

NORDPLUS Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts



David Yoken (ed.)

NORDPLUS

Explorations and

Collaborations in

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Introduction to the ECA Network's Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts

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MAY 2019

This publication focuses on personal reflections from both teachers and students who have been part of our NORDPLUS activities. Over the years, our NORDPLUS for Higher Education's Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts / The ECA Network (and the collaborative networks

that came before, see below) has created and developed truly innovative interdisciplinary activities for our university partners who represent an enormous geographical and cultural contextual sweep from Greenland all the way down to Lithuania.

2019 marks the 21st year I have been engaged with NORDPLUS for Higher Education. The grant applications I have written during these two decades have been funded every single year and now this totals to more than one million Euros of support we have received from NORDPLUS.

Our first NORDPLUS for Higher Education project, called Greenland, Iceland and Finland Together / The G.I.F.T. Network brought together our partners from the Nuuk Art School, the Akureyri School of Visual Arts and our Arts Academy Dance program for, at that time, rather brave inter/cross/transdisciplinary artistic explorations. We had our visual arts and dance students participate in “place based” Intensive Courses, site-specific performance events in Iceland and Finland’s nature and we also travelled to Greenland.

We continued with the G.I.F.T. Network for a number of years. In 2004, in the separate EU Leonardo DeVinci Network, I wrote a grant (which was successfully funded) that brought together dance and music teachers from Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and the UK for an exchange of expertise regarding the meeting point between movement and sound. A delegation from Finland, the Kuopio Dance and Music Academy, and our Arts Academy, Danshögskolan (Sweden), and the Skolen for Moderne Dans (Denmark) all travelled to London meeting and dialoguing with musicians and dance teachers from the Royal Ballet, The London School of Contemporary Dance, and the Laban Centre.

In 2005, I established two NORDPLUS for Higher Education networks: one focused on the music and dance collaboration (Explorations in Music and Dance / The EMD Network, which was the precursor to today’s ECA Network) and another network focused on dance and media arts called Dance and Media Arts / The DAMA Network.

The ECA Network evolved from these earlier networks to also include media/video arts as well as visual arts. We have produced two documentary videos, one of which [“Motion, Emotion – Seven Days in Copenhagen”](#) received “Best Practice” formal recognition from NORDPLUS.

A longer film [“A Sound of a Movement”](#) was produced documenting our 2014 Intensive Course, hosted by the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, in Vilnius, Lithuania.

In “A Sound of a Movement”, interviews are conducted with the participating dance and music students and teachers.

Over the years, our many Intensive Courses have been supported by NORDPLUS and we have had perhaps over 150 students participating in Mobility actions and many of our ECA Network teachers have also participated in teaching exchanges.

Now in 2019, as we prepare for the 21st year of funding, in the application due to NORDPLUS on February 1st, 2019, there will be a major refocusing of our network and activities.

The network will go forward with the existing ECA Partners as well as new partners from Norway, the Faroe Islands, and Lithuania. The focus will now be on artistic pedagogy/didactics as well as a meeting point for the arts (dance, music, visual arts, and media arts) and environmental science. I have spent a lot of important time working and developing the Green Actions Network/Project and this vital area of global importance will have a home in our NORDPLUS Network.

The new proposed network is called “Creative Arts Pedagogy and the Environment / The CAPE Network.”

We will be focusing on the pedagogical/didactic areas of innovation regarding the praxis of arts and the environment, with sound evidence based scientific knowledge informing the participating arts students/teachers, and a mutual focus to share the “creative” process with our environmental science colleagues (students and teachers). It is a two way, win-win collaborative effort. We will examine ways in which the arts and science can come together related to environmental and sustainability issues and how we can establish new working/teaching methods between these disciplines as we have done in the ECA Network all along. We will also have opportunities to have more concentrated workshops dedicated to dance education and other arts pedagogy areas that our partners want to examine with the support of Mobility monies. I also want to encourage distant/video engagement prior to our direct IRL (in real life) activities and the possibilities to see where technology such as LOLA can be applied.

As I was recently quoted in an article about our Arts Academy’s cooperation with the University of Greenland’s Institute for Learning and my dialogue with their Visual Arts Lecturer Ivaag Kriegel:

“We have discussed how digital technology can be implemented in a functional or applied manner that supports the embodied and physical sense of teaching that is so essential to the arts’ learning environment.”

We will also place emphasis on “co-design” with the participating university students having a large input and participation in the content and direction of the network.

Over the years, our NORDPLUS ECA Network (and the collaborative networks that came before since 1998) partners have gained much experience working “out of the box” to develop teaching methods, within collaborative arts projects. These actions have gone way beyond the typical “silo” “myopic” approaches that in the past have often occurred in higher education (and in some institutions, still exist). Now this ECA interdisciplinary approach has become somewhat commonplace in many of our arts programs, when 20 years ago it was something so new! The NORDPLUS Music and the Association of Nordic Music Academies (ANMA) networks will be having their General Assembly and Thematic Day this coming May 2019. Their new and “innovative” theme is “Exploring the Potential of Cross Arts Collaboration”, something we have actually been DOING for that past 20 years in our NORDPLUS networks. So 20 years from now, when such arts and science transdisciplinary curricula are common place in higher education, we (well, the younger members of our network) will say: *“Think how innovative the CAPE Network was in 2019!”*

As of April 29, 2019, the Creative Arts Pedagogy and the Environment / The CAPE Network was awarded with funding from NORDPLUS for Higher Education for 2019–2020. In closing, I want to sincerely give thanks to the following:

- The NORDPLUS for Higher Education team, Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) for their never-ending support and always rapid responses to my email questions.
- Turku University of Applied Sciences’ Rector and President, Dr. Vesa Taatila, for his dynamic and creative leadership on behalf of the entire university and especially for his deep belief in and support of culture and the Arts Academy.
- The Arts Academy’s former directors Maija Palonheimo and Risto Hyppönen, as well as our current director, Timo Tanskanen. Their continuous support during these 20 years has been vital to the success of our NORDPLUS activities.
- Eero Linjama, Head of Education and Research, Performing Arts and Music, and Antonella Storti, International Coordinator, Arts Academy, Turku University of Applied Sciences for their feedback, support and guidance.
- My dance colleagues and daily collaborators at the Arts Academy’s program in Dance, Tarja Yoken, Heidi Alppirinne, and Katja Korpi. All things regarding music and dance have begun with my daily collaboration with these dedicated creative artist-teachers.

- Kim Helweg, my fellow musician and Head of the Musicians Accompaniment Dance / MAD program and Head of Music at the Danish National School of Performing Arts. Kim has been a leader in so many of our NORDPLUS ECA Network activities and whom our ECA Network owes so much.
- Rima Rimsaite, Head of International Relations Office, Giedrė Kabašinskienė, Faculty Project Manager and Mantautas Krukauskas, Composer and teacher at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, who all have created remarkable opportunities in hosting our N+ ECA 2014 Intensive Course.
- Tiina Ollesk and Renee Nõmmik, Estonian choreographers, dance artists and Associate Professors at the Baltic Film and Media School, Tallinn University who have mentored our ECA Network students in important workshops.
- Petra Frank, Beata Alving, Katarina Lundmark, and Karin Ivarson, Stockholm University of the Arts, University of Dance and Circus, DOCH, Stockholm, Sweden. DOCH has been one of oldest partners and I value my Swedish colleagues' time and energy they have directed towards the ECA Network.
- Alma Ragnarsdóttir, Head of International Office, Iceland University of the Arts, who has supported all of our activities with her wisdom and knowledge about all things NORDPLUS over the years.
- Dr. Ruth Montgomery-Andersen, Principal of the National Theatre School of Greenland and teaching staff University of Greenland, Nuuk, for her years of support and dedication to our NORDPLUS networks.
- All the dance, music, and film teachers (and their home institutions) who have led our workshops and Intensive Course.
- All the partner institutions' ECA Network coordinators.
- However, most importantly my sincere and deepest thanks to all the students who have made such remarkable projects and contributions to the N+ ECA Network. It is only because of you, the students, that this network even exists.



Inspired by the NORDPLUS ECA Network: some reflections on myths of interdisciplinarity

Mantautas Krukauskas

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In the past decade, both in the arts and research, the category of interdisciplinarity transformed into a usual area of creative work or study. I keep asking myself what interdisciplinarity really is? Is it really something new? Sometimes we just hear the words, however the true meaning remains undisclosed, as well as the understanding may vary according to the country, culture, field etc.

The most common understanding of interdisciplinarity most likely emerged from the world of academia and is very much connected to the roots of higher education and research. Interdisciplinarity in universities would most likely be described as combining two and more fields or approaches into one discipline. This includes crossing borders between more closely related subjects, as well as crossovers between humanities, sciences, social sciences, and the arts. If we can say that in research interdisciplinarity connects very much to the pursuit of a common goal to perform a specific task or solve a specific problem; in the arts, usually it results in a creation of an artwork, which has features of several disciplines, according to the boundaries of our European tradition. On an abstract level, interdisciplinarity in all of its forms faces similar challenges, which usually can be divided into “professional”, “cultural”, and “organizational”.

Until I immersed myself into the activities of NORD+ ECA (Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts) Network, my main experience with interdisciplinarity was connected to international educational projects, Erasmus intensive programs “Sound Art in City Spaces” (S.A.C.S.), and “Interdisciplinary Involvement and Community Spaces” (I.I.C.S.) which were implemented annually from 2009 to 2014, as well as activities in European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA).

This experience gave me a clear understanding that interdisciplinary cooperation is an essential element in the innovation and problem-solving processes. It is important not as the final outcome (or empty political slogan) but connects with aspects of conduct and implementation. Such processes with the participation of representatives of various fields often serve to find new approaches. On the other hand, they are difficult to define; in each separate case, non-traditional problems are encountered, which are intractable by conventional means.

