
ABDP PODCAST TRANSCRIPT: Episode One, Carolina Bergonzoni and Giuseppe Comuniello

[OPENING MUSIC: upbeat piano, synths]

[RIANNE] Hello everyone. Welcome to the first ever episode of the All Bodies Dance Project podcast, a series of discussions about dance, access, performance, the body, and everything between and beyond. Each episode is hosted by me, Rianne, and another member of the All Bodies Dance ensemble. Each new co-host will invite an artist of their choice to be our featured guest - someone who we admire, are curious about, someone we want to learn from and be in community with.

Today's co-host is All Bodies Dance Project company member Carolina Bergonzoni; and our special guest is dance artist Giuseppe Comuniello zooming in from Italy.

Our conversation touches on Giuseppe's artistic life as a blind dancer, teacher and choreographer, his role as a changemaker amongst the politics of dance, disability in Italy, and how perception, assumptions, types of time, and sensory interpretation are part of his life as an artist.

Before we get into that conversation, let's hear from Audrey Siegl.

[Audrey Siegl speaks *hən̓dəm̓iɾə̓m̓*] I invite each of you close your eyes, take a slow steady breath in, and let it out. Think about, say out loud if you know their name, the Indigenous people whose lands you're on, the ones whose ancestors are in the earth, the ones whose language is still whispered in the trees and that comes up out of the earth itself. For those of you in the Vancouver area, I say [*speaks hən̓dəm̓iɾə̓m̓*]. In the language of my ancestors [*speaks hən̓dəm̓iɾə̓m̓*] I say welcome to the lands of the *hən̓dəm̓iɾə̓m̓* speaking people. My name is [*speaks hən̓dəm̓iɾə̓m̓*] *sx̣em̓təna:t, St'agid Jaad* [*speaks hən̓dəm̓iɾə̓m̓*], also Audrey Siegl.

I am from Musqueam and am the granddaughter of the late Steven and Celina August. I want to raise my hands to you all for creating a safe inclusive space, for creating a space where everyone can come and move and dance and be, for us to celebrate not just the differences between us, but the strengths we bring together when we gather, where we all

meet, where we're all sacred, where we are all safe and where we are all included. This is a beautiful place to be, and I implore you to enjoy your movement, enjoy your connection, and again I raise my hands and I say *hay ce:p qá'* [*speaks hərdəminəm*].

[MUSIC]

[RIANNE] Carolina, do you want to introduce yourself?

[CAROLINA] Sure! I'm also in so-called Vancouver Canada, I'm also sipping coffee because it's 8:30 in the morning, which is 3 hours earlier than I normally operate. I'm in my bedroom. This is the only place where my very barky dog is not allowed. I can see the train from my window, so I also hear the train sometimes, and I am just watching and enjoying what's happening.

[RIANNE] Giuseppe, do you also want to introduce yourself?

[GIUSEPPE] Good morning for you and good afternoon for me, because in Italia now is half past 5 in the afternoon. And today I'm on a sofa in a small flat in Florence. This flat is not my flat, but is a flat of my girlfriend and it is small but is very comfortable. In Italy today is not a good day because it's a rainy day, and it's super for me to be speaking with you and my first experience in a podcast.

[RIANNE] Thank you. So I'm just going to start off by asking Carolina how do you know Giuseppe, and why did you invite Giuseppe to the podcast?

[CAROLINA] I don't actually know Giuseppe in person. I know *of* Giuseppe, and the reason why I know of him is that Giuseppe has collaborated with a company in Italy, in Bologna, called MUVet, and Giuseppe is friends with my friend Gaia. And so, I've been kind of following their work, and following Giuseppe's work from afar. I also know of Giuseppe because I have seen him dancing one time when I still was in Italy. And I decided to invite him because it's someone that kind of has navigated around my own circle, and I feel like I left Italy, and then Giuseppe started working with people I was working with, and so I feel like there is this connection of... we never met in person, but I feel like it's almost as if we had met. Yeah.

[RIANNE] Great. Does that sound accurate, Giuseppe?

