energy, the path of energy this person creates when he walks along the high street, and trying to follow that as if you are without, but that's the thing, without it we spend so much time in there not. It looks obvious now, you can't do that. Because you're

annoying people. So you have to be very, very subtle, and it's amazing the amount of time it takes to look as if nothing is happening and without annoying everywhere. And of course there are people reacting very different if they spot something, some people they really enjoy, they go for it. And you need to have a smile or you that's actually it's good that you remind me of that try out with those students. And it's not something you can do in two days or even even in a week. It takes a long time to kind of find that detail in that nuance, that sensibility really.

Melanie:

Yeah, yeah.

Frauke:

That sounds lovely, very much sounds like a sensibility that like you need the right kind of performer to pull that off. Somebody that can be so present, so that person stands out in the crowd and then just totally disappear.

Melanie:

It's amazing isn't it.

Frauke:

For particular performer.

Melanie:

It comes back to, you know, sometimes when you go and see live comedy, and if you're sat in the front row, and you're always picked on, and I always think the worst comedians are the ones that get their cheap jokes from taking the Mickey out of one or two people that haven't necessarily asked for it. And what I think people sometimes do with audience participation is follow that kind of line, you know, let's use these couple of people here at the front, and we'll pull them in, and they don't want to be and then you get that awful resistance. And what Luca I think you do so beautifully, is you're able to read that situation and those audience members. And I remember, I think it was Matt Winston demonstrated for us on that project. And he just did these gentle rolls along the floor. And if somebody wanted to walk away, they did, and they could, but if someone was intrigued, they might move that little bit closer, but he didn't go into their space, which I thought was so clever, and so refined as a technique.

Luca:

You're playing with, you know, you never know what these people because you know, they're not ticket holders, you actually interfere with their day, you know, they might be having a shit day, or

sorry, sugar day, or they might have any sort of, you know, issue they're dealing, so you can't really become too foolish. I don't know, you need to somehow play respectfully as well. Because not everyone wants to also be so close. So sometimes people enjoy just watching from afar. But then we always find that it's always someone who actually wants to join in even if they're not invited, you know, you just have to cope with whatever happens, you know, it's a reaction, it's a spontaneous reaction.

Melanie:

Yeah. And Frauke, are you able to play with that, or push that any further because your audience are kind of self elected, they've bought a ticket, they know a little bit about the work, I would presume before you buy a ticket, and they've come and put the headset on there in the space, they're ready for you? Are you able to push the experience for them in any way?

Frauke:

Well, our shows are pre recorded. So it's pretty much what we've decided. So they're exactly the same every time in terms of all your content, although two of those were seated in one they were standing in the round. So there isn't that much leeway of participation. But we have been doing an r&d in the summer, when we could just squeeze a little bit of time in when the pandemic was sort of there was this moment in time where we could do a bit of work with a couple of dancers outside. And so this is a new project. That's also why headphones, where the audience gets different soundtracks, and they're sort of performing a little bit for each other in a very gentle way. So there's more of that entering in. And what we have with that one, is the kind of very gentle invitation to people that are not part of the audience, as well as people that are part of the audience and everybody who was in the park or the public space becomes like somebody who is potentially involved, you just simply don't know. And there has been some work done of what it's like to sit down next to someone or dance for someone who's not part of it, and how that person then becomes in voluntarily so part of the action and if that's desirable for that person, and what to do, if it isn't, so there's a level of respect there that we are also interested in.

Melanie:

Exactly.

Luca:

I was also thinking, it's so important to also take care of physical danger, especially if you're not performing on a devoted space on a stage or sort of marked performance area. So most of the time, we'll have to take really good care of not falling into people or stepping into people's feet or, or put people at danger, both for the performers and the public. So that's another element of awareness that is so important. You can't just be out of control, you know, you've got to be really in the spontaneity you got also to maintain this element of control, which is so important, because of

course, when you have no barriers, you know, nothing that protects you. And we've been dealing also with sometimes potential attitudes of members of the public, that looked quite sort of threatening. So how do you react clearly don't retaliate, just move away, and you know, smile and let it dissipate. But you can expect all sorts of different reactions, you know, so I think that's the one side of is greater the audience participation, and I love it, absolutely love it. But there's an element of unpredictability.