Real interdisciplinary innovation arises from the positive effects of stepping across boundaries of your own discipline. So-called “knowledge economy” became limited, because often we discover that the right knowledge to solve a problem is in a different place than the problem itself. There are also many problems that need more than one kind of knowledge to be solved. All-encompassing interdisciplinary creativity became an essential tool for today and for the future, as it was also in the past. To my understanding, it is exactly the interdisciplinary trends, which lead us from “knowledge economy” to “creative economy”. Abilities, which are traditionally classified as typical for artists, became essential for further development of any contemporary field, including economy and business.

The interdisciplinary approach can be detected in the source of development of European thought, traced during the course of history and identified in its currently recognized form in movements of the second half of the 20th century. Especially in recent years, interdisciplinarity became a panacea, which should solve many of the issues raised in the new age. Interdisciplinarity in the broadest sense is the counterpart of specialization. Probably this also inspired criticism, which emphasizes that interdisciplinarity can become a threat to professionalism. Is it really a problem though? Anyway, the success of interdisciplinarity is often attributed first of all to the combination of skills and competencies of remarkable experts in their own field.

However, it is difficult to work with people whose knowledge is separated by boundaries. Boundaries cannot simply be ignored or removed. The amount of knowledge contained within a defined discipline is constrained by the amount that the disciplinary experts can acquire in a career or a lifetime.

It is often believed that people with different training have difficulty communicating because they have learned different specialist languages. There is a bigger challenge to that – they are actually trying to achieve different things. Different disciplines often have different core values and have grown together as social groups precisely because of the shared values within each discipline.

In order for a new interdisciplinary team or interdisciplinary creation to become effective, it must develop shared values and culture. This can take a long time, and sometimes even managing

such teams and processes is extremely challenging. On the managerial or self-managerial level it requires unusual personal qualities and skills and is inherently risky, because the very opportunities created by combining perspectives means that the outcomes cannot be predicted. As we want to calculate everything to have clear metrics of the results of investment, how do we measure that? Substantial amount of research about interdisciplinarity actually tries to describe “new” disciplines, rather than how to enable their emergence. This leads towards the concept of “intellectual ecosystems” and their “middle ground” where anything can occur and lead us to the new ways of existence.

The features of an artist are essential in such ecology, even more – in case of artistic creation – the “team” or at least a wider perspective has to co-exist within one human person. Especially today, when the amount of information grows exponentially, it seems that it is impossible for one person to become a universal professional, and the Leonardo da Vinci phenomenon will not repeat. Our position in time though allows us to think differently, which is necessary for the development of aforementioned new ecosystems and economies in our society and managing humanity as a whole (and not destroying the Earth in the process!).

NORD+ECA gave me a very clear experience and developed an understanding about the myths of interdisciplinarity and how important it is to address them.

Myth no. 1: if institutions have different disciplines within, people will cooperate.

In reality, being in one institution is not enough. Before I got involved more actively, my colleagues Aira Naginevičiūtė (choreographer) and Vldas Dieninis (improvising musician, percussionist) have already participated in workshops organized by this network. In many higher arts education institutions, we are clearly facing the boundaries of discipline, when co-existing faculties and departments do not cooperate enough (while real professional life nowadays is full of cooperation). It was enough though for my colleagues to meet at a “middle ground” and start developing formal and informal activities for dance and music students. Such middle ground is often provided by international activities, where the cooperation aspect is a must. In dance studios, we have loudspeakers or musicians hired to accompany dance and, for example, we educate composers about the context of writing music for dance. Integrated cooperation of students is not developed enough though, and such middle grounds, which arise from activities by networks similar to NORD+ECA, are necessary to strengthen it and provide alternative means of education and practice.

Myth no. 2: it is easy for artists to cooperate and communicate.

Unfortunately, when we are educated how to behave, we are also educated how not to behave. For example, the main difference between fine arts and performing arts is not in the artistic result, but the gene and values of education. Although similar, same words and concepts will definitely have a differing meaning across arts fields. To be a successful artist, you have to learn to understand and communicate. A nice side effect of cooperating with people from another discipline is that it also trains you to better understand and communicate with your own craft. Artists are often empathetic; however, that is not enough, as they have to practice working with others. While working on shared artwork, people have to develop shared ownership and values for miracles to happen. Usually problems with self-esteem and a will to dominate with individual ideas might arise and are usually very difficult to address. As I have witnessed during the NORD+ECA intensive course “Choreographer/Dancer and Composer/Musician, a Collaborative Platform” in 2014, it served as an environment, ecosystem where students were able to cooperate, communicate and practice their skills, because the event modeled a real life situation with shared tasks, a tight schedule, and a pressure of presenting a certain fixed result before an audience.

Myth no. 3: interdisciplinarity itself.

Music and dance are a great example how interdisciplinarity itself could be just a conceptual illusion in our brains. Both have extreme similarities in their structuring: time, rhythm, dynamics, velocity and form, among many other things. Even if we assign different meanings and words to the same abstractions, that does not change their fundamental connection. It is not strange, as roots of all arts probably stem from the same – the archetype of ritual. Even more, as the world is one, separation of art, sciences and humanities is also relative! Of course, we cannot process everything at once; to understand the world we have to create simulacra which represents it – the disciplines. Their boundaries and relationships shift according to historical and cultural contexts in the unbreakable row of cause and consequence. I have to give a thousand thanks to the NORD+ECA network and all the people who were involved in its activities over many years for this one very important reminder: we all have to have our own strong practice(s) to develop as human beings, but at the same time, we cannot forget that we are one.

*You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will live as one*

“Imagine”, Lennon/Ono

The Choreomusical Approach

– an essential strategy for interdisciplinary work

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Introduction

The NORDPLUS Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts / The N+ ECA Network has become one of the most important educational artistic Nordic/Baltic area networks that offer the possibility of approaching the collaboration between music and dance from a choreomusical point of view. Through many years of consistence and focused work inside the N+ ECA Network, the institutions in Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have done major collaborative research and development in this area through workshops, courses, and lectures for both students and teachers from the various dance and music programs.

The choreomusical approach involves a close combined use of theory and practice demanding a high level of knowledge about music and dance.

Theory and practice

Choreomusical thinking is an area that includes different activities and strategies in order to experience music and dance as one expression. The word is created by putting two other words together: Choreography and Music, showing that this is a cross over, compared with our traditional experience of music and dance as two independent art forms.

Activities connected to this kind of a word can be divided in two main areas:

a) Choreomusicology

and

b) Choreomusical practice

a) Choreomusicology

This course of study and practice offers such different academic disciplines as choreomusical analysis, choreomusical history, choreomusical theory. Those disciplines give a slightly different view on the collaboration between the approach to dance and music than the musicology and dance history approach. We see composers and musicians less important in the traditional music history suddenly being very important in the choreomusical history. In addition, the progressive linearity of the traditional music history is not the same. Using Mozart and Bach for dance is connected to a neo classical dance approach, and using romantic concert hall music is a late romantic or early modern dance phenomenon as well as the use of expressionistic music mainly happens in the modern dance context... and so on. This shows some problems in directly combining the dance and music history and the need of choreomusicology.

Analyzing a dance work demands equally developed analytic skills in both dance and music. Often to use a combined dance/music score for that purpose is of great importance for the establishment of the choreomusical theory.

Choreomusicology is first of all the theory, which is connected to choreomusical practice and is therefore very closely connected to the actual doing.

b) Choreomusical practice

is dance and music composition, dance and music improvisation and dance technique classes with live music accompaniment.

These three disciplines are all closely connected to a choreomusical understanding of music and dance. The process of composing music and making choreography is here an interactive process where the final product is done in with a fully collaborative spirit with a deeper knowledge of both art forms.

The improvisation format is developed through the need of spontaneous expressions that belong to the time-based arts. It seems this area has a great possibility to develop much further and is a very interesting format especially when seen as a kind of Open Opus.

Dance technique classes have a long tradition of choreomusical thinking, which can be used as compositional and improvisational tools. Both in ballet and in the contemporary dance classes you can see a kind of historical development where new musical styles (or even old) take their place in the classroom. A newer approach to the dance classes is even to consider them as a choreomusical lab; as a practical research space.

Projects

Through a diversity of formats, the N+ ECA Network has developed different approaches to choreomusical work for students as well as for teachers and has even created a kind of practice based artistic research.

Workshops with a large number of participants (16 to 50) have mainly been created around the following subjects:

- Choreomusical composition where the students of choreography and musical composition work intensively together with the time frame of 2 weeks. Working with musical scores as well as instant composition and improvisation.

and/or:

- Choreomusical practice in the dance classes, where all aspects of the musicality in dance and music are explored. In ballet and in contemporary, in set material and in improvisation. All kinds of musical styles have been investigated in these sessions and the idea of having more than one musician to play for class has been extremely successful.

Smaller courses including lectures has also been a fruitful way of distributing the knowledge from the dance and music experience. Practice for a single student to work with other students inside the network has also been a main activity for both composers and accompanists.

To give a picture of the importance of the ECA N+ network as a forum for artistic development, I will describe two samples of previous courses.

A) The postmodern relationship between music and dance (Copenhagen 2011)

This course was planned to give an impression of new musical practices in contemporary technique classes and involved teachers with experiences from Rosas, Judson Church and Cunningham. By showing different kinds of postmodern approaches, the workshop gave an update on the different ways to follow up. There seemed to be different main approaches:

Neo Modern. To let compositional tools and strategies come in to the classroom, for instance chance operation, which Cunningham never used in the classroom. Using postmodern musical concepts as the main connection.

New Practice. To let the dancers and musician overlap each other's competences and actually do the warm up together as one group.

New sound in traditional counted classes, where the musician translates the rhythmical phrasing of the dance exercises but with non-traditional instruments (for these dance technique classes that is), like strings, woodwinds, brass and even a full jazz or rock band. An experience that also was possible to share with ballet.

The conclusion was that all experiments could work, but to implement them in all universities and schools will demand a broader sharing of the N+ ECA Network activities. This could be in the future activity plan.