[GIUSEPPE] Yes I know Gaia. I met Gaia 8 years ago in Bologna, and am now working today with Gaia in the workshop or performance, and is a very beautiful girl because for the first time, eight years ago tells me “OK Giuseppe, now we can teach in a class of dance, and you can teach with me.” And for me is a super experience and from this experience, this dance class, I start to... involve my work... continues to teach... and... But for me is not teach... my experience with my body... in a different body, in a different person, in a different situation.

[RIANNE] Nice.

[CAROLINA] That’s the best definition of teaching I have ever heard. I might steal it!

[MUSIC]

[GIUSEPPE] I start to work with the child, it’s very very interesting, with Gaia because Gaia love to work with the child, the young people, and for me is a particular experience. Because for the child, blind people are not a big problem. When you speak with young people and the child, “OK, I’m Giuseppe, I am blind people”, and the child can be “OK good, wow”, and ask me one million of answer.

[CAROLINA] Giuseppe, I wanted to ask you, I think you are... are you doing a residency these days? Are you in residency for a project? Am I getting that right?

[GIUSEPPE] Yes, my last project is with my girlfriend Camilla. For me is a first project out of production. And in Italy it’s very very hard to start with any project. But for the moment is very good. This project is... take on the stage one experience that me and Camilla do all day when we go to watching a performance, to watching a dance theatre performance, and Camilla explain the performance to me, and these experiences for us are very interesting. And in five years we have created, made, building an alphabet, a different mode of transmission. And in this performance we explain this different mode of transmission, but it is in the context of a dance performance. [Speaks Italian] Come posso dire? Tutto diventa poi un performance. Deve essere un po ricalibrato per essere una performance.

[CAROLINA] Right, so everything becomes a performance, and therefore has to be reconsidered and redone for the stage.

[GIUSEPPE] Yes.

[CAROLINA] The moving from like a day to day experience to making it into a dance.
[Speaks Italian] E' muoversi da un' esperienza quotidiana renderla una performance.

[GIUSEPPE, in Italian] Una performance. sì, sì! è questa la cosa più difficile, però siamo molto contenti. Dovremmo debuttare, però in Italia é tutto bloccato.

[CAROLINA] So the most difficult thing is making this everyday experience into a show; and they should have a premiere, but because of COVID everything is shut in Italy.

[RIANNE] So I just want to make sure that I understand. So Giuseppe, you're taking your practice that you have with your girlfriend of her describing live work to you, and turning that everyday practice into a performance? Is that right?

[GIUSEPPE] Yes. When we go for example, we go to watch a performance and Camilla live explains, tells me in a different mode. For example, she painted on my hand the stage, and tells me for example where the performers start. For example, in this corner there is a desk, there is a light, a particular light, or I don't know. And she paints on my hand the situation. Or for example, she moves my body to explain a particular moment. Or using the voice, a different solution.

[RIANNE] Mhm.

[CAROLINA] Doesn't this sound like something we've done, Rianne? [LAUGHS]

[RIANNE] Yeah!

[CAROLINA] I think I told you Giuseppe, but for the past two years, All Bodies worked on a big project named Translations, and we worked with a group of blind consultants to make a piece that was meant for the non-visual senses. And so we developed a few techniques such as tactile description. So we would do something similar to what Camilla does, but on the audience's back. And we focused on the Laban effort dynamic for that, to try to pass the quality of the movement. And then we had verbal description, either from the perspective of the dancer - so Rianne would dance and describe what she was doing. And then we played with the sound of the costumes, the sound of the body itself. Yeah, and we have been kind of like thinking about Translations ever since.

[RIANNE] Mhm.

[GIUSEPPE] Wow, for example, in Italy or in Germany or in Switzerland, I tried to do touch-tour before the performance, and then after this touch-tour and start the performance... and there is... description... for example for the dance performance it's not important to describe all single movement, but it's important, for me, for my opinion, it's important to describe the situation, the emotion, the imagination... imagination that the dancer creates on the stage.

[RIANNE] Mhm.

[GIUSEPPE] And in my performance, for me it's important to communicate with the audience... OK... but the dance performance is different for all audience. One audience sees one performance, and other audience, other people, person sees another performance, because dance is very very singular. But that is my opinion for the dance performer. In the theatre, it's different, because the theatre, for me, creates a situation with the voice, with the [Speaks Italian] Mmmh. Come si dice? Scenografia?