Melanie:

That you have to be prepared for. That moves me on to another question, actually, about some of the other logistical things that you need to think about because you talked there about health and safety and care of your performance care of the audience, which of course, without that sort of safety net of seats and stage and proscenium you need to think about but I wondered, what else do you have to consider when you start thinking about making a piece of work that's going to be presented outside? What do you do about dressing rooms? What do you do about rest spaces? Frauke, what do you do? Have they got a shipping container of their own perhaps, or base space?

Frauke:

Yeah, I mean, luckily, there are other things that we need and then there's a production team that solves the problem. And I imagined that much more creative job with the work that we do, because there's just so much to be sorted out. And sometimes things don't get sorted. So the last r&d of the show, we're in the middle of we're going to continue actually on Monday. And then finally, unbelievably so in a very small way, but um, yeah, there was a gazebo one day and the next day it was gone, because the wind just blew it away and there was another gazebo. And then yeah, so it's usually a bit on the rough side for everyone. It's usually a bit inconvenient, and very cold.

Melanie:

Yeah. That's interesting to think about, though, huh. It's just how you manage that and set up the dancers' expectations, I suppose.

Frauke:

Yes, I think it's very important to let the team know what they're in for and make sure that they're up for it. And you can sort of tell if the performers is up for it.

Luca:

And I totally agree that there are certain performers, they're not made to perform in the cold in the hard floor. And that's why I tend to work with the same people on those kind of projects. They know what it is. And there are some performers are more ready than others. Because you don't have the anything is comfortable. Of course, it could be like a lovely sunny day. It's not too hot, not too

cold, perfect. But most of the time, it's never perfect it's windy, could be windy could be called could be wet, and you got to really love it, you got to love it, you have to be made for it.

Melanie:

Yeah, it's interesting isn't it, I've talked on the podcast before about a tour that we did in autumn, a doorstep tour. And of course, the dances are all in a van just moving around from place to place. It's only a seven minute show, but it was done on people's drives. So they've got to be ready for you know, all of those sort of different hard surfaces. But one of the most inventive things that I found out at the end in the evaluation was that one of the rest spaces the base spaces they used in the day was a Holiday Inn. And they've just booked the room for the day, a couple of rooms for the dancers. And of course, they didn't stay the night, but they had this nice warm, carpeted space where they could warm up, they could lie on the bed, they could do whatever they needed. And that was a cancellation of a community centre, because their heating had gone down, which would have been cold, all of these things. And I thought, Oh, that's a bit of a genius little tip, renting something like a Holiday Inn or Premier Inn might be a good way, when you're trying to set this kind of stuff up.

Luca:

I think comparing to putting on a show on a stage or rehearsing in doors, perhaps as a team, you always have to think a bit more about your performers, you know, provide even just to tell them that extra layers or provide a warm drink every now and again. Or if you work in a theatre, perhaps people are looking after themselves, you need to necessarily provide so much. Also I've done quite a lot of rural touring, you know, it's not outdoor, but it's not the conventional way of working. So you got to take care of working on hard floors for many days, you know, how you can look after that provide some mats. So you know, all sorts of different things that you have to think carefully about that.

Melanie:

Yes, yeah.

Frauke:

Yes, I find its helpful to include the performers early on and think through if it's something that's really new, you know, what they might need, there might be things we didn't think about, you know, how they can manage their energy levels, and what they might need to have a good focus and work safely.

Melanie:

And that's a really good idea. And I suppose both of you are thinking about those things now, because you're both about to go into the studio next week, I think. Frauke, am I right in thinking yours is a recreation of a work?