B) Open Opus (Copenhagen 2016)

This workshop was intended to focus on the possibility of creating music and dance inside some kind of headline/main structure in order to keep the quality of a compositional structure as the frame and to leave details for more spontaneous events. Improvisation.

The workshop developed different views on the open structure, starting with a historical lecture about the open work in modern literature and music. Then several artists followed with updating lectures about recent projects.

Although this course included a large number of classical musicians, the course became more Open than Opus. The students seem to focus on the following subjects:

- Open Opus as a set piece you can experience in different ways. A choreography you experience in dark and again in light. Only the music is audible in both settings.

- Open Opus as a row of events that can happen in any order, or an amount of information that will be presented in a non-linear manner, or a lake of different impulses without start and end or up and down or left and right.
- Open Opus as a strong conceptual formula with tight rules including only a very limited amount of improvisation. A very simple intuitive choice being an integrated part of a fixed sound or movement world.

The conclusion from this project was somehow obvious. It seems that the classical musicians had many difficulties in including their main competence and they saw the Open Opus as a holiday from repertoire and a challenging situation regarding their lack of improvisational experience and skills. There was nothing specifically “wrong” in this, but Open Opus can also be a way to reinterpret established musical repertoire. Ballet dancers would be in the same situation.

And then in a rather parallel situation, the improvisers had difficulties in thinking in a strong conceptual context, even for the jazz musicians with their long standard tradition, which is exactly an open opus. Open Opus as the cross over between composition and improvisation will be an important element in the future development of the time bound arts and the course gave some strong hints for tomorrow.

Conclusion

The N+ ECA Network is the only network in the world for students working in the field of choreomusical practice. Since there are very few educational programs (in Europe the programs bringing music and dance together are in Paris, Rome, Glasgow and upcoming in Barcelona), the N+ ECA Network has been extremely important for further practical and research development in the field. In the N+ ECA Network there have been explorations and new instrumental approaches, new compositional approaches and the development of innovative choreo-compositional techniques.

New ways of approaching music by using nontraditional techniques, experiments with the collaborative roles between dancer, choreographer, musician and composers are the ongoing goals of the N+ ECA Network.

Our experiences in the above projects and the technique of choreomusical practices have far more relevance and power in collaborative projects than we originally thought.

I see more future possibilities in the following fields:

The performing arts

The techniques that are explored in choreomusical practice are not exclusive to the dance and music collaboration but can successfully be used in all other kinds of collaborative work within the various performing arts.

Science

Also in collaboration with science, the experience with choreomusical work will have a tremendous importance to avoid naive experiments and banal translations and sonifications or illustrations that often create frustration and cause collapses in otherwise very interesting projects.

Therapy

In the work with disabled and chronically sick people – young or old – the choreomusical knowledge can be used as well to obtain the maximal interaction between the individual and the art of music and dance.

A big thank you to the N+ ECA Network for making these experiences and visions possible and hopefully also in the future will the N+ ECA Network be a lighthouse for the collaborative works in the time-based art forms.

Physical Cinema Workshops: NORDPLUS ECA Network Experiences

Helena Jónsdóttir

Workshop leader, Physical cinema and student comments

Iceland University of the Arts, Reykjavik, Iceland

Intensive Course Workshop Department of Choreography, Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonia. August 20–28, 2011

This nine days' Intensive Course workshop was led by our NORDPLUS Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts / The ECA network colleague from Iceland Academy of the Arts, Choreographer/Film Maker, Helena Jónsdóttir. The participating dance and film students came from our ECA Network partner institutions in Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Our hosts, the Department of Choreography, Tallinn University arranged all the important logistical details to make this a positive gathering for all who participated. Many thanks to Tiina Ollesk and Karmen Ong for all their efforts to make this happen! Helena worked intensively with the students, introducing them to the world of "Physical Cinema" and together with the students, explored a number of related issues concerning the collaborative aspect of dance and film.

Workshop #2 "Physical Cinema" Intensive Course Latvian Academy of Culture, Riga, Latvia. August 24–September 2, 2012

Our Icelandic colleague, Helena Jónsdóttir, once again led an extremely successful Intensive Course workshop at the Latvian Academy of Culture, Riga, Latvia during the late summer of 2012. Our host Mr Krzysztof Szyszen, the Latvian Academy of Culture's International Projects Manager, arranged all matters to create a wonderful atmosphere. We were honored to be the first group able to work in the newly opened Latvian Academy of Culture's Department

of Theatre and Audiovisual Arts' "Zirgu Pasts" building. The ten days' gathering ended with a wonderful evening with an open house as well as screenings of the students' works in the workshop.

Helena's comments:

"Physical Cinema" is a specific genre of film-making in which a choreographer, a film-maker / visual artist, and composer/ sound designer collaborate towards a creative work where movement, motion, time, and space are a prime source of the narrative or abstract "story board". It is an area of mutual and balanced exchange of concepts and ideas. It is not a documentary, or filming of a live staged performance. The dramaturgy of location as well as innovative and experimental kinetic use of the camera all play an extremely important part in the process.

"It was amazing experience to travel within the Nordic countries, through the students and exploring the new Nordic ground in the city of Tallinn and Riga. The importance of being in these cities was how we used them and their culture to give us inspiration into our works there: going out into the city, talking to its inhabitants and using the landscape in the works. Meeting experts from each school and their students, each bringing experience within their fields into the workshops was deeply valuable. Dance film or "Physical cinema" as we call it, was a name that each department could connect with. So, "Physical cinema" combines film, dance, choreography, music, sound and visual arts into one. It was an intensive period; therefore, we adapted the workshop towards that, having in mind from where each student is coming. Today I hear about students collaborating from those meeting points and some of the students are still using physical cinema in their everyday works.

I know of some students, especially from the dance field, who have managed to extend their works into new directions or taking their study in dance into another state of mind through the digital world. One student from Latvia is now in a film school in Estonia (she was a dance and choreography student in Latvia and in PARTS Belgium); another from Iceland is working for an online TV company as a cinema photographer and editor parallel with her dance work, entering that world with a unique view of capturing and bringing the movement and physicality into "that" everyday world. Another student who came from Visual arts in Iceland is now using material from the workshop in his teaching, and a film student from Estonia has gone into making documentaries about contemporary dance in the Baltics. Some of these students have continued to attend my physical cinema workshops when I am offering these in their area. This collaboration through the NORDPLUS ECA Network was a very positive and eye-opening experience for all. Dancers working as filmmakers, and filmmakers entering the area of movement. Having everyone jumping into each other's field during these short periods was a true game changer."

Reactions from current or former students who have participated in N+ ECA Network activities, especially if the ECA Network has supported the students' creative and professional life once they have graduated

Workshop in Riga, August 2015:

"The name of the workshop was "moving together" and it focused on the relationship between music and dance, more specifically the role of live music in the dance class. There was an underlying theme of finding a common ground or a language that we can both speak. I really enjoyed this workshop. What I liked most about it was having the opportunity to get to know these lovely creative people and be exposed to new ideas and share my own with them. I think it's very important as an art student to have the opportunity to broaden your horizon in this way." (Sara Margrét Ragnarsdóttir)

Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonia. August 20–28, 2011:

"I'm a graduated film director and event maker currently living in Riga. I had the privilege to be part of Helena Jónsdóttir's physical cinema workshops in Riga and Tallinn. It was a life changing experience and changed the way how I approach filmmaking and creativity. Helena Jónsdóttir has an incredibly strong personality that inspires. The workshops were neatly structured and provided with constant challenges. Every bit of theory was complemented with unique examples and references. More than anything these workshops were encouraging to find your own voice as an artist. I often look back to this time and refer to Helena Jónsdóttir in my works or conversations with others."(Reinis Spaile)

NORDPLUS projects – Estonia (2011) and Latvia (2012), Physical cinema workshop:

"A very important experience in my life. I learned a lot. Working with my colleagues in the workshop and at the same time creating a strong network. At that point I was starting my studies of contemporary dance and choreography, now graduated I have been accepted to the Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication school in Tallinn. They found my background very interesting, dancer looking through the viewfinder as a filmmaker. I am very grateful for those workshops. They have had a huge impact on me. The main thing that I appreciate is that I had a chance to be introduced to Helena Jónsdóttir, which I kept communicating after the workshops that established and grounded many different things for me in context of dance and film, as an ongoing conversation." (Rūta Pakaine)

NORDPLUS projects – Tallinn, Estonia 2011:

"This workshop was an eye opening experience for me. Wonderful to meet my colleagues from different countries and different fields that we could share and learn from

each other. This was my first steps in filming movements that had lead into my works today. I highly recommend this workshop for everyone, Helena is an extraordinary teacher". (Arndís Benediktsdóttir)

The impact of the N+ ECA Network has had upon programs in dance and/or music

Helena Jónsdóttir, Workshop leader, Physical cinema:

"The workshop "Physical cinema" at the IAA that has been running for ten years, has grown stronger in the way giving the network that grew out of the NORDPLUS ECA Intensive Course workshops within the students' works and actions."

"The N+Eca network is an important platform that gives students an opportunity to travel from their home country to participate in workshops that fit their own interest. The dialogue between students that come from different schools and countries, is another important factor for the students to experience. Regarding Iceland specifically, it is important in the context of a geographically isolated island, to be active in collaboration with other schools from Europe. The dialogue is extremely important and it enables students and teachers to gain new perspectives."

Sveinbjörg Þórhallsdóttir, Programme director in dance, Iceland University of the Arts, Reykjavik, Iceland:

"The Physical cinema, intensive short courses led by Helena Jónsdóttir for the N+ECA network, plays a big part of the curriculum in the program of contemporary dance at Iceland Academy of the Arts. The students enjoy this module immensely. Our students have had the experience of applying to different NORDPLUS ECA Intensive Course workshops with different focuses provided in our program. Personally, I have found workshops with inter-grated dance and music programs to be of specific interest and value to our students.

