

V Figurines

Forsøgs-rapport  
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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Context

Framework

Methods

Sound Breath Conversations

Sculpting Bodies

Pixies

Fire

Venus Figurines

Conclusion

Application

Research continuation

Documentation

Epilogue

Links

Appendix

Scores

Bluebook notes

Tuning score

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I look much forward to continue this journey.

Julie

## Introduction

This is an experiment and practical research in emphatic states between women. The research will be the brick-stones for the choreography *V Figurines*. Through sound, movements and sculptures females are represented, in a fluxus of emotional and physical states. Together with six dancers I did a two and a half week residency at Forsøgsstationen, supported by Nordic Culture Fund. The residency culminated with a sharing in Dansehallerne at Dansens Dag 2016. With this rapport I wish to share some of the methods, questions and curiosities that occurred in the process so far.



## Context

The idea developed after having met the artist Marit Benthe Norheim, at Land-shape festival 2015, where she presented her project *Life-boats*. I later participated as a volunteer, helping together with about a hundred others, to build the last cement boat out of three that will be part of the *Life-boats* – a sailing sculptural beton installation. The boats represent women in different life stages: *My ship is loaded with longing*, *My ship is loaded with life*, *My ship is loaded with memories*. This made me reconsider female representation and sowed the first seed to the idea of *V Figurines*. I am intrigued by how the female is portrayed in arts. Looking at Venus Figurines from the Stone Age, I noticed that the first found figure was called "Dancing Fanny"!

## Framework

To experiment and research I gathered the dancers: Marie Andersson, Birgitte Lundtoft, Hilde Ingeborg Sandvold, Meleat Aster Helena Fredrikson, Sandra Liaklev, Sophia Mage. Together we worked five days in November 2016 in Dansehallerne with more dancers, and recently for two and a half weeks at Forsøgsstationen. I led the sessions, once the dancers had warmed up themselves. From then they were guided into the work with various scores and exercises, which would tune

them into their own body, others and the space they were in. The sessions were four hours a day, with a break in between. The research methodology derives mainly from dance, voice, martial - and performing arts practices. We spoke in English as the dancers have various nationalities, why this rapport is written in English as well.

## **Methods**

The methods aim to build various common 'states' between the dancers, establishing intentions to make actions and interactions. I see this as a way to create landscapes, setting conditions to specify performers' behaviors and interrelations. The methods are currently for improvisation, but can be used to develop choreography. The improvisation allows each performer to respond to the task individually and use their own curiosity through the structure. My interest is to open the senses to one's both inner and outer world; exploring moving with closed eyes as well as open, to give equal importance to all senses of the performer.

### **Sound Breath Conversations**

These methods explore how a group can create musical and varied soundscapes. My particular interest is how to transform one soundscape to another, and how each voice and breath plays a unique role, both by inventing sound and responding to sound. The performers were led through various tasks exploring conversations with both voice and movement. For example:

#### **I. Building Orchestra**

One makes any sound and keeps that going whilst one by one adds another sound, supporting that soundscape. This is a way to notice the various instrument and textures within one musical idea.

#### **II. Domino**

One makes a sound 'idea', and forward it on to the person sitting or standing next to by looking at the person and passing the sound, the receiver takes the sound by imitating a version of that sound, and transform it into a variation before passing it on. In this way a sort of domino effect is created.

#### **III. Move a sound**

Everyone stand up either in a big circle, on a line, or randomly fairly close together, so that it is possible to hear the sounds that are being generated. With closed eyes, one makes a movement that incorporates a clear breath 'pattern'. The rest (choir) responds with closed eyes, imitating the sound, with whichever movement that will accentuate that sound. In this way the individual interpretation and physical language reveals, while the sound is repeated. Later you can decide whether to imitate or be silent as response, to challenge the predictability of the score. You can also choose to imitate the imitation of others, to create a canon effect.

The listening, responding, and layering of sounds can create conversations, either between performers and audience or in between the performers only.

## **Sculpting Bodies**

Everyone: Find yourself in a still position lying on the floor. You will take turns sculpting the other bodies by relocating them in the space in relation to each other, composing exactly the image you want to create. By dragging, 'molding' and shaping the bodies, you will create a typography of bodies with various heights and curves, and by the end you will place yourself in the picture, where you become part of it.

This can be seen as a meditation both for the person being sculpted becoming attentive to the touch she receives, the creator orchestrating the bodies and the audience perceiving. This becomes a play with audience imagination triggering feelings of perhaps both satisfaction or 'disagreement' in how a body is shaped and positioned.