Frauke:

No. So it's a new outdoor show on the back of a truck. So the idea is a truck drives in and the side opens and in it is a piece of science fiction. And we were kind of halfway through a bit more. Now looking back, I'm not sure how far we actually were. But anyway, on Monday, we continue with that in a stripped down version. So it's COVID safe. It's again, in a shipping container, it has the full length on a travelator all the way through that you can't see. And then there's a false wall like a run around. It's the feeling of sort of infinite production line of what will become these people. And it's a sort of an exploration of like, is the light on or off and What is consciousness and so things are made this machine is like... you can tell we're just making it right, because... not quite sure what it is yet! This is sort of how we make work. We look at the perspective that we want. And we find these very physical ingredients and a subject matter emerges that somehow comes from the setup with this one, we had an r&d with people on the travelator. And it was immediately clear that there's something so fantastical and sci fi about the somnambulant movement of the travelator, even if they move very fast because they're being transported. It already felt like very existential like beginning and end there's a constant end but it's kind of infinite and questions around that. And there's a loneliness because no they also don't touch you know, and they kind of play one person that is a kind of continuous person that that goes through a very rapid evolution of sorts.

Melanie:

And what are the audience doing? Do they stand to they sit? Or do they move around the venue.

Frauke:

So at the moment, that is not entirely decided, it kind of depends a bit on capacity. I would imagine that the first shows have reduced capacity, usually our shows have about 500 to 700 capacity. So there will definitely be less and it is a little bit contingent on the site, if there will be a seated audience or if people will be standing. I don't think we really got to resolve that yet. I mean, to put on a show now, like, it just feels just so far removed from, you know, just to go to the shop is a big deal. Like, it's kind of crazy.

Melanie:

I take my hat off to both of you, you're both about to do it. Like literally, we're only just opening up and there you go bang both of you in the studio, which is incredible. Luca, what's your piece about?

Luca:

Well, for us its outdoor. And the basic idea to take an audience out for a walk. We will have a starting point and an ending point. Probably a couple of hours, I would say, walking, and during this walk, there will be things to encounter performers, events, music, and it's still to be filled up as an idea. But

I just really was fascinated by the idea of the experience of walking and what it means to different people. And this will be in Woolwich, which is where we are based as a company. So through Woolwich, through the commons, probably down to the Arsenal, to the river. So across the town centre. And yeah, it's it's a project that is been there for a while now thinking and then of course, because of last year, because of what's happening it feels so important to actually do it. Now, the main aim is to bring people back together. So performers together, audience together. And of course, like Frauke was saying, you know, it's uncertain at the moment how many people we can gather, we can do this for but it doesn't matter whether it's 30 people or three people or 550, I don't know. We'll see. But, again, it's about using the space and responding to the space and what the performers can do with the space. I think as an approach its going to be quite different from Invisible Dancing. But, of course, there are some similarities in the sense that there isn't a preconceived stage, people will be moving with us. So they are actually going, they're going to participate in a way.

Melanie:

Audience and participants at the same time. I'm interested in this because I know that you have an r&d process where you often spend a lot of time going out and meeting people before shows, I'm sure many artists have this in some shape or form. But I was honoured to be invited to be part of that process. So I went on a walk with you with my two boys. And at the time, I remember thinking, how is this feeding you? Especially as you were trying to get something out with my boys? I think that they weren't giving you know, are you really enjoying your walk in they're both going it's boring. We want to be on a Nintendo. I didn't know what you were going to get from me and my clan!

Luca:

But your boys are so interesting. About where they were going. No, I'm not going there. Because there it's not. I preferred that way. So just the choices that we're making. It was very interesting because a lack of light or because there's too steep or because I don't know all sorts of things that maybe an adult don't think about.

Melanie:

And how do you take all of this, you went on lots of walks, how do you take all of that, and then

Luca:

I'm in the process to transcribe or the interviews I did during walking with different people. And it's so nice to relive those experiences to listen, the sound or the steps or see sound or any kind of sound, the same brings you back there. I mean, probably what I'm going to take away is different experiences, not because they need to recreate them, but it just makes me I don't know, enriches my decision making in a way or my starting points in the studio with the performers. So I feel like I

know a little bit more about what it means or what kind of experiences people have. But it's not because I'm going to actually use the material to re stage that those ideas. You know, it...