The N+ ECA network has furthermore enabled and enhanced the collaboration between the dance program at IAA and the dance education at Statens Scenekunst Skolen in Copenhagen. Kim Helweg, the head of the MAD education in Statens, has, for example, chosen to send his music students on internships to our program to play music in technique classes and participate in creative processes. The mobility support from the N+ ECA network has enabled and enhanced collaboration between the schools, and for that we are very grateful."

THE GREENLANDIC DANCE ARENA: Building Capacity Through Collaboration

Dr. Ruth Montgomery-Andersen

University of Greenland – Department of Culture and Social History, Nuuk, Greenland

Introduction

Greenland is a self-governing entity under the auspices of the state of Denmark. It has the status as an independent member of the Nordic Council of Ministers, in relation to cultural questions and an equal partner in cultural projects since 1972 (norden.org 2016).

Greenland has been an active participant in the NORDPLUS ECA program since its inception, and with the 2006 inclusion of Greenland in the Nordic N + ECA Network, it has changed the way that Greenland has participated in Nordic networks. The program has expanded from a dance network to a network that includes performance, journalism, the sciences and the development of programs and experiences that are above and beyond our initial interest fields. Over the past 10 years of the network's existence, the call from the Nordic Council of Ministers has been focused and re-focused on our youth, on competency building; that includes all of the Nordic citizens, no matter their ethnicity and inclusivity of all members of society, through universal access.

Greenland participation has, under this network, grown to a greater capacity and has received support from the network, its curator and from the local community. Support has not been limited only to participation, but has also been for development of the network and ensuring that Greenland has been an equal partner in all phases of the network. Teachers, students and network contact persons have benefited from the collaboration and these events have contributed to the visions and dreams of the students that have been a part of the collaborative experiences that the network has created.

The network has initiated and created chances for performance students and professionals to develop new connections and network partners, but it has also contributed to the development

of a dance scene and the concept of community participation in dance. Young professionals and students have come together to create and share knowledge within the Nordic dance arena. These participants have come from Finland, Estonia and Greenland. There have been choreographers, dancers, photographers, actors, university professors and health professionals that have participated and shared their knowledge within the network and with the people of the participating countries.

One of the main differences within this collaboration and other collaborative processes is that Greenland has not only been on the receiving end of the collaborations, but our knowledge, our competencies and our people have been active throughout the entire process. That we have been empowered and supported to be equal partners and not pushed on the “back burners”, but have taken a leading role in several of the projects that we have been a part of.

Actress and head of the National Teater’s School of Acting, Varste Mathæussen, has been a guest lecturer at a seminar in Iceland, and guided other Nordic professionals through the history of Greenlandic Theater. Dancer Alexander Montgomery worked and collaborated with Choreographer Svetlana Grigorjeva, resulted in a development of choreography and exchange with the university in Estonia. Furthermore, young and upcoming photojournalist Inuuteq Krieigel has collaborated with universities in Turku and Estonia on the documentation of choreography collaboration “Welcome to the Jungle”.

Namely this collaboration embodies the spirit of collaboration and collective efforts of the N+ ECA Network. Estonian Svetlana Griorgjeva, a new and upcoming choreographer, was supported and encouraged to work with dancers and musicians from Finland and Greenland. These performers, from the 2012 project, included the Estonian composition/music student, Liisi Altsaar, from Tallinn University’s Department of Music and guitar student Alvin Raat from the Estonian Academy of Music.

This collaboration became enhanced, as journalist student Inuuteq Krieigel was asked to work with the group during the development of the production and under the performance. The collaboration was a catalyst to an exhibition and study tour for the young journalist in Finland and Estonia. This study tour inspired Inuuteq to work towards photojournalism as a career choice.

The goal of cultural and performance networks is the development of competencies and exploration of artistic expression. This should result in a competent, expressive, and inspired young artist. The other goal of the network is to ensure sustainability within the individual communities and the transfer of knowledge from one generation to another. This requires not only competent but also socially knowledgeable mentors.

During March 2016, Greenland was the host of Arctic Winter Games 2016 (AWG2016) in Nuuk. This marked a new era in collaborative agreements with the country and internationally. The focus of AWG2016 was sport and culture, each of the areas equally important to the success of the games.

One might ask what do these Arctic games have to do with a Nordic network? Firstly, Greenland is Nordic Council of Minister's (NCM) "Window to the West" and has strong historical and cultural ties to the Inuit Peoples of Canada, Alaska and Russia. These ties fulfill and support some of the goals that have been put forth by the NCM. Secondly, the knowledge and experience that has been gained by the collaborations in the network have directly influenced by the quality, quantity and the level of experience of the youth and young professionals that were a part of the AWG2016.

Former students from the network were included in the games as high level performers, journalists, members of staff and members of the AWG2016 organization. The NCM vision had a direct influence on the cultural program of AWG2016 and this in turn created a window to the Nordic Countries.

In 2006, at the start of the N+ ECA Network, there were several examples of workshops, seminars and happenings created by guest teachers from Denmark and other Nordic and European countries, but there were no children or youth in Greenland that received regular dance classes. Dance was not a part of performance programs, afterschool programs, or other extracurricular activities provided for children and youth in Nuuk or other areas of Greenland.

Over the past 10 years through collaboration, foresight and innovation, Greenland can now boast of a biennial dance festival for children and youth, OuterVision; the establishment of our own National Theater and Theater School; the revitalization of the amateur theater culture; and the opening of Greenland's first dance studio to offer ballet, modern/ contemporary and jazz dance, Qiajuk Studios.

The N+ECA has supported the dance and performance community and has ensured that dance has not been an art form that is reserved for a select few, but has supported Greenland in its attempt to create an arena, when dance comes out to schools and is within the public areas, making it accessible to a large portion of the population, especially in Nuuk.

As a future collaborative partner, it will be important for Greenland to have a greater possibility to participate in seminars and network meetings. This will require that the greater expense and the need for long term planning is acknowledged and taken into consideration when planning

the program. Through network collaboration it is possible to raise awareness for the arts, to inspire young artist to greatness and to develop a platform for sustainability within the arts in Greenland.

We would like to acknowledge the important work that the N+ECA coordinator, David Yoken, has done to ensure Greenlandic participation and look forward to an increased participation from Greenlandic learning institutions, students, teachers and professionals.

A collaboration full of actions that have made us stronger!

Tiina Ollesk

Associate Choreography Professor

Baltic Film and Media School, Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonia

10 years ago, we seemed to be standing by the highway, trying to hitchhike to some passing car. There seemed to be opportunities, but when plans became to be carried out, there were many reasons why we were not taken along: not enough attractiveness, financially unable, no suitable learning environments, questionable sustainability. Then came the chance to join the NORDPLUS ECA Network in which we have felt like full partners since the very beginning. In this network, we have come across curricula of diverse focus areas (teacher, artist, contemporary art, traditional culture) which makes relations sometimes very challenging, but also enriches us. We have learned to listen to each other and managed to survive in various environments and conditions, as well as work together creatively.

Ten years ago, the Tallinn University Dance Department was located in Tallinn's Old Town and the dancers had only two small studios in which they could work. In the spring of 2009 we had to rack our brains for ideas and go to the streets to make a dance film – luckily the weather supported us and for a week dance and film students directed by Icelandic film maker and choreographer, Helena Jónsdóttir, filled the Old Town with their youthful energy. These meetings are essential to young people for making their own networks. Many creative projects and collaborations have emerged from these meetings.

Tallinn University has limited possibilities to invite teachers and art practitioners from abroad; therefore, we are very grateful for the NORDPLUS ECA network for the support (Teacher Mobility Grants) in covering the travel expenses of highly appreciated teachers. In 2016, dancer Liv Mikael Santz and musician Gert Østergaard Pedersen from the Danish School of Performance Arts visited us, presenting the best examples of the collaboration between a dance teacher and a musical accompanist. Students highly valued these teachers for their

precise teaching methods and practitioners of a “good eye”. Their engaging classes enriched our curriculum both for the students and the teachers.

The network has offered excellent opportunities for students in working in such “exotic” places where they would never have wandered on their own. Sveta Grigorjeva, an active young choreographer and writer, was a resident artist in Greenland in 2011, working in the local community and directing a dance production for three young dancers. Working in that kind of different environment has a positive impact on young artists’ creative work and world view.

The above presents but some of our good memories of the NORDPLUS ECA Network activities. These have made us stronger, raised our awareness, and supported the dance curricula’s position in the higher education in Estonia (expressed in getting larger and better-equipped dance studios among other things).

“The ECA Network has given me the chance to further work in detail with my practice through collaboration with other students and experts of the field. In a way, each exchange lets you work in detail with one concrete topic, and helps you evolve in a new environment created by the participating people. It has given me the opportunity to meet new people and knowledge of what is happening in other dance scenes other than my native country. It is important that sharing knowledge already happens in the time you are still in the University as a student. ECA network is a wonderful opportunity where you receive new experiences and knowledge from others while sharing yourself and your thoughts.” (Indrek Kornel, MA choreography student at Tallinn University 2015–2017)

“In 2014, during my MA Choreography studies at Tallinn University, I participated in Modern Dance Technique and Physical Cinema Intensive Course in Turku. My participation in the course was supported with a NORDPLUS ECA Network Student Express Mobility grant. I would love to thank and mention that looking back in time, it was an interesting experience and great opportunity. The needed impact is for sure the fact that I was able to participate in the Intensive Course. I remember that those five days were full of action, information and collaboration and I sometimes still watch those videos we created.” (Tatjana Romanova, MA choreography student at Tallinn University 2013–2015)

“The NORDPLUS ECA Network has given me a chance to meet so many lovely people and to expand my knowledge in so many ways. Thanks to these projects, I’ve become more open-minded about process and creation. It is important to see results, but in the process things happen that you won’t always see in the finished product. That makes you appreciate it more.” (Katre Sabbal, BA choreography student at Tallinn University 2014–2017)

Experience report from a teacher's perspective

Gerhard Lock, Music Lecturer, Baltic Film and Media School, Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonia:

“Thanks to my kind TLU BFM choreography department colleagues Tiina Olesk and Renee Nõmmik, as well as the wonderful network head David Yoken, I have been involved as a teacher in the extraordinary NORDPLUS ECA (former EMD) Network activities since 2009. Representing partly both the music and the dance realms, I could participate in teacher meetings in Stockholm (2009), Copenhagen (2010), Tallinn (2012) and Klaipeda (2014), where important matters of quality assurance, development and collaboration have been discussed and further implemented. I also could present there my artistic and research work and share my experiences regarding choreomusical relations, which I started at Tallinn University in 2005. During 2011–2012, I was the tutor of the TLU student-composer Liisi Altsaar, who participated in “The Collaborative Greenlandic / Scandinavian / Baltic Youth Community Dance Project” held in Nuuk, Greenland. This was organized by the NORDPLUS ECA Network. I am very thankful for being in the ECA NORDPLUS Network’s interdisciplinary and future-directed activities. These have enriched and supported my own choreomusical development and enabled valuable and long lasting collaborative relationships as well as experience sharing internationally.”

