

"Capital WOMEN"

Creation of performances focusing on women / taking place in public spaces



Author / Director : Léa DANT

Cie Théâtre du voyage intérieur / FRANCE

1 / PROJECT SYNOPSIS :

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Or how a group of women of all ages, each one unique but working in unison, examines the place of women inside the city and within social interactions, and distilling from that an intimate feminine perspective.

“**Capital WOMEN**” is an ongoing creation, collectively created and performed by groups of local women across different countries and urban spaces, at the crossroads between poetic and the political.

This visual dance-theater stages images of **SISTERHOOD**, and takes place in iconic public spaces of a city. The symbols they carry are those of women’s solidarity, empowerment, reflecting a feminine sensibility, and made from the uniqueness of each woman composing the ensemble.

The creation process preceding the public performance creates a very solid group that generates great emotion through an intimate sharing that reflects **something universal in women.**

It is about...

MAKING **SISTERHOOD** VISIBLE

DISTILLING POETRY/ SENSIBILITY IN URBAN SPACE, IN SOCIETY

MAKING SPACE FOR INTIMACY IN THE HEART OF THE CITY

SHARING OUR FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES AS WOMEN

ENABLING WOMEN TO UNITE THROUGH ART

The project is to stage women’s intimate feelings, in very simple performances, that create strong and delicate images at the same time... Not as a protest, but in beauty, sensibility and poetry.

These images come to question society’s view of women. In the public space.

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

AN UNEXPECTED RESPONSE TO A CURRENT NEED OF MANY WOMEN

The most extraordinary things happen when you do not expect it. This was undoubtedly the case of Léa Dant's "Capital WOMEN", an international project that should have been a one-time workshop.

« In 2018, I created the play "Sous La Chair", a about how women experience life with their feminine sensitivity » says Léa. 'The National Dramatic Center in Upper Normandy (France), where the show was created, also wanted to offer a small workshop to draw more attention to the piece.

« I developed "De femme à FEMMES", a workshop of about 35 hours in total, reserved for women and offering final a performance in the public space. It would be small scale, a workshop for about twenty participants ».

« At the time of the presentation of the initial workshop – at the dawning of the #metoo wave in early 2018 – Léa Dant was surprised to see the extent of interest expressed by women wishing to join the project. In fact, there were so many women wishing to sign up that she had to say no to some of them, but then set up two groups of 25 participants each for the first performances in Rouen ».

Excerpted from Léa Dant's interviews with newspapers covering her performances in Helsingør, Denmark and Amersfoort, Netherlands.





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A CONTEXT-SPECIFIC CREATION

Discovering what to stage in each country based on women's local realities

While the performances all carry the same core messages, they vary as they are recreated by each group of women, based on the feelings expressed and the reality lived by women in the concerned country.

In France women expressed difficulty with street harassment and seemed more connected to their sensuality. In Denmark the group needed to speak a lot, analyze their experiences, and the question of domestic violence became central. In the Netherlands there was a great fear of what others would think when acting authentically and these women had a strong sense of being part of a family tree —daughters of their mothers and grandmothers.

All these differences and particularities become writing material for Léa Dant's creation of the public performance.

Her challenge is then to unpack, soon after the workshop begins, the social interactions and cultural challenges and the context of the women participants.

Each time, I have to figure it out in the first two days of the workshop.

The workshop includes times for discussion and writing and times for creation, which are largely expressed physically, visually and through shared action. The women also experience sisterhood in the group and feel safe, learning to trust each other.

This creates a very solid group that generates great emotion through an intimate sharing that reflects something universal in women.

During the workshop

The participating women reveal their intimate experiences and share them, in an atmosphere of safety and confidence they create for themselves.

Through words, gestures, movement, theatrical expression and the creation of communal actions, they become a very solid group and experience sisterhood. Pictures of the final performances reflect this intimacy and this sisterhood.



HOW TO ORGANIZE THE CREATION WORKSHOP AND PERFORMANCES

To date, the entire project has taken 35 to 40 hours each time, including the performances.