## **Pixies**

As a pixie you underline another person's movements, by relating your spine to the motion. You move in direct response with the intention to be transcended to the one who is initiating movement. The spine is more active than the rest of the body, aiming to react to the twist, turns, changes of levels, rhythms and speed in order to 'shadow' or 'illuminate' the soloist. You are constantly relating to another physically, challenging your natural movement patterns and responding in sync with the soloist by staying open and alert, focusing on the spine movement. As pixie you keep your feet right under yourself, ready to move anywhere in the space, the core is contained and engaged.

As an observer you can notice the energy flows and interdependence that is being explored, as a bird flock, seaweeds or electric waves.

## **Fire**

In a circle everyone starts bouncing from the knees, to charge the body with energy ready to accelerate out from the circle with fast moves. Practice moving from the centre, transferring weight, and shifting feet as burst into the space. Each creates short travelling sequence with the intention to escape. After bursting out you walk back to the circle to reload, bouncing with the others in the group. Here, two and two, you start 'elastic' burst out from the circle, where you move away from each other at the same time, using each other's energy to expand out into space. Another task is to 'confront' another, by doing a kind of martial dance. Here you practice constantly adjusting to the other body in front of you, keeping a one meter distance constant between you, moving forth and back, whilst one dominate by 'pushing' without physical contact, the other backwards. You move mainly from the core, feet and legs, whilst the arms, neck etc. helps to support. Most of the time the arms will be in front of your self, slightly bend, as if you are running.

From the outside you will see confrontations, shifting dominance and hesitation. The fire dance involve change of dynamics from the fastspeed powerful travelling, to bounces on the spot 'reading' body structures, surprising and playing with predictability.



## Venus Figurines

The dancers were asked to make their own Venus Figurines, a sculpture representing Venus (referring to the female) - however they wished to interpret that. The material was white paperclay, which associates with the colour and texture of the cement boats from Life-boats project. They spend about one hour to create their sculptures, which became 'mascots' for V Figurines. The figures were also used as a compositional tool, where each dancer one by one arranged the figures in relation to one another, and then placed themselves in relation to them afterwards. This associates to *sculpting bodies*, composing images of changing interrelations between people. None of the six figures look alike, and that was exactly one of the core interest of mine in this investigation, exploring how versatile female representation can be.



The dancers were asked to make a 'blue book' about their figure to give *her* identity. They explored movements and sounds that could characterize their figure.

## Conclusion

### Application

I will use these methods to choreograph a durational piece to be presented in gallery and museum spaces. I am also considering the possibility presenting the work in harbours accessible for all passers-by. I would like to apply for more residencies to develop the methodology even further and create the choreography.

I think the methods could equally well be applied to a group of only male dancers for example. The crucial in this experiment is to work with only one gender. Can a group of only one gender represent as many roles and qualities? Do we depend on different genders for different roles? Can one gender equally to all genders, represent human qualities as versatile?

The women shape each other, play and transform with a common force. As an attempt to both unite and free oneself, the women change roles, leads, follows and listens. The intention is to reconsider and question how the woman is represented, and open the audience as well as performers' senses towards the present moment, the space they are in and the people they are with.

### **Research continuation**

During the research new questions has arose, that I want to explore further:

Which vocal exercises could help prepare the performers and make less strain on their throats?

Which producers, curators, partners could be relevant to collaborate with?

How little or how much do I need to tell or write about the intention of the work before sharing it?

How much should the 'women' be emphasized? Is it more about human qualities than women's?

Which costumes can support the women's individuality as well as unify them?

Which others references are there to draw from on female representation, object/subject?

Which specific movements can be applied to the fire section?

How could the unification in pixie section be more visible?

How can the performers involve the audiences more?

How can sculpting bodies happen with more details and 'molding'. Is it possible to avoid 'dead looks' with lifted heads and dragging bodies in different limbs?

How can the work be shared in an informal setting?

How can live music contribute?

What is the connection between figures and bodies? How can this link be incorporated more actively?

### **Documentation**

A short film documentation will be made by Julie Damkjær. The photos here are screenshots for that. Additionally ,I will share some of the methods and ideas behind at Platform in Forsøgsstationen 17th June 2016. In the future, I wish to continuously share work-in-progress and invite guests to observe, give feedback and perhaps even participate in the work.