All students and teachers of Tallinn University would like to thank David Yoken for the huge work related to the NORDPLUS ECA Network’s development.

EAMT Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts

Hanneleen Pihlak

International Relations Coordinator

Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Tallinn, Estonia

When NORDPLUS cooperation opened up for the Baltic countries in 2008, the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (EAMT) was quick to join several higher education networks in the performing arts, including Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts / the ECA network (at the time the EMD network – Explorations in Music and Dance). Among these NORDPLUS networks, ECA network has quite a unique profile – first of all, involving and combining music, dance and media/film arts, it is one of the only truly interdisciplinary networks and secondly, one of the few with active partners also from Greenland and the Sámi culture. Propelled by the energy and dedication of the involved artists/teachers and the network coordinator, David Yoken, the network has developed into a dynamic and innovative cooperation platform.

I personally have been involved in the ECA network from the beginning and taken care of the administrative aspects regarding EAMT participation, from finding the participants for the workshops and meetings to booking flight tickets and facilitating the communication between the network and the individual students and teachers.

The inclusion of EAMT got a rather special start for me, as I was able to accompany our students and teacher to the first intensive course and network meeting for EAMT as an official network member at the Iceland Academy of the Arts in Reykjavik, November 2008. I was fascinated already by the mere fact that the activities took place in Iceland! As I participated only in the network meeting and not in the actual course activities, I was able to fully experience the unique atmosphere and spirit of Iceland in addition to getting acquainted with the network and discussing the future participation and possible contribution of EAMT. One aspect I remember vividly was that the final dinner was hosted by the rector of the Iceland Academy of the Arts in his home, and the hospitality and community feeling this gesture created was transferred to the whole event.

In cooperation with the Tallinn University Department of Choreography, already the next network meeting and workshop was organized in Tallinn and hosted by EAMT in spring 2009. As a host, EAMT got the opportunity to introduce its facilities, profile and study programs to the network members as well as allow more students of the academy to join the workshop, as usually the available funding is limited to 1–2 students per institution in each project.

During the time of our involvement, a considerable number of students and teachers of different specialties and departments of EAMT (e.g. pianists, folk musicians, electronic musicians, composers, improvisers etc.) have got the opportunity to participate in approximately twenty intensive courses, network meetings and workshops as well as regular teacher mobility in Reykjavik, Copenhagen, Turku, Klaipeda, Nuuk, Vilnius, Riga, Stockholm and Tallinn.

The EAMT curriculum does not include a dance program and the majority of our music students do not have many possibilities to work with dance students – or students of other art forms in general – during their regular studies. Therefore, the main benefit on institutional level of being a member of the ECA network has been the opportunity to widen and diversify the profiles of our study programs in the context of other performing arts and through that, enhance the scope of the provided education.

The main challenge EAMT has faced during the years of cooperation relates to the above-mentioned aspect. The students have a full program to complete at the academy and several complementary projects deriving from their studies. It has not always been easy to reach the students specifically interested in interdisciplinary cooperation and it has taken time to bring out the interest due to the lack of experience and knowledge. Related to the smaller experience and higher insecurity, the participating students have sometimes felt that during the actual events, they would have benefited from “more time to understand the connection between music and dance.”

The second challenge of EAMT has been the lack of ownership on academic level, as no specific teacher has been able to take a formal role within the network concerning the selection of the student participants and being an active player in designing the direction of the network activities. This has resulted in a lack of consistency, as there has been a different teacher representative at nearly all network events. At the same time, this has allowed a higher number of teachers to get acquainted with ECA activities, participate in the discussions and idea development. I believe that all involved teachers have contributed to the richness of the events with their unique profiles and expertise as well as gained valuable experiences and contacts that in turn have influenced the teaching at EAMT.

On an individual level, the ECA intensive courses and workshops have been a gateway into the world of interdisciplinary cooperation, allowing the participants to acquire new skills and knowledge in a creative environment. In the evaluation forms of different workshops the participants have appreciated how the experience has helped them to “understand the ‘dancers’ world” and made them “conscious of the relationship between music and dance”.

Among our participants have been those for whom participation in the ECA project(s) – and involvement in direct interdisciplinary cooperation in general – has remained more of a one-time experience as well as those for whom it has been the first step into an exciting new field of activity and collaboration that has influenced their academic and professional direction.

Pianist Talvi Hunt was selected to the first ECA project in 2011, after which followed several workshops in Copenhagen and Turku. The contacts established through the network combined with Talvi’s interest in interdisciplinary art projects and improvisation brought her to study in the Musical Accompaniment for Dance (MAD) program at the Danish National School of Performing Arts in 2012, where she created numerous performances in collaboration with dancers and actors. Talvi is currently continuing her studies at master level in Switzerland focusing on the interpretation of contemporary music.

Electroacoustic composer Alvin Raat participated in a seven-week ECA residency focused on community art environment in Nuuk, Greenland in 2012. Together with music and dance students from Estonia, Finland and Greenland, they conducted workshops and created a collaborative dance/composition project. Alvin has stayed active in the field of interdisciplinary cooperation, including preparing and presenting music and dance performance “Over and Out” as his Bachelor’s exam in cooperation with an Estonian dancer Sofia Ketova who was also among the participants of the project in Greenland.

Performance “F32.9 Unspecified“, a collaboration between the dance departments of the Tallinn University and the Turku University of Applied Sciences in 2010, was also the first cooperation project of Maria Kórvits, at the time a composition student of EAMT, and choreographer Liina-Karina Meedt from Tallinn University. Besides composing ensemble works and choral music, Maria has continued interdisciplinary work, creating music for film, dance performances, exhibitions and installations and cooperating on individual level with various artists and choreographers.

Composer and electric guitarist Ove-Kuth Kadak participated in a workshop in Copenhagen in 2014 and returned with very positive emotions. This experience and the established connections set the ground for a cooperation project developed in 2015/2016 at the Danish National School

of Performing Arts, bringing together musicians from EAMT as composers and interpreters and dance students from the Tallinn University.

Pianist and improviser Farištamo Eller was one of the first EAMT students to be involved in the ECA network activities, participating in a workshop in Reykjavik, which in turn initiated her joining a cooperation project at the Danish National School of Performing Arts in Copenhagen. Farištamo is active musician who has continued to work with singers, instrumentalists, dancers, actors and animators after graduation.

She writes about her experience in the ECA network: “I have participated in two ECA projects. One was a free improvisation project in Reykjavik from which I remember darkness, huge invisible wind that blew even indoors and the Blue Lagoon. During the entire time it was light we rehearsed and played music. I met a Danish teacher from the contemporary dance academy who invited me to improvise at a project of their dance students. I was in Copenhagen together with a Finnish guitarist and a Norwegian saxophonist. We stayed there around three weeks. It was an exciting and highly inspiring time. We worked in small groups with dancers every day. During these weeks, I was a composer, because I noticed that as the dancers “compose” all movement, I could achieve music with stronger power and energy when I also write down what I play on the piano. We learned how a musician and dancer could work together, counted rhythms, beats and tempo. From there I got a great deal of emotional and intellectual willpower to continue working with dancers. I made my second master’s on joint improvisation of a musician and a dancer.”

This list does not aim to be exhaustive but is intended to present a few examples of how the direction and focus points of the network and its activities have influenced the creative and academic journeys of EAMT participants and how participation in the projects has initiated contacts and artistic collaboration across disciplines not only internationally but also nationally as it has brought Estonian music and dance students together and given them an impulse for starting a creative dialogue.

The ECA network has given the participants a platform for exchanging visions and expertise, provided them with tools to widen their horizons and showed them a possible path for shaping their academic and artistic future. The main benefit and importance of networks such as ECA lie in their role as facilitators and forums. Synergy created within such networks makes the whole greater than the sum of its parts and working together results in bigger accomplishments that would be possible separately as individual institutions.

In the future, the ECA network will hopefully continue their work in explorations and collaborations in the arts and keep inspiring the students, teachers and institutions by offering

opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and further mutual pedagogical development. I also hope that the network will continue to prioritize and further enhance the equal integration and inclusion of all encompassed fields of art. As long as there is energy, dedication and enthusiasm among the teachers and the network coordinator, there will be always new generations of students keen on either taking their first steps or already further developing their skills in working across disciplines, methodologies and countries through the platform created by the ECA network.

Reflection upon the NORDPLUS ECA Network experiences

Ina Ločmele, Contemporary Dance Program, Latvian Academy of Culture

Today the NORDPLUS ECA Network has a wide perspective. It represents more than 16 diverse higher education arts institutions from more than nine different countries and one of them is Latvia, represented by Latvian Academy of Culture. Many students and pedagogues have experience on participating in the ECA Network. It has been an honor and a privilege for the Latvian Academy of Culture to be invited and to participate in the NORDPLUS Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts / The ECA Network. Since 2010 many Latvian Academy of Culture students – dancers, choreographers, film-makers and teachers have been part of creative and worthwhile workshops, classes and discussions. Working together, they have been engaging with communities, learning from each other, and sharing experiences and resources. The ECA Network empowered participants to develop and let the creativity grow.