[CAROLINA] The scenography.

[GIUSEPPE] Yes, the scenography. But in the dance performance, imagination is very very free.

[MUSIC]

[CAROLINA] I'm kind of curious how, like you bring this whole set of tools that you're describing into your teaching practice. Like, when you teach, do you use some of these tools that you're bringing into this performance? Or do you perceive your practice as a teacher and as a maker separate?

[GIUSEPPE] No, I... the first time I approach the group... and create a situation very comfortable for all people, and I start with very simple exercise, and I, for example, touch my hand with your hand, and separate, and for me the important is when you break this contact, and the space from one hand to another hand. In my experience, this exercise for example is very very good, and creates immediately in a very comfortable situation, the people close the people they has stay in contact, stay in this situation. And I have different exercises, for example describe one people describe a moment another people... describe this movement... I don't know... for example... the first dance... and this is more beautiful ballet in the world, and the people are... the speaker...describe this... or a different type of

exercise. I think the important is... know very well the group and start with... my approach is very very soft. It's not important to do big movement, the quality of dance, but for me it's important the group, the situation, and all the people participate in this work.

[MUSIC]

[RIANNE] I'm curious about this idea of time, and things taking less or more time, and what your approaches are in rehearsal to time and process and creation and yeah, your own personal approaches to making and rehearsal and time?

[GIUSEPPE] OK, in Switzerland I speak with a performer, an English performer but I don't remember the name, and she tell me the "crip time"

[OTHERS AGREE]

[GIUSEPPE] ... and this was very interesting, these words "crip time" because there's a particular delay... different timing for arriving in the same point. What is this time? Sometimes is not more time, but different time. And for me it's important that, for example, when I am arriving in a new company, yes, in a new company, and tell me OK you are blind and you can do something and you can't do someone else. And for me, it's OK no, because I'm Giuseppe. For me, I'm blind but I am a person, and my limit is *mine*, and you don't know my limit. And the first time you know Giuseppe, you know my limit, you know my situation, you know my approach, you know my experience, my background. And then we start to work.

[MUSIC]

[RIANNE] One question that I really want to ask, just because I don't, y'know, I don't know all that much about you Giuseppe, and I'm realizing now that I'm very curious about whether if dance was a part of your life for a long time, or a short time, and how your relationship with dance started, your dance story.

[GIUSEPPE] Yes, I start dance eleven years ago...

[CAROLINA] Eleven?

[GIUSEPPE] Eleven, eleven or twelve... in 2009. And when I start, when I come in in the theatre in front of the first choreographer, for me the dance is a world, an incredible

world, but I don't know this world. And for me it's very interesting because in this moment when I start approach me the dance, I practice ... sport... I practice different... sport... but the dance is very different because you communicate with your body. And in 2009 I was two year that I lost this I lost... [Speaks Italian] Come si dice sono diventato cieco?

[CAROLINA] You lost your sight? Yeah... or you became blind?

[GIUSEPPE] I became blind in 2007, and I start to study my new life, because it's very very different. And when I start to dance, for example, in the stage for me are very beautiful because there is a danger, there is a problem, and I'm very free... my sensations is very good... and stay on the stage is for me a beautiful situation for my body, for my mind, for me. In this moment.

[CAROLINA] What brought you to dance? Like, what was the first dance encounter?

[GIUSEPPE] I start with Virgilio Sieni, who is a particular choreographer in Italy, and he work with transform the normal movement in a performance. He work with no dancer people, no professional dancer people, and transform their movement in a performance, but with a small movement, or work movement. For example, he work with an artist... Artisan, how do you say... artigiani?

[CAROLINA] I don't know, people who do crafts, artisan product...

[RIANNE] An artisan?

[CAROLINA] An artisan!

[GIUSEPPE] Artisan, OK, and he transform these movements in a dance. And I start this situation, then I approach me in the contact improvisation, and then I start to study ballet. This is my situation. Now I study ballet, for example. Because for me is very... for the body, for me is very interesting discover the ballet... [IN ITALIAN] How can I say? It's a martial art almost.

[CAROLINA] It's almost like a military, like a martial art or like something rigid and structured.

