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Conservatoire Cherubini in Florence, Italy. Conference on artistic research in music on occasion of the founding of RAMI - Associazione per la Ricerca Musicale in Italia

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Key Note presentation:

**A Societal Survival Strategy
a vision on artistic research**

When you meet an unseeing person you must either fight or run for your life. Keep away and protect openness! Those who can keep their senses alert have soft shoulders and hands that feel what they touch. By remembering to keep your eyes open you can develop the ability to see also those who imagine themselves invisible and find your way to places the unseeing think unattainable. As artists we train to keep our senses alert, but also with our deeds help sharpen other people's vision.

It is not enough just to be good or a fast runner. Today you also need knowledge that enables you to work in a specific cultural context. Artists train. Artists do research. Artists form organisations and forum to jointly develop, learn and create. These forum today have a decisive role in society. Artists meet others to develop knowledge and methods that open-mindedly bring us forward, push the development and nourish hope. I congratulate you to the constitution of RAMI!

I'm a choreographer. Choreography authors itself in a void, in the space between the public and the private. Choreography cannot excuse itself from its political, social, cultural or private context. Choreography can be interpreted as the art of and about the composition of movement in time and space. The movement articulates the self and puts the work within the framework of what the viewer is able to interpret. This ability in turn is dependent on the position our culture affords man as a body.

But history blinds you. We dress up conventions as traditional figures and hesitate before the innovative, before that which differs from what we have hitherto experienced. Choreography becomes textual, a way of *inscribing* movement into the contemporary, offers and explores tools for movement production, for the process and the analysis of the prerequisites for art and the creation of art in many different contexts, as a proactive, artistic dimension of society. We must both learn to move and to think politically.

Through choreography new contexts are created. Choreography can visualize alternative forms and expressions; spatial as well as conceptual places in a dialogue with both traditions and the contemporary. The definition of choreography is an open,

inclusive concept that encompasses a wide array of activities. It operates cross-media-wise and cross-language-wise, inter-disciplinary, dialectically and discursively; it changes, it manages and it transforms. Today you find composers, visual artists, architects doing choreography, musicians being choreographed... Maybe you've seen and heard Gerhard Eckels *The Choreography of Sound*? Jean Francoise Laporte's *Intuitive Sound Dance*? Swedish musician Stefan Östersjö and composer Carl Unander-Scharin are regularly collaborating with choreographers in their research projects to give a few examples.

We all speak with at least two voices: words and movement. Movement can be read as signs. Our common task is to redefine these and take a stand for creating a new awareness. Giving the movement a voice. We stretch and widen the limits for our communicative competence. That is how our ability grows to see and interpret changes, not just in a work of art, but in the world. A few detours now and then are inevitable as well as choices that set limits and boundaries. That doesn't amount to shutting up your mouth.

Active artists interested in the methodology of the in-depth process develop definitions of what we mean by artistic research. Which role should an artistic seat of learning assume in order to visualize and motivate art as art, artistic research paralleled with scientific research and the societal values represented by these creative products, this knowledge and this competence?

These questions warrant a discussion to clarify the needs and the motives for a development of the conditions that will allow artists (composers, musicians, choreographers, visual artists...) to further engage in artistic research. These needs and motives will shape the evolution of training and research projects, which in turn will influence not just future artistic representation, but also the workplace and all of society. Universities and higher seats of learning must work in modes that open up for new ways of thinking.

In some European cultures we have during the last decade seen a general shift toward movement, sound and motion in relation to questions of identity, economy and the distribution of abstract values. What art is and what it wants to be can be experienced in certain works of art and their contexts, but it can also be discussed, researched: researched in, researched for and researched about.

In mixed collegiums of scientists and artists jointly engaged in research, artists have often felt the demands for "scientific method" as an "arranged marriage" or a "guardianship". In order for methodological development to be constructive and useful for the artistic process, it must take place on art specific terms. The future of artistic research is therefore entirely dependent on the dedication of artists, who really want to engage in research based on well-established artistic practice. We need a strong interaction between artistic process, production, research and education.

Many artists possess a unique form of knowledge. When the path they take to reach their goal is documented and the questions arising as a result are made available to others so that they can follow the process, examine it critically and learn from it, more artists can acquire greater knowledge and gain stimulus in their own work. This is how knowledge develops in the arts, a body of knowledge that is shared with the wider world through both the process itself and the resulting work of art.

Artists interested in doing artistic research, should be able to do it on the basis of artistic theory and methodologies, without being forced to adapt scientific theory or methodology. Cooperation with others, artistic as well as scientific fields of study, is nothing new or unusual in the artistic process or production. We do it all the time. My claim is that it makes a difference to artistic research if the artist/choreographer is responsible for the research and that it is arts-based with art as its goal. Artistic research is research conducted by artists, who explore their field of study on the basis of tested experience and artistic practice.

We invest our desire and our hunger for the intangible in what we call insight and knowledge. Dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs and a sense of its inadequacy is something most of us share. All interest arises from a sense of there being something missing. For lack of... we seek. We interact by arrogating to ourselves the right to project our needs onto what is happening between us in forms of cultural expression - or in works of art. Art may be seen as a survival strategy or as a self-image of a society. This is a perspective on the arts that the institutions of higher education have to assert to justify the allocation of resources for the form of curiosity-driven research, which can help us to move further. Through artistic research we develop knowledge in, on and for the arts.

The formation of artistic knowledge is of crucial importance for the development of a good society. Through art we can change habits and stop conventions and indifference to take hold. Art can make us rethink and critically assess what we hitherto thought was common knowledge. Much research underlines the importance of art for society's progress: for choosing locations, for economic development, for new work forms, creative industries etc. Art contributes greatly to the knowledge about creativity, how creative environments are formed and new knowledge about the uniqueness of being a human being with her senses intact.

Culture is what we live, our common foundation, our societal contract. We live a need for faith in the future based on curiosity and respect for who we are or long to be. To make art a natural part of everyday life in the good society, a policy is needed that deals with art's availability, credibility and topicality – as art. This demands for a where artistic presentations query the current state and generate insights in what would otherwise remain hidden. It is of fundamental importance for the role of art in our culture and for the power of many voices being heard through open mouths. Art is an integral part of society's survival strategy!

I give you my manifest, something I wrote to comfort and encourage myself in times of doubts:

”Change a habit and avoid convention. Stop indifference from catching a hold. Push away slowing resistance and open up for enjoyment free from perversion. Stir up and mess up. Create new rites around that which must be protected so that goodness and love are again recognisable. View art as immaterial pleasure or materialised madness, the alphabet of outrage paired with lust and profound intimacy. A dissection of reality down to its smallest particles, reunited in entirely new entities dipped in love. The encounter with art should be like coming home or finding an exciting, challenging place where anything can happen. A place where we want to remain, amidst all the incomprehensible, to be present, listening, narrating...”

In this lecture I’m quoting myself from an article on artistic research in choreography to be published later this year by the SHARE project, some lines from my book “Do You get What I’m not Saying” and from a talk I gave in Brussels as member of the Team Culture 2012 (EU). Efva