Dance may in many forms be abstract, but at the same time, its starting point is someone's body, a specific space, a specific time and context, style or tradition – even a specific audience. Once one moves away from a mainly semiotic reading of movement or “what does it mean?”, there is always a starting point for a discussion to be found in the concrete features of the performance. The ECA Network projects have broken down the barriers and preconceptions that surround contemporary dance, both among artist, the media and the public. To do that, it is necessary to focus on possibilities and not on limitations – that means finding new ways of engagement with things like the general lack of basic knowledge about contemporary dance among editor.

In all the projects, which the ECA Network proposed, I may say the communication between the various participating partners has always been clear and transparent. Workshops have always been well guided and led by professionals. Everything always has been well arranged to create a wonderful atmosphere.

Overall, monitoring, mentoring, and giving feedback took place in the best way. For example, there was the 2012 Physical Cinema / Dance for the Camera Workshop at the Department of

Choreography, Tallinn University. It was great experience to have the Icelandic film maker/choreographer Helena Jónsdóttir and participate in her workshops. That the students did the work in such a brief amount of time is a testimony of Helena Jónsdóttir's so very high level of pedagogical direction and artistic vision. Helena was able to create an atmosphere where the students felt open and were honest as they spoke about their creative work: their challenges, and their joys. Also very professional, high quality homogeneity of dance and music – when dance transforms into music and the music is embodied in the dance. One of Latvian Academy of Culture students, who has already graduated – Ronja Rūta Pakalne – took part in two ECA Network projects; one in Estonia (2011) and the second one in Latvia (2012).

“It was a physical cinema based workshop with Helena Jónsdóttir leading it. We were many students, from different art forms, like dance, film, theater. I remember those two projects as a very important experience in my life, because I gained a lot of information and managed to experiment on things with other great artists – that has resulted in action especially in the present moment. Coming from the dance field and going into film probably was not my plan at that point, but it did go in that direction later on. A big thank you exactly because of those projects. They had an impact already then and the importance I saw later on. During those projects I gained a network of people abroad, we still keep in touch, with some people I am very good friends and colleagues with at present. The main thing that I appreciate is that I had a chance to be introduced to Helena Jónsdóttir, which resulted in future communication that established and grounded many different things in context of dance and film, opened up new horizons of how to combine those two art forms.” (Ronja Rūta Pakalne, professional contemporary dance choreographer and dancer)

The cooperation and workshops “Action Digital portfolio” with composer Kim Helweg from the Danish National School of Performing Arts, Copenhagen, where Anete Tambaka, Taisija Frolova and Ramona Galkina took part, were equally of value. These took place in 2014 in Lithuania, and were titled “Choreographer/Dancer and Composer/Musician, a Collaborative Platform”.

“...We were divided in two big groups. I was together with Birgitte Bauer-Nilson and Kim Helweg. The first two days the dancers worked with Kim and Birgitte worked with musicians. It was really nice to see how musicians dance. And Kim returned me back to counting, which was a really good challenge for my brain. There was a nice challenge to play “music” and we had to make a work with our own voices and instruments in the groups on the second day with Kim. So Birgitte and Kim divided us into four groups. Choreographers came up with their ideas and Brigitte and Kim added a composer, dancers and musicians to each choreographer. So I was one of the choreographers and also a dancer in Greta Grinevičiūtė's work. It was challenging for me because what I usually make in a half a year, I had to do in just 5 days during a 3-hour period a day! That was a crazy and good experience! I'm so thankful to work with such a creative and professional composer

as Mariana Palacios. I'm so thankful for musicians, who played and danced very beautifully. I'm thankful to the dancers for their trust and effort to learn things fast, for their time, and positive and creative energy! They inspired me and made me believe that anything is possible! And Marko Kallela, our lighting technician from the Arts Academy, Turku University of Applied Sciences, was brilliant! He sees things very clearly and he is very creative. It was a pleasure to work with him." (Anete Tambaka, professional contemporary dance choreographer and dancer)

Anete Tambaka in a very elaborate way describes her experience working together with musicians. Emphasizing the techniques, which are relevant for both – for music and dance:

"I wanted to show in my piece that dancers could collaborate with musicians. All of them are on the stage together, but also work as individuals at the same time. They are all together like a family! I think that was the main goal of the project!" (Anete Tambaka)

"Birute Banevičiūtė inspired me with her lecture about Contemporary Dance and Music for Children! And what I'll never forget is David Yoken's individual class of voice warm up! Dancers need to warm up their voices a lot, because they tend to speak or sing on the stage. Unfortunately we don't have that kind of vocal classes at the Academy. I truly appreciate the chance to warm up not only our bodies but also our voices in such projects!" (Taisija Frolova, professional contemporary dance choreographer and dancer)

Ramona Galkina, after participating in NORDPLUS ECA Network Intensive Course workshop in 2014 in Lithuania, said:

"I also enjoyed being a dancer in Greta Grinevičiūtė's work. She is very talented and she explains things to students very clearly. She gave a lot of freedom in her workshops and successfully kept dancers' individuality in that strong structure. I really enjoyed watching that. It gives space for the dancers' creative process!"

During this Intensive Course workshop, it is very valuable to have witnessed choreographers and dancers testing new ways of choreographing and expanding the forms of dance. Furthermore, they explored compositional tools, which can be used in the collaboration between, for example, musicians/composers and dancers/choreographers or film-makers. The intention to give the students these experiences is a very strong characteristic of the ECA Network.

Then there were also experiences in the 2015 NORDPLUS ECA Network Intensive Course in Latvia at the Latvian Academy of Culture. The focus of this Intensive Course was to explore the various relationships between the dance teacher and live musician/s, focusing upon the dance teacher teaching and the musician playing for the classes. The different ways of communicating were examined and explored so that the collaboration between the dance and the music were

embedded in the pedagogical approach to the teaching environment. Anush Aperjane the student of contemporary dance in Latvian Academy of Culture:

“Every morning it started early at 9:30 with a warm up for both the dancers and musicians together with wonderful dance artists/choreographers Tiina Ollesk and Renee Nõmmik (Associate Professors, Department of Choreography, Institute of Fine Arts, Tallinn University). We had contemporary classes with live music led by a dance artist Liv Mikaela Sanz, Gert Østergaard Pedersen, David Yoken and musicians of the Danish National School of Performing Arts Musical Accompaniment for Dance (MAD) program. Every day was a new journey. We had and felt through our bodies a variety of music instruments and searched for resonance in our movement. There was a lot of improvisation, which was very important for me. It gave me impulse to seek more in my own movement, developed it made it richer...”

Furthermore, Alise Putniņa was lucky to travel and participate in a collaboration project in Turku, Finland.

“It was a great opportunity to be at Turku University of Applied Sciences for an exchange experience. We got a closer look at the dance education program there, saw how students are working, participated in the ballet and modern dance classes. For me it was a valuable experience to get a closer look at the education system in Finland. And of course, the dance studios, working space and education system there are of high quality. Thanks for the great experience and I hope this opportunity to meet other cultures will last.” (Alise Putniņa, professional contemporary dance choreographer and dancer)

What the Latvian Academy of Culture finds very strong in the ECA Network is the specific genre of film-making where a choreographer has the opportunity to try to collaborate with film works. The short documentary film “Motion-Emotion – Seven Days in Copenhagen” shows how valuable the gained experience was. This film was created by an international student film team in 2012 Copenhagen, where the participating students from the Latvian Academy of Culture were Ruta Kublicka, Annija Belogradova, Klavs Liepins and Taisija Frolova. Regarding the experience between dance and film in the ECA Network one of our participants, choreographer and dancer Anastasia Lonshakova is going to make a diploma work for master degree, a dance movie.

“We were a very wonderful group of close to 70 dance and film/media and theatre students from the network partner institutions in Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the USA, and Belgium during a week-long ECA Network intensive course workshop held in the dance spaces of the Danish National School for the Performing Arts, Copenhagen, Denmark. We did some very interesting collaborative work. Each of us had our own perspective and way of thinking, but the powerful thing was to unite our minds together and to make one piece, one movie.” (Annija Belogradova, professional contemporary dance choreographer and dancer)

In these years together, we have built trust and nurtured relationships across national borders. That encouraged people to overcome local as well as global difficulties and support the exchange of their ideas, knowledge and expertise.

“It gave us not just a new experience, but improved the access to the arts and culture for many students in general.” (Olga Žitluhina)

The NORDPLUS ECA Network has brought together choreographers, dancers, film-makers, musicians who share a common language of narrative / non-narrative time and space. Moreover, it has been the creative development and encouragement of young people.

The NORDPLUS ECA Network always emphasizes the importance of building collaborative bridges to other artistic disciplines and at the same time, creates innovative cross/inter-disciplinary arts education pedagogical strategies that support the students' and teachers' artistic development when approaching art forms outside their specific area of expertise. In this regard, all the collaboration, workshops and discussions show that the NORDPLUS Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts / The ECA Network has the right direction, strong motivation and professional approach.

The experience of participation in ECA Network, in some way, is so similar to dance – hard to describe, because as well as dance, it exists beyond words. This is the challenge of making invisible phenomena visible, the magic of communicating feelings and a kinaesthetic experience as well as creating an image of something that cannot be seen.

DOCH and the NORDPLUS, Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts / The ECA Network

Karin Ivarson

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The Stockholm University of the Arts, The University of Dance and Circus, DOCH, Stockholm, Sweden, has been a partner in the NORDPLUS EMD/EMDCA/ECA Network from the beginning in 2006. During the years, we have had many students and teachers participating in different Intensive Courses in the ECA Network, and mostly they have had positive experiences in meeting students and teachers from other countries, and they have learned a lot from each other. Perhaps the most important aspect of these exchanges / gatherings has been the collaborative dance and music workshops, which were not only educational, but also fun!