[GIUSEPPE] Yes, but this precision is very good because, for example, all movement have a name, and with my teacher is very simple communicate and teaching me the new

movement. Because all movements have a name, it's very clear the situation. And I love this practice.

[CAROLINA] Were you, I'm just curious, sorry, if it's too much just ignore me, but were you a consumer of dance in the sense that... did you enjoy dance before you started dancing, as an audience member?

[GIUSEPPE] Uh, no.

[ALL CHUCKLE]

[GIUSEPPE, in Italian] If I had known about dance...

[CAROLINA, in Italian] Yeah, I am asking if you liked dance before.. if you would go to a dance show to watch dance. I am not super sure about English verb tense here.

[GIUSEPPE, in Italian] No. I didn't even know where/how to enter in a theatre. I have never been before, I didn't even know where the entrance of a theatre was.

[CAROLINA, laughing] He had never been to a theatre before, didn't even know where the entrance was.

[RIANNE] I relate to that, Giuseppe. Similarly before I started dancing myself I had never seen professional dance before, I had never been to the ballet, I didn't even know what contemporary... I didn't know that contemporary dance existed. And so, I relate to this feeling of coming into it first as a dancing person [LAUGHING] instead of an audience

[CAROLINA] I think for me, it's like... because I've been dancing for my entire life, like going to see the dance was part of my dance school. But I feel like in a way I'm almost... I feel like I've seen dance before I perceived myself as a dancer, although I was actually already dancing when I was... like, they brought you to the theatre as a kid. It was like "Here it is! Enjoy!" kind of thing. Yeah, lots to think about.

[GIUSEPPE] My problem is sometimes I ask myself "OK but am I professional dancer, or not?" Because I didn't study dance when I was a child, for example. I started dance when I was 36 years old. Thirty four, thirty six. But I work with an important choreographer, and I have a good experience in dancing and performing. And for me, OK, but I am a professional or not? [LAUGHS]

[CAROLINA] And what answer is it for you? What do you think is the answer?

[GIUSEPPE] I think no, not professional, but I am having an experience, a good background.

[CAROLINA] An experienced non professional dancer...

[GIUSEPPE] Yeah!

[LAUGHTER]

[RIANNE] A new lingo for our bios.

[LAUGHTER]

[CAROLINA] Well, when you said 'your portfolio' it was like woah it's 25 pages... I would rethink that answer, but that's just me.

[LAUGHTER]

[GIUSEPPE, In Italian] Oh right, did you get my portfolio? I never received a confirmation email.

[CAROLINA, in Italian] Yes, yes! don't worry!!

[MUSIC]

[CAROLINA] Rianne, do you want to ask the last question?

[RIANNE] Sure, yeah. So our last question is actually an opportunity for you, Gieseppe, to ask a question to the listeners. Something that maybe is on your mind or you're wondering about lately that the listeners can ask themselves.

[GIUSEPPE, in Italian] Yes, I...I would like to ask people... how often they - how do you say it? Oh man! I don't even know how to say it in Italian -... How often they listen to others, instead of trying to find solutions, to just pause and listen. I mean, they approached a

situation with others, by listening instead of approaching like: "here is my solution to your problem. My only goal is to find a solution for your problem, instead of listening to you"

[CAROLINA] OK, I don't think I can give this justice in translating it, but I will try. Giuseppe would like the audience to reflect on how often they found themselves in a position of listening to the other, rather than trying to find solutions for the other. So, being in a dialogue, being in, um, listening to the other, and not approaching it with 'here is the solution' to your problem.

[RIANNE] Mhm. Wow, thank you.

[CAROLINA] In Italian it sounded much nicer.

[LAUGHTER]

[MUSIC]

[RIANNE] Thank you for listening to the All Bodies Dance Project podcast. A special thank you to our behind the scenes collaborators. Our soundscapes were created by MJ Coomber and podcast graphic by Kirsten Hatfield. Editing by Sasha Langford and Tuesday Furgeson. Episode transcription by romham pàdraig gallacher from the radical access mapping project.

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The transcription of the episode is available on our website, along with info on upcoming guests and our other projects. Links to artists and organizations mentioned in the episode are in the show notes.

And finally, we would love to hear from you. If you have feedback questions or ideas, please email us info@allbodiesdance.ca