Melanie:

There won't be a little kid saying I want to go and play Minecraft?

Luca:

I don't think so. You know, the research usually I'm doing is for me is a way of prepping myself. You know, some people might spend a lot of time in reading books or watching stuff. I like to do that but also I like to engage with people at the very, very start even before I go into start working with the performers, and of course the performance and it will be very much about the people in the room. So they're going to have quite a strong input in what will come out.

Melanie:

Yeah, and Frauke your r&d must take a very different form given that so much it you were talking about the travelator and the perspex screens and the set and what have you. What's your r&d process for this and how much relationship do you need with the place that your transportable venue is going or perhaps you don't need that at all. It's just the space you're creating for yourself and your dancers, the little world that you've created within those four walls?

Frauke:

Yes, I think it is a highly controlled environment that we are creating ourselves the way we wanted. And the connection then happens, you know, with the audience as the show runs, and we have not been to all the places where it will be shown. So that element is in this work not so present. No, that's right.

Melanie:

You've done some r&d for this piece, haven't you. Is that just in a studio? Did you have much of a set? Do you get something mocked up or you're just playing with ideas?

Frauke:

We had two weeks, which now feels like a very long time ago, two weeks with two casts on the travelator in quite a rough space, called Ugly Duck.

Melanie:

Sounds Amazing.

Frauke:

Yeah, so we're going to go back there with a container, we had a good chunk of rehearsal. Interestingly, where we also did The Roof, but the whole place had completely changed what's occurred in the east of London, Beckton, The Roof we did in an old warehouse, that was about to be I think, torn down. And then for Future Cargo, we came back and we actually had a space in the new development and exactly the same side. But it wasn't let yet. So it was an empty space. And that was our warm up space is still pretty rough, or like concrete floor, which is really not great for dancers, and then a bit of wasteland where the container was placed, it was quite cold. But the dancers are okay because then the container, and you could warm it up quite well.

Melanie:

And I imagine I hate to bring up the B word. But I imagined that this idea of a transportable set for your outdoor work had the idea of international touring built within it, you could just take your venue and put it where it needs to go. And I'm imagining...

Frauke:

What is the B word?

Melanie:

Oh Brexit?

Frauke:

Alright, yes, of course, or no? Why did I ask?!

Melanie:

You've said it now, we're ever cursed. But international touring, let's not go there. That is a different podcast episode. But I did wonder whether this idea of a venue that you transport actually provides a solution as we continue to live with COVID. Because you've created your bubble in a way with for your performers, you can clean it as you need to clean it, you're not going into anyone else's space, it seems to me like you're minimising risk of transmission, because you're keeping everything self contained, as you said, and I just wondered whether your team were thinking around that in any way? Or are you just thinking about Monday morning and rehearsals.

Frauke:

So we did not think about that, because the show was envisioned way before the pandemic, the thing that we did think about this time was tourability, because our shows have been a nightmare to tour. They're very complicated, and they're very heavy and very expensive to tour. So we just wanted to be for change a bit light on our feet. So we had this idea of, you know, putting it on the back of a truck. And so that was one consideration and the sort of mysterious object at the back of the truck. Nobody really knows what is in all those as shipping containers. And yeah, so if it really makes touring COVID safer, people will still have to go to the loo, they still will have to warm up in a different space, they will still have to get to that country, I think it's just a bit shit. And something that will hopefully get controlled enough for the risk to be acceptable, like other risks we take.

Melanie:

Yeah, yeah. And Luca, for you, was the plan always to create this work? Or is this also being driven for you by the pandemic?

Luca:

No, because before pandemic, the idea of a a walking piece or experience, it was for the Greenwich City of Culture or borough of culture, we were asked to put together a programme for that application. And then Greenwich didn't get it. So we have this project there in our heads in part, and then we thought, let's not throw it away. Actually, maybe this is actually the right time trying to make work for the stage right now is very unpredictable. It feels safer to work outdoors at the moment, you know. So that's what we thought, actually, let's invest. And let's put all our efforts into trying to make this happen now, but the idea is to have a touring piece. So we want to do iteration in other places, working with other communities. So it's not an emergency kind of, oh, because we don't know what to do kind of piece because we can still working with social distancing. And it's easier at the moment if you're outdoor you get less frustrated about not being able to do any contact work. And also you can maintain a distance between people in a more relaxed way and also being outdoor the risk of passing the virus is reduced. So it's kind of feels like it's responding to the time we're in, but it's not necessarily about the time we're in.

Melanie:

And so finally, I wanted to ask you both if the pandemic meant that theatres could never again, open their doors, could outdoor work, fill the gap, and could you ever imagine a world where that was the only work you made? Luca?

Luca:

Oh, I hope not. I adore working outdoors and it's beautiful, it makes you feel very special performing outdoor is also something quite unique. But I still think theatre an enclosed space can give you it's a different type of experience. And I love the magic or the travel that you do with your mind with imagination in the theatre, both as a performer and an audience. So I still would like to think that

there is space for that kind of experience. I mean, it will be fine. But it still would be a shame to it's like if you say, what would you see dance just becoming a like a something on on film, dance on film is fantastic. But I think it would be a shame to miss the live experience. So hopefully not. Long life to outdoor work.

Melanie:

And thank God for it. And the way it's been pushed as an art form. Actually, if I didn't ask you, but you were both doing this over 10 years ago, 15 years ago, and I wondered how many people were doing it then. And now it is much more common. There are many more people doing it. I imagine there'll be many more that are doing it this year in 2021. It will be the year of the outdoor work.

Frauke:

Yeah for sure.

Melanie:

Frauke, how about you?

Frauke:

Well, I second I basically second what Luca said. I think it would be terrible if there were no theatres from both perspectives as a performer as a maker as a as an audience member. I love the smell of the Barbican, Sadler's Wells, The Place. All those lovely theatres, I just love the atmosphere of the theatre. And that's where the stuff happens. It's also what they stand for their space is for this kind of stuff. And it's important. At the same time, if I get enough money, I can imagine all sorts of structures that are not in the theatre. And there's some sort of like, how do you say it like when the bee goes and...

Melanie:

Pollinating

Frauke:

Then puts the pollen around. Cross pollination, thank you. From the outdoor work and to going back indoors and finding more creative ways to deal with the space that seems to be also be quite popular. And we also did that we did a show where the seats were pushed back. And people were standing around a platform. And everything came from underneath. So that was our only indoor show. We call it an indoor show. We don't call it a theatre show. Isn't that interesting?

Luca:

And I think about this, that actually the crossing between the two is so important. Also think in terms of what we talked about performers' capabilities. And you learn so much about empathy when you're working outdoors, for the environment for the people around you. And it's so beautiful to think that you can transfer those skills and that kind of sensibility also in the work that you do indoor, maybe not so close to the audience. And so I think they go hand in hand there is a lot of lot of things, you can really develop performers and creators in thinking outside your box, you know, literally. And so I think it's important that there was a very lovely aspect that one, the cross pollination.

Melanie:

I think you've just both of you created options for the title for this episode, cross pollination or outside the box, so that feels like a really good place to stop. If you'd like to hear more episodes about subjects moving artists of today, search for Talking Moves wherever you get your podcasts and don't forget to subscribe, leave a review and spread the word and for more information about Frauke and Luca, head on over to greenwichdance.org.uk. And do remember if you know someone you think we should talk to you or have a topic you'd like us to talk about, please tweet us @GreenwichDance. But for today, that's it from us and do join us next time for more Talking Moves.

Luca:

Bye. Thank you

Melanie:

Thank you so very much.