The workshop can be organized in different ways, according to the likely preferences and availability of the women in the given country, enabling them to be available to engage :

- 3 weekends + 4 evening workshops for a presence of the director for a 16-day period
- 6 weekends running on a period of 6 weeks with the director commuting
- 2 periods of 8 days 1 month apart, enabling scouting for the performance venue in advance

The performances can be scheduled in a festival, in the official program, or as a “flash-mob” style event if the organizer finds it interesting for the city / context.

Number of women : 25 maximum / ages 16 and up / no on-stage experience needed*.

* If possible, it is preferable to have 1 to 5 women student actors/dancers or with some scenic experience
The participants are not paid; the project is a workshop including **2 final performances.**

THE CHOICE OF THE RIGHT PERFORMANCE SPACE IN EACH CITY

The performance created will take place in a place chosen together by the artist and the programmer. Léa Dant tailors the performance according to the contextual and symbolic dimension of the final performance space. This space therefore has a meaning in relation to the place of women in the city and in the culture of the country.

Léa Dant writes with the symbolic dimension of the place. In Amersfoort, Netherlands, it was the square located on the site of the former Church of Our Lady. It has a large gate depicting the Virgin Mary before which women honored their mothers. In Helsingør, Denmark a central square of the city was chosen, where there are many bars and sidewalk cafés, a perfect venue for addressing domestic violence often linked to alcohol consumption.

The choice of the site for the performance is therefore very important – it will contribute meaning to the creation. It must also be in a central location, and highlight the presence of women in the city in a way they cannot be ignored.

“They can stop or go on walking, but they won’t be able to avoid it.” Excerpted from an interview by Léa Dant.

VIDEO TEASER AND A FINAL THOUGHT

« Capital WOMEN » in video (3’) in it’s Rouen (FR) performance :

<https://youtu.be/4VeROAA-QWo>

“Capital WOMEN” can bring us together, change the society we create together, today, and contribute to restoring women’s place in it, which is truly invaluable.

“They appeared from different corners, gradually moving towards the centre of the «Lieve Vrouwekerkhof» where they took charge of the square.

At the foot of the tower, they embraced one another and without hurry they put on their white gowns on top of their black clothing. The amount of public kept growing and stayed, watching fascinated.

While dreamy music appeared from the loudspeakers, every woman expressed a personal story. The microphone went from one hand to the other.

What was it? Dance or theatre? A demonstration of solidarity among women, but without the grim feminism?

No one knew exactly, but everyone seemed to be fascinated.”

Jeroen de Valk , ALGEMEEN DAGBLAD, 26th August 2019



LÉA DANT, *Author/ Director/ Trainer/ Scenic coach/ Actress*

Born in 1974, is French-American. She grew up in Washington D.C. and Rabat, Morocco, and moved to France at age 15 to pursue her career in theater.

Meeting Arman Gatti (journalist, playwright, film director deported to concentration camps at age 15) in 1992 marked the beginning of her journey in theatre. Acting for him changed her vision of theatre, and from that point on she perceived acting as a way of expressing identity, a transmitter of necessity and meaning.

This new way of looking at theatre would be enriched through working with Sophie Legarroy and her "0" Collective (Grenoble, France), which brought together artists to create events in which their lived experience had an important place. This work is what led her into theatre direction.

Two further encounters were key to her learning experience: with Philippe Genty she first developed her techniques as a director through the creation of Dédale, created for the Honour Court at the Palace of the Popes at the Avignon Theatre Festival in 1997.

She next explored another aspect of theatre direction through her work with the mentally handicapped acting troupe l'Oiseau-Mouche (Roubaix, France), for which she was assistant director in 1999.