### Epilogue

I recognize 'the woman' within this work, and therefore I see it as a way to represent her. When these women dance and make sounds together, it becomes an expression of the female, even if what she is expressing does not belong to a certain gender, but is generally human. Even then, there is something characteristic and recognisable about the way *she* expresses herself. Perhaps just because of her nature. This is the seed to my curiosity. Thanks for reading.

### Links / References

<http://julieschmidtand.com/>

<http://www.life-boats.com/>

<http://www.wilhelmine.no/music/>

<http://www.birgittesignelundtoft.weebly.com/>

<http://mariehelenandersson.dk/projects/>

<http://juliedamkjaer.com/>

Scores

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "PIXIES". The score is written on a single sheet of paper and includes several sections of notation and diagrams.

**Section 1: Sound Immitation**  
The first section is titled "SOUND IMMITATION. SET CHOIR MATERIAL & SOLO. CALL & RESPNS." Above this text is a diagram consisting of several vertical lines with arrows pointing downwards, suggesting a sequence of notes or a descending scale.

**Section 2: PIXIES**  
The second section is titled "PIXIES." and "LATERAL". It features several diagrams:

- A diagram with three vertical lines and a horizontal line connecting them at the top.
- A diagram with two curved lines, one above the other.
- A diagram with two curved lines, one above the other, with a small circle between them.
- A diagram showing a hexagon with arrows pointing outwards from each vertex.
- A diagram showing a hexagon with arrows pointing inwards towards each vertex.
- A diagram with four vertical lines and arrows pointing downwards from each.

**Section 3: Silence**  
The third section is titled "Silence. 1. 15." and contains several diagrams of vertical lines and dots, possibly representing rests or specific rhythmic patterns.

**Section 4: Call and Response**  
The fourth section contains several diagrams of vertical lines and dots, with some lines having small circles or dots above them, possibly representing call and response patterns.

**Section 5: Solo**  
The fifth section contains several diagrams of vertical lines and dots, with some lines having small circles or dots above them, possibly representing solo parts.

**Section 6: Final**  
The sixth section contains several diagrams of vertical lines and dots, with some lines having small circles or dots above them, possibly representing the final part of the score.

Score



Excerpts from Venus Figurines' blue books written by performers:

## Bio of Venus:

- From Venus.
  - Rooted as a tree.
- Wearing a cloak of mystery.
- Cold-hearted. Fierce.
- Eats nothing.
- Contains everything she needs.  
It is a woman, but in a world of no men. Therefore, she is everything, and also a man.
- She is disgusting and irresistible.
- She doesn't like, nor dislike.
- She carries a vacuum around her, and will never be in touch with anyone. She is alone. She is not sad about it.
  - She is highly intelligent.

## QUESTIONS:

- Do you feel like you have a mission, or a purpose with your life?

in water, under water. Spiny, a little dangerous to others, can take any shape, can go anywhere, thick

never dry, Never giving up.

OCCUPATION - sending  
throwing — birds to the  
receiving sky

Favorite move - shaking shoulders  
and hips.

Favorite colour - blue

Favorite instrument - dance &  
bells

soft, surrounding, grounded  
friendly, small

Tuning score:

### Multiple Lungs

Lay on your back, in a circle with your head facing towards the middle.

Acknowledge how you breathe, where the breath fills the body with air

try to locate those place

what moves, contracts and releases

in your next inhale engage your lower abdomen,

in your next exhale expand your abdomen out

notice what that does to you, or perhaps doesn't do

can you now direct your breath to different parts of the body

the ribs, the lower belly, the lungs.

Can you imagine placing your lungs different places,

and let the breath fuel that particular part of the body

Place your hands on this place to direct your breath

sense the movement

from here start elongating the breath to find a common breath with the rest of the group

once you have found a common breath,

start breathing through the nose

on your next exhale add a humming sound

any hum

after, breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth adding an ah sound

continue to play with exhalations with various vocal sounds in the low register,

each exhale is one note, to warm up the voice mildly

start noticing the soundscape you create with your fellow practitioners.

### Facial yoga

Find a comfortable sitting position facing towards the middle of the circle.

Stretch your face, Open your face, everything eyes, mouth, cheeks, ears, forehead, etc.

Close your face, squeeze everything

Now do both, upper half of the face wide open, lower part of the face squeezed and tightened

And change, close your eyes and open your mouth

This is to activate the muscles in the face, connected to the rest of the body, especially the stomach area. This releases tensions and awakens the facial articulation.

Start playing with dry sounds made with lips, tongue, breath