

COUNTERSENSE

By and with Erika Webe

Artistic partners: Isabel

Lagos et Elena Sadkova

External eye: Eric Whiteford

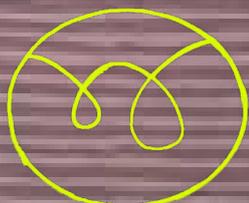
Musical composition: Joel Heiras et

Fabio Zindaco

Light creation: Shantala Criscuolo

A Espuma Company Production

www.espuma.org



COUNTERSENSE, though the drakness of light

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COUNTERSENSE

GENDER: Dark Comedy

Visual, physical and choreographical theatre

YEAR OF CREATION: 2023 - 2024

DURATION: 50 minutes

FOR ALL AUDIENCES, recommended for ages 7 and up

ACCESSIBLE TO : Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals

COUNTERSENSE is a dark comedy performance that explores, through choreographic theatre, visual language and sounds atmospheres, existence and the boundaries between Life and Death within an «invented society» moving toward self-extinction and the mechanization of the mind. The notion of foreignness, along with the relationship to oneself, technology, and the Other, is deeply questioned.

How to be yourself and exist in society?

SYNOPSIS : The story begins on an ordinary day in the life of CARA, a secretary in the Department of Culture in the city of Namdal, in Europe, who, like every weekday, spends her hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in her «mobile office,» a desk strapped around her body.

But as she heads home, an accident occurs... disrupting the course of her existence and pulling her into unimaginable realities. CARA dies, drawn by strange calls in the middle of an avenue, unable to see the truck speeding toward her.

She becomes the spirit of her angels and the body of her demons in a journey through her own Hades. **Is this what it means to be dead? Or could it mean being alive?**

A piece that invites spectators to become observers of their own lives, to reconsider social codes and norms, and to envision the possibility of «symbolic» deaths and rebirths within a single existence.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Genesis

I was born in Argentina, the third generation of my family born there. My ancestors, however, were foreigners from diverse backgrounds: my great-grandparents, teenagers at the time, left Slovenia, Lebanon, Germany, and Spain in the early 20th century in search of a place of peace.

I live in France since 2019. I am also now Italian, speak six spoken languages, and am learning two sign languages. I feel as though I have multiple homes across the world, where I've felt welcome, nourished by connections, pursued artistic projects, and always been greeted as a friend. I've learned to speak their languages, adopt aspects of their cultures and traditions, and yet, I still feel like a foreigner everywhere.

In this piece, I explore the notion of being a foreigner, as it is a phenomenon present in all eras. The reasons are as varied as the stories themselves: wars, economic crises, love, work, the desire to explore, religion... And, as humans, we will inevitably miss certain commonalities: people, particular tastes, music, customs.

In 2009, I embarked on a quest to find my home in the world. Born and raised in Argentina, with grandparents coming from Germany, Slovenia, Lebanon and Spain, I began a journey that continues to this day. Along the way, I realized that my home is the theatre. From this home, and with the collaboration of extraordinary cohabitants, I developed COUNTERSENSE: a gestural narrative of a conflicted spirit seeking a place to belong.

Why COUNTERSENSE?

First, because the word «COUNTERSENSE» contains «sens,» and this sensory awakening of the character is central to the piece. Then, the prefix «counter» evokes for me the idea of opposition to what one seeks—a kind of resistance to oneself.

These two concepts together create a vivid image in my mind: that of a car driving in reverse. At the start of our story, the character CARA finds herself at this point—moving in reverse, against the flow of her own path, and yet, unknowingly, drawing closer to it.

The Creative Process

This piece is the result of three creations developed at different times, all sharing one commonality: they were solo performances. These include Takata (2021–2022), Friction (2022), and Prituel (2023–2024). Each of these works had distinct teams, locations, and contexts:

Takata was, above all, a study and analysis of the musicality of movement and the movement of music through choreographic narratives. It was developed as part of my thesis, *Montagnes Intangibles*, at the International School of Dramatic Corporeal Mime (EIMCD), with pianist Fabio Zindaco.

Friction is a story I wrote, inspired by PRR!, my first solo performance¹, which I toured with until the pandemic. I began the creation of Friction with Elena Sadkova as both collaborator and director. However, the war prompted her decision to return to Russia to be near her family.

Prituel was a creation in which I sought to craft a rite of passage through theater. Van Gennep describes «rites of passage as accompanying changes in place, state, social position, or age.»² He divides these into three phases: preliminary, liminal (on the threshold), and postliminal. From an actor's perspective, these can be seen as separation (from the prior state or place), transition (between two states), and incorporation (into a new state). The creation of Prituel was supported by Culture Moves Europe, with Isabel Lagos as director and Joel Heiras on musical composition. Today, this «dramaturgical concept» has become part of the R&D project *Cultuals Weavings*.³

It became evident to me that these experiences were pieces of a larger puzzle, leading to the creation of a unified work. These explorations, which began in 2021, have culminated, four years later, in a fully realized piece.

1 Mise en scène par Jean Méningault dit Méningue et avec la musique originale d'Andrea Maracci.
Voir : <https://www.erikawebe.com/fr/copia-de-prr-fr>

2 Arnold Van Gennep, *Rites de passage, rites d'initiation*, ed Presses Université Laval, 2002.

3 Voir : <https://www.theatrestate.art/researchanddevelopment>

ARTISTIC APPROACH

«I say that the stage is a physical and concrete space that demands to be filled and made to speak its own concrete language. I say that this concrete language, meant for the senses and independent of speech, must first satisfy the senses; that there is poetry for the senses just as there is for language, and that this physical and concrete language I refer to is truly theatrical only insofar as the thoughts it expresses escape articulated language.»

It is important for me to specify that COUNTERSENSE has been created with the vision of a minimalist, unconventional aesthetic, focused on a transdisciplinary gestural theatre where the body becomes the primary medium of expression, becoming a sensorial experience.

DRAMATURGICAL COMPONENTS:

The Body

The Clown

Minimalist Scenography

Sound Design



THE TEAM



Erika Webe, actress, clown, mime, aerial acrobat, director, gestural composer, and poet.

Erika was born in 1990. She was 12 years old when her grandmother secretly took her to the theatre workshops at the town hall of Lomas de Zamora, where she grew up in the southern suburbs of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her parents told her that theatre was something dangerous, but she was certain that she wanted to do this with her life.

At 15, Erika joined her first company at the Theatre Nobles Bestias under the direction of Alfredo Badalamenti. Since then, she has studied and practiced theatre, guided by curiosity and challenge.

In 2008, she studied dramaturgy with Cecilia Propato, and in 2009, she moved to France to study social and cultural anthropology at the Lumière Lyon 2 University, where she also joined Maude Fouassier's company Muses en Abyeme