

Sign Dance Collective UK & HR 2023 Brief Touring Report



Erasmus+

This year was one of the busiest for both companies in THE SIGNDANCE GROUP. The UK developed projects instrumental to the art form signdance theatre, whereas the European company grew by leaps and bounds by collaborating on two substantial Erasmus Projects.

“Oriente Plus/ Power Cut” www.signdance.org in its second year of touring, was successful in so many ways.

We worked at the following Venues and Festivals-

March-We began our work on the second year of the "Oriente Plus Power Cut" national and international tour in Pakostane and Graz with a ten-day rehearsal of this new touring work.

The piece had a tough start in 2022, and we were looking forward to developing the work further and making it more accessible and easier to perform.

After the rehearsals, we toured to –

April- In the UK, we performed at Bucks New University in High Wycombe and The Bourneville Museum in Birmingham, where we researched the new work- "Faces and Broken Hearts" funded by Arts Council England with the community and with our New Generation Artists funded by The Rothschild Foundation. The success of both shows and the Places Faces Broken Hearts Project at Selly House, which was well attended and supported by the community, gave us the confidence to start this challenging and exciting year.

Selly Manor <https://www.bvt.org.uk/selly-manor-museum/>

Bucks New University <https://www.bucks.ac.uk>

April- We then travelled to New York City for improvisations and research for “Places Faces and Broken Hearts” and to Wilmington, North Carolina, to perform at one of our favorite venues – The Juggling Gypsy <http://jugglinggypsy.com>

The audiences were receptive to all three performances of Oriente Plus and we further developed the ideas for Places Faces & Broken Hearts. We travelled across the USA on train, from the New York YMCA, which hosted the company's rehearsals and new development for “Places Faces and Broken Hearts” to beautiful Wilmington, where we stayed in excellent accommodation <https://www.signdancecollectiveinternational.com/about-2>

We always grow artistically with our colleagues and partners in the USA, and this time was significant as we were working with our incredible USA associate artists Caylia Wallace and Irina Kaplan, who are instrumental in the development of SDC's current work and are an inspiration to us.

We also remembered and commemorated our dear past colleagues who passed away – Maggie Kaplan and Lionel Macauley. We spent time with their families; their words and memories were essential to developing Places Faces and Broken Hearts.

Viviana Molinares, SDC's core company and visual artist based in Florida, created a series of paintings for Places Faces & Broken Hearts, which we used to develop character, place, and space.



So successful is Viviana's work that her paintings form part of the touring production and the main inspiration for set and for character.

Soobie Whitfield Golda Dahan and Vani Ca delivered one-off workshops and training with The Deaf Community and at Bucks New University.

May When we returned from the USA, we dove into an entire month of working with Places Faces and Broken Hearts in Croatia and the UK. We combined two projects –

1. The R&D for Places Faces & Broken Hearts
2. The Art of Silence Festival

At The Erasmus Plus supported , Art Of Silence Festival, and with our partners from Latvia 3D Group and Romania, Sign Dance Collective, Croatia welcomed fifty young Deaf and hearing artists to develop work in signdance, Deaf theatre, and movement improvisation.



“ The Places Faces and Broken Hearts” development was inspirational. We worked in Filip Jakov Kino Cinema for fifteen days and included three Croatian dancers from a beautiful performance group called Irida in the R&D. They helped to design the movement ideas. We also had the participation of the director, Indiana Lowes Colins. Who instigated the ideas of masks and Commedia De Art ideas. David Bower worked through the project’s visual language to begin developing the visual script.

We performed “Places Faces and Broken Hearts” to a packed audience outdoors in the village of Pakostane, and we rehearsed Oriente Plus Power Cut in front of The Art Of Silence Project artists.



We continued the tour with eight shows of “Oriente Plus” at The Brighton Festival Donut Venue . The conditions were extremely challenging, and we rose to many of them. Still, this fringe venue may not have been the most suitable situation for the company. It was an inaccessible situation, which meant the disabled and Deaf performers struggled. We prepared the venue as much as possible. The place where we performed constantly changed at the last minute and this made the situation inaccessible. This made for a frustrating situation. Nonetheless, we survived it, and audiences in Brighton loved “Oriente Plus”.