The defining trait of Léa's work is human identity as the kernel of all artistic acts, both for her in her creation and for others, whom she seeks to support in their own self-expression. To do so, she pursued training in pedagogical techniques so as to learn how to teach different approaches: physical (a practitioner of the Danis Bois Method); supervision of theatrical workshops (Diploma in Specialized Theatre Studies from Censier-Sorbonne Nouvelle University). She then underwent training in coaching at Harmoniques in order to be able to accompany other performers. Since 2015 she has taught on the faculty of the FAIAR (Center for Advanced Studies in Theatre Arts) in Marseille, a training program specialized in performance in public space, **where she mentors the apprentices' personal creation projects and teaches directing (acting and staging).**

Le Théâtre du voyage intérieur

Léa Dant created her own company, the Théâtre du Voyage Intérieur, in 1999. **Through her plays, which she conceptualizes, writes and directs, she seeks an intimate relationship with the audience-participant**, beyond that of the performance, by creating conditions where intimate moments are shared and lived through by both audience and actors.

Through this, she aims to create the perfect conditions to offer audience members the possibility of an "interior journey", allowing them to go back into their own selves, feeling or rediscovering their singular way of looking at the world, thereby coming back to their own true identity.

Through workshops linked to the plays created by Léa Dant, the participants are placed at the heart of the expression of their own identity in a new experience of the self, allowing them to share their singularity with others.

Her company is based in Paris and projects have been funded by the DMDTS (Music, Dance, Theatre and Performance Agency) and the DRAC (Regional Office for Cultural Affairs) divisions of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication as well as the local government of Seine-Maritime. The company was associated to Atelier 231 (National Creation Center for Arts in public space - based in Sotteville-lès-Rouen, France) in 2003-04 and was based in Eaubonne, near Paris, from 2009 to 2014 thanks to the support of the DRAC Ile-de-France, the local government of the Val d'Oise department and the Ile-de-France region.

In the press

Voyage en terre intérieure by the Théâtre du Voyage Intérieur theatre company is to this day one of the best achievements in street theatre [...] Created by the Franco-American Léa Dant, a disciple of Armand Gatti and Philippe Genty, this is a journey of unheard-of beauty.

Bruno Masi - LIBÉRATION, July 21, 2001

The Compagnie du Voyage Intérieur has created what will perhaps remain the most bewitching, atypical experience of the festival.

Stéphane Davet - LE MONDE, July 22, 2001

A breath on the edge of the shoulder, the touching glance of a fingertip on the hair...that gentle, caressing voice is present [...] and we leave for another place, blind, trusting, towards a journey to an inner land.

Passing through the Off Festival in Aurillac, the young Théâtre du Voyage Intérieur's very first show made a lasting mark on those that followed it."

Géraldine Kornblum - L'HUMANITÉ, August 28, 2000

Twelve people, no more, were blindfolded by unknown hands before letting themselves be transported [...] at the end, twelve people, in the beginning strangers to each other, were a little less so thanks to the grace of the dark and an unknown touch and voice.

Daniel Conrod, TÉLÉRAMA

We all come out in tears beneath our masks. In a single hour, we have lived a whole life; and not only lived it but felt it, smelt it.

Assia Rabinowitz, LE FIGARO, 23 juillet 2001

Chez moi dans ton cœur [...] last year, we lived a dream, an unknown adventure. This year, with the same sensuality, we rediscover something reassuring."

Assia Rabinowitz - LE FIGARO, July 21, 2002

Je Cheminerai Toujours [...] is a rhythmic ballad with the sincerity and finesse of the performances that we stock in our memory.

Bruno Masi - LIBÉRATION, February 16, 2006

The success of Je Cheminerai Toujours is the quite startling mirror effect that it provokes. Depending on the spectator and the scene, each person will feel they have seen a passage of their life playing in front of their very eyes. The effect is disturbing.

B.M. - LA VOIX DU NORD, December 28, 2005

Throughout the evening, we walk through the theatre to accompany the six characters on their journeys. Conscious that their end is near, they share their interrogations and their anguish. In exchange, they ask those present to share their secrets and their memories. They offer us wine. The play gradually installs fragility as a backdrop.

Guilherme Conte, GUIA ESTADO DE SAO PAULO, April 29, 2011

" Capital WOMEN "

Original idea, author, director :

LÉA DANT

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MAËVA LONGVERT or **ANNE JOURNO**

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