For the dance teachers and musicians, it has been impactful making connections with dance teachers and musicians from other universities. We have been able to see our colleagues in action in their own context of dance teachers teaching and musicians playing. It is also an interesting challenge to work and participate in these workshops, when we meet for the first time. It is an illuminating experience to visit other universities and have an understanding regarding their environments, their studios, the equipment, instruments etc. One gets another perspective on one's own daily working life, and with these reflections, one develops artistic skills. The many formal and informal discussions concerning communication between dancers, dance teachers and musicians have increased the ongoing awareness of these important questions.

Making connections at the ECA Network meetings supports possibilities to invite teachers and musicians from the network as guest teachers in DOCH's regular programs. We have participated in Intensive Courses for jazz, modern dance, ballet, children's dance, choreography and composition, improvisation, percussion, and meetings concerning teaching methods. We have met wonderful teachers and musicians from many countries with different kinds of expertise in the dance field.

The exchange possibilities have had a positive impact on both our students and teachers. These exchanges are inspirational and educational for the individuals, and further the network building and collaboration between programs. Often it is difficult to find time during the intensive school year, to have informal talks with your teaching colleagues about educational and artistic development issues. However, when you travel and spend several days together for the Intensive Courses, it brings up more creative ideas and thoughts.

As a direct result from some of the workshops in the ECA Network, we have created a specific music course for our first year dance pedagogy students with workshops collaborating with several musicians. In groups, the students create dance phrases, and the musicians play one at a time in different ways, and then we continue to discuss the different musical impact on the movements. The discussions about the relations between music and dance have been vital and creative for both musicians and students.

ECA Network has also been a benefit for the whole university since it has created more international awareness.

In the network, we have also had teacher discussions about developing courses and programs for musicians in dance, how to structure and plan these courses and which topics to bring to these kinds of courses. The University of Dance and Circus, DOCH, has, in line with these discussions, developed courses for musicians in cooperation with The Royal College of Music in Stockholm. In the future DOCH will start a new course for musicians playing for classical ballet technique.

Personal reflections

For me as a music teacher and musician playing for dance, the challenges and opportunities working with ECA projects have been so welcomed. I have had the pleasure to try my ideas and methods with different collaborators and in other contexts than my daily working environment. These experiences have improved my teaching and playing in many ways.

I think it is positive in general to be a guest at another university. You develop your artistic skills and thinking when you meet students from another “culture”. In every university I have visited, I have been well taken care of, and I really felt like a guest in a very positive way. It is of course challenging to teach in English but also a positive aspect of professional and personal development.

Student reflections

A student voice: For me as a student the ECA Network has contributed to a broader view of art through interesting meetings with other artists. I also learned more about myself through meeting other artists. Communication and meetings is imperative for the development of me as an artist.

A student voice: ECA gave me a wider network of dancers and musicians, both from Sweden and other countries. The discussion about communication between dance and music has continued between students from DOCH and The Royal College of Music, initiated by the students, both in jams, projects and discussions about the arts.

A student voice: I am very happy that I had the opportunity to go to an ECA activity, this gave me new inspiration and thoughts about the relation between dance and music that I brought to my fellow students back home. The experience of being a part of the ECA network is a 100% positive experience. For the development of the arts it’s absolutely necessary that students meet over artistic disciplines and countries.

Challenges

Sometimes it has been a bit difficult in the network to handle economic questions concerning teachers and musicians participating, and how to share the costs between our university and the network. One problem has been to find money for substitute teachers and musicians when some of our teachers and musicians went away to participate in an ECA Network arrangement. It is also important for the teachers and musicians to get enough time for planning the Intensive Courses.

Sometimes it has been a problem to send students to participate in a short time ECA activity, because they need to fulfill their studies in the ordinary program in their “home” university. The students have to pass the examinations in their courses at DOCH at the same time as they are away for participating in the Intensive Courses in the ECA Network.

Future

ECA Network is very important for the future of “music in dance and dance in music” in our universities. The network is more important than ever because of challenges in society regarding democracy, environment challenges and art and financial cuts. We need to come together across international borders, university differences and economic possibilities or problems.

We need to continue to work for the necessity of live music in dance universities, so musicians, dance teachers and students can continue to improvise together, so they can develop their creativity in an ongoing process, and so they can work together and develop artistic sensibility in dance didactics. We need to develop research in the field of music and dance and pedagogy, and also to work on new Intensive Courses together with other creative artistic disciplines.

I want to congratulate ECA Network for these 10 years of creativity, innovations, constantly growth in knowledge in the field, and most of all, the love for music and dance within all dancers and musicians involved in the network. I hope the ECA Network will continue growing and have another 10 years of explorative artistic exchange!

From Explorations in Music and Dance to Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts

Marko Salmela

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Congratulations to the N+ ECA Network!

It has been 15 years since the group of Scandinavian musicians and dance teachers visited dance schools in London. This 2004 project was led by David and we were exploring the overall profile of London's dance institutions. These included The Royal Ballet, The London Contemporary Dance School, and the Laban Center. We were interested in the manner in which music was embedded in their structures. This was my first journey with the teachers from Finland, Sweden and Denmark.

The history of the NORDPLUS ECA Network began in 2004 with support from the Leonardo da Vinci programme – The European Programme for Vocational Education and Training grant. With this Leonardo support, a group of university dance and music pedagogues from Finland (Arts Academy, Turku and the Kuopio Academy of Music and Dance, Kuopio), Sweden (The Royal College of Music, Stockholm and the University College of Dance, Stockholm) and Denmark (Danish National School of Contemporary Dance, Copenhagen) traveled to London for an “exchange of expertise” with staff musicians and dance teachers at the Royal School of Ballet, The Laban Centre, and the London School of Contemporary Dance.

After this London residency it was determined that dance and music in our university level art institutions was an important area to develop.

In the beginning, this NORDPLUS network was called “Explorations in Music and Dance / The EMD Network”. Nowadays this program is called ECA – Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts.

The concept of this network was to offer teacher and student mobility between the partner institutions and offer intensive courses where dance and music students would have the opportunity to explore collaborative creative studies and further their knowledge and awareness of each other’s art forms.

What is ECA Network for me? It is an opportunity for meeting and exchanging ideas with other teachers. I can discuss with other teachers about the schooling in their country. I get new ideas how to develop my teaching when it comes to teach music for dancers.

Accompanying dance is kind of a “lonely” job. You are playing alone and you try your best to help dancers in their dance technique classes by improvising music or playing composed music, and sometimes composing music for a longer dance series and dance and music productions. It is essential for me that I can meet other musicians from other countries and exchange ideas with them. Whenever we have had these intensive courses and played with other musician or musicians, I get to hear how they play and I get inspiring new ideas and ways of doing my work back home.

I really hope that this kind of collaboration will continue in the future. However, of course it is always a question of money. Hopefully EU politicians who will decide whether to give the money will understand the impact of these yearly intensive courses.

In these intensive courses, students and teachers get together and begin experimenting and exploring music and dance in many ways. It is a question of collaboration in music and dance. The participants are discussing about ways to make this collaboration happen. It is essential to have some conversation between musicians and dancers before beginning to work. During these intensive courses, there is a chance to create some kind of vocabulary so musicians and dancers will communicate better with each other. That is part of my job as a teacher and musician at Savonia University of Applied Sciences in Kuopio. I work with music and dance students and we try to find the right words and ways to collaborate with each other.

Our students who have participated ECA intensive courses have felt that these courses have improved their understanding between music and dance. I think that is one of the main points why intensive courses are arranged. They have worked a lot with improvisation and it has served the aim to explore the relationship between music and dance for example in jazz dance. Some

dance students said that as a dancer they became more aware of the rhythm of their movement and how to dance with or against the music and how to communicate with the musicians.

A few years ago, one dance student who was participating said to me that in the intensive course one theme was the relationship of music and dance in the modern dance technique. During those days, she learned to be more specific with the timing of her movement. Every dancer also had the possibility to practice the dialogue with a musician regarding the musical qualities the musician could play that would support the dance series the dancer had chosen.

All the students who have participated in ECA intensive courses have said to me that a very important thing is meeting other students and discussing with them, learning the differences between other countries and hearing how their student colleagues from these other institutions arrange the education. They were also pleased about the arrangements. In that matter, a big thanks to David Yoken who has made all this happen. From my point of view, David has done a remarkable job creating this NORDPLUS ECA, former EMD, Network. In fact, how did he arrive at this idea, to make such a network? I have not asked him ever. I think I will ask him about this idea someday.

A former dance student said that she would like to do some collaboration in the future with the people she met during the course. Moreover, she developed some ideas for dance classes as a teacher as well from the experiences she had.

The NORDPLUS ECA Network has had a positive impact upon our dance and music. Every time when there is a possibility to send dance and music students to an intensive course they are really excited. Unfortunately, I cannot send all music and dance students to learn and get acquainted with other students from different countries. Only few music students and few dance students can be sent to participate these intensive courses at a time.

Students are aware of this ECA Network and from time to time, they ask me if there are any intensive courses coming in the future.

What will be the future for the N+ ECA Network? I sincerely hope that the Network will continue to exist!

Direction – North Matters

Agnija Šeiko-Sarulienė

Dance Department, Klaipėda University, Klaipėda, Lithuania

I joined NORDPLUS Explorations and Collaborations in the Arts / The ECA Network right after my studies at the Codarts Rotterdam Dance Academy as I started working in Klaipėda University (KU) Choreography Department, and the involvement in the Network became one of the most motivating elements in my new job. At that time the KU program was absolutely outdated and there was almost no international cooperation. The N+ ECA Network has provided me with an opportunity to join international professional circles, for our students it gives possibilities to participate in various workshops, and for our professors it gives an opportunity to conduct classes for different students. I have been involved in the N+ ECA Network for nine years (the start was in 2008 at my first seminar in Iceland), and now as I look back, I obviously see that participation in the network has had a significant impact on my professional and personal development.

This is one of the international networks that is bringing real changes. Thanks to project manager David Yoken, a great number of seminars have been organized, professors from different countries and universities have had a chance to meet, new connections and friendships have been established, and new cooperation has started. I see obvious changes firstly in our professors' teaching methods, their approach, and ways of communication; secondly, I see good changes in our study programs; and finally, it has broadened our students' attitudes and knowledge.

Personally, for me, the Network has created a possibility to deepen my knowledge and experience in one important dance area – "Physical Cinema". I have had created a number of dance films before but I have never tried to systemize and prepare such material. In 2014, an N+ ECA Network "Physical Cinema" workshop I developed and taught at Turku University of Applied Sciences' Arts Academy in Turku, Finland, introduced me to the great Latvian film-makers Rugile Bardziukaite and Reinis Spaile. Together we have prepared and introduced a concentrated program during which our mentored students have created a great number of interesting and innovative dance films.

For me as a young professional, meeting with David Yoken has been a huge boost in my career. He is the one who supports and creates all necessary conditions for unleashing the potential within starting arts-teachers and young creators and also guides them in establishing themselves in the early phase of their career. His high standards and great trust allowed me to mature and discover my own methods and style in both areas, teaching and creative work.

N+ ECA Student participants' comments

"I was introduced to this Network in my final year of studies. How did I benefit from it? By gaining new cultural, professional and social experiences. From the great number of activities in Copenhagen, I was most impressed by the workshop on collaborative musical and movement improvisation. Why was I amazed by it? Until then I thought that only two kinds of people could improvise, either true professionals or the ones who have had no dance training before. This lecture was my first breakthrough towards improvisation. It was like revolution in my mind and in understanding of body abilities. After the lecture, I had to acknowledge new ways of movement and their emotional, physical and aesthetic meaning. This experience had an incredible influence on my current work." (Rasa Zelnyte, former student; she took part in the workshop in Copenhagen)

"I participated in one workshop in Finland, which was very interesting and useful. I learned about the process of film development, how to effectively work with the team in order to achieve the set goals, etc. I was especially happy to have the opportunity to see the most spectacular places of the country, as well as to learn about the city of Helsinki. We were lucky to have local Finnish female students in our group who brought us to places of truly wild nature. I have met many like-minded students and teachers. I am so glad about the things that I have learned from the other workshop members, I gained new experience, and surely, I would love to come back. (Justina Voveryte, 4th year student)

"It was a wonderful experience and an incredible possibility to work with professional artists, to communicate with different students, to share our experience or, as it is in our case, just to learn from their experience. The atmosphere is especially friendly. Both factors that I have faced, excellent environment and wonderful people, with no doubt encourage productivity. I have wonderful memories. I would love to be back." (Indre Puisyte, former student; she took part in the workshop in Copenhagen)

"It was the moment which made me step out of my "comfort zone", made me search and try what is uncomfortable and extraordinarily. It was a wonderful time – I was surrounded by people who are full of amazing ideas, each of them was very much individualistic, and I could learn so much from each of them. I hope there will be more of such opportunities! It is very rich in knowledge, provides a possibility to establish new connections with wonderful people, and with no doubt, it leaves unforgettable moments. It is so funny that after this journey, when watching any films, I started paying close attention to the angle of filming." (Eiva Dobilaitė)

"The N + ECA program provided me various possibilities to broaden my horizons not only in my creative work, but also in the students' world. This is an amazing opportunity to get acquainted with the students from other countries, and not just with dancers or choreographers. The given tasks invited us all to cooperate and create together. A week that I spent in Finland, at Turku University of Applied Sciences' Arts Academy, gave me a great opportunity to have a new outlook on myself as a dancer and a creator.

The Physical Cinema workshop helped me to discover a new approach to dance, its presentation and creative activities. It changed my outlook on dance films, and I got more interested in this sphere of art. It is so interesting to observe the emotions, moods and different expressions through movements that can be depicted through film while using untraditional music or creating it by using natural sounds of the environment. The time spent in the N + Network ECA is truly amazing, it provides many opportunities to discover one's own hidden possibilities and potential." (Elinga Serapinaite)

"In 2014, I participated in the N+ ECA Network Intensive course in Finland, Turku University of Applied Sciences' Arts Academy and also in Vilnius. In Finland, we studied modern dance techniques and physical film-making courses, while in Vilnius choreographers, dancers, composers and musicians created a collaborative platform.

I am glad to have had the opportunity to participate in these projects during my study years. I had a possibility to learn not only from different teachers, but also from other students, both dancers and choreographers, musicians and composers.

While working on the projects, I was able to realize my own ideas, I felt totally free to create. I met a great number of like-minded people with whom we shared our thoughts on creativity, dance and art in different schools, cities, or even countries. Even though a few years have passed, I still keep in touch with some of them, we observe each other's works, and hope to meet again or even to work on creative projects together. From all my years of studies, N+ ECA courses made me the biggest impression and remained deeply engraved in my memory. It was not only most interesting, but even more – most useful lectures. I am still using the knowledge gained in Finland in my work.

I wish every art student to have at least one chance to participate in such a project, for it encourages students to broaden their perspective on the chosen profession; moreover, the universities that are involved in this project are encouraged to improve their programs and thus they become stronger. In the future, I wish more students were involved in this program; maybe even students from other related faculties and of course to expand, to communicate and build a dense network between the arts faculty, teachers and students." (Egle Misiukeviciute)

Positive aspects of participating in N+ ECA Activities

Another very important aspect of the Network is that it provides a wonderful possibility for the Universities of the Baltic countries to get acquainted with the Nordic education system, to cooperate with their professors and teachers, and to invite them to give lectures or teach within the framework of the network. For there are only two programs that provide financial support for inviting professors and teachers from abroad – Erasmus and N+ ECA Network; otherwise it would be impossible for universities to find financial resources for such cooperation. In the period of nine years our University has been involved in the N+ ECA Network, 60 percent of international activities of our Dance Department are taking place within the framework of this Network.

Involvement in the Network evokes our University for improvement. For instance, when the question was raised whether music accompanists are truly needed in our Choreography Department, the strongest argument not to reduce personnel nor their working hours, was the activities and results observed during projects of N+ ECA Network; without doubt, we were very glad that this immensely important function of live music during dance classes was maintained.

One of the most important current tendencies within European Universities is enhanced cooperation between music and dance departments. While working in the project that has actual concrete results and also that joins a great number of Nordic and Baltic Universities as well as Academies into cooperation, dance and music gain the same important academic value as other fields of studies.

Especially in Klaipeda University, as there is constant questioning if an Arts degree program (dance, theater, music and art are truly) is still relevant and needed, the N+ ECA Network becomes a strong argument in our striving for improving the quality of studies and even the argument for defending the importance of preserving (and not eliminating) it.

Even more, when we needed to persuade the Board Members of Klaipeda University of the necessity to renovate one of our auditoriums, we have achieved this by stating strong arguments that a renovated hall is vitally important for our activities within the N+ ECA Network in order to attract more international seminars and meetings.

In addition, this Network provides a real possibility for the Universities to "keep their fingers on the pulse" of international tendencies in dance and music programs, as well as in search for their improvement.

It is vital especially for those programs that require significant changes. Thanks to the cooperation within the Network, we have a constant possibility to re-evaluate the quality of our study program and search of the ways how to make it unique, as well as to adapt methods and experiences of our international colleagues, and all of this has already brought significant changes in our program and its quality.

Klaipeda University has invited a great number of guest teachers to give lectures on the subject of dance technique and composition as well as improvisation, and all of them were with musical accompaniment. This has given a new impetus and understanding how different and diverse music in dance lessons can be. This was very important for the professors of elder generation who still hold on Russian school traditions.

Our cooperation with professional musicians and students from our Music Faculty is constantly becoming stronger. Several of our students have even involved with live music and vocal singing in their dance composition examination, and these were the students who have participated in Network seminars. Further, our students have created three compositions with the Klaipeda Chamber Orchestra. They were introduced in several combined concert programs.

In 2016, our dance students took part in the Intensive course “Physical cinema”. Klaipeda University does not teach on this subject, therefore, for our students it was the first acquaintance with this new genre. Two students are going to create a dance film as their final composition presentation.

Students are encouraged to reflect, communicate and connect with foreign students. The problem is that due to Lithuanian national character our students are reserved and timid. However, after taking part in the seminars and meeting international colleagues, they start gaining more confidence and new experience.

Overall concluding remarks

I see openness and a correlation of different and diverse music and dance genres as one of the N+ ECA Network’s strengths. When the filmmaking discipline was added, the study field has significantly expanded and possibilities for cooperation have increased. In this way, the study field has been strengthened. However, it is important to maintain dance and music and the strong correlation between these two disciplines as priority, and to include other disciplines to compliment them.

To motivate students to participate in international activities;
It is very important to continue organizing seminars;
Contribution in raising professionals: in encouraging dancers, musicians, and other involved artists to strive growing in a professional level, and providing possibilities for that;
It is necessary to continue organizing long-term workshops.

Teaching possibilities;
Possibility to organize joint projects;
Experience and knowledge sharing;
The importance of music and dance cooperation;
Open atmosphere;
Variety of genres.

The institutes in the NORDPLUS ECA network:

[The Danish National School of Performing Arts, Denmark](#)

[Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Estonia](#)

[Iceland University of the Arts, Iceland](#)

[Klaipėda University, Lithuania](#)

[Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvia](#)

[Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Lithuania](#)

[Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Finland](#)

[Stockholm University of the Arts, Sweden](#)

[Tallinn University, Estonia](#)

[Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland](#)

[University of Greenland, Greenland](#)