June/July Following the work in Brighton, we moved on to Graz, where we were lucky to have the opportunity to continue developing “Places Faces & Broken Hearts” in Graz, Austria. The Oriente Plus and Places Faces & Broken Hearts performances were received with great enthusiasm and warmth by substantial audiences at The Graz History Museum/Art Gallery and KIG Kulture in Graz. The company thanks Graz Arts Funds and Transmitter Performance for their support.

We continued to the Ana Desetnica Festival, www.anamonro.si, where we delivered part of an ERASMUS Project – "Into Public Space." We were also incredibly fortunate to get funding from Creative Europe Ljubljana and The Ana Desetnica Festival to further develop Oriente Plus Power

Cut. Paired with director Samo Oleami, the show was able to develop further with this beautiful support.

We performed Oriente Plus throughout Slovenia to enthusiastic and substantial audiences. One of the best festivals in Europe in our opinion.

July continued. After an incredible journey on train, boat, and cycle from Ljubljana to Rijeka, Croatia and Vodice, Croatia, we performed "Oriente Plus" over three days at the summer festival in Vodice. This remarkable place allowed us to apply our street theatre technique effectively.

In The UK, we performed "Oriente Plus" at The Manchester Fringe Festival at Whitworth Gallery www.greatermanchesterfringe.co.uk to a very responsive audience, winning a festival fringe award for our Oriente Plus performance.

We then travelled throughout Southwest England to the Falmouth Museum, where we performed in the rain in a tiny nook on the first day and under grey but dry skies on the second day; we drew lovely audiences. Then to the Exmouth Festival. In Exmouth, it rained, but we performed, and underneath umbrellas, wonderful audiences joined us in the performance of Oriente Plus.



August & September

Into The Public Space- Erasmus + Signdance Europe Croatia Circus Street Theatre & Voice European Partnership Project Croatia and Serbia. We delighted the summer tourists in Croatia with Sea dances and participated and led workshops at a big Circus Festival in Serbia. We also joined circus, street theatre and clowning skills workshops with Circus Fera www.cirkusfera.org and Ana Monro www.anamonro.si

After returning from Serbia, the cast of Oriente Plus travelled to Waddesdon Manor in Aylesbury Vale, UK, to perform the show and interact with Manor Garden guests. Manor audiences loved Oriente, and we received fantastic feedback from it. We look forward to returning in Autumn 2024 with "Places Faces and Broken Hearts".

At Middlesex University we worked on the project visual script and the storytelling style for the show

At the SDC Places Faces & Broken Hearts Mini Festival at Wycombe Arts Centre www.wycombeartscentre.com

We delivered Workshops, The Conference, "Inclusion on My Terms" and the official Sharing of Places Faces & BH R&D plus Guest Performances from the excellent Anjali Dance Company, UK www.anjali.co.uk

and the extraordinary Irida Dance Company, Croatia <http://irida.com.de/>

Residents of Wycombe enjoyed a performance of Oriente Plus on the High Street.

Signdance Collective suffered a significant loss during this time with the death of our associate director, Ruth Gunstone. Ruth was an extraordinary human. A gentle, intelligent, spirited woman full of love for life. Ruth championed SDC's work for over a decade, and we miss her.



October At Leeds Deaf Theatre at Centre for Deaf Culture & Slunglow UK www.slunglow.org

, we continued the development of "Places Faces and Broken Hearts" through Open Workshops with The Deaf Community, and with The Leeds Deaf Theatre Company. This residency was a highlight in our calendar. The space at Slunglow is magnificent, as is the company itself. The Deaf community was fun to work with. Sessions progressed their artwork and SDC's Places Faces & Broken Hearts, and we enjoyed sharing at Slunglow.

The whole company, Foscani School for Deaf Young People, was in Romania to perform "Oriente Plus" and develop The Art Of Silence Digital Booklet, an Erasmus Project that disseminates information on inclusive ways to work in the arts. SDC is a significant partner on the project, which will be delivered in autumn 2024 with our partners in Latvia and Romania.



Between May & July, we delivered Five Open Online R&D Workshops for Places Faces and Broken Hearts in Association with The Together Festival London www.together2012.org.uk

The workshops were inspirational, and the company artists gained knowledge about the possible outcomes for the new work.

Isolte Avila and David Bower January 10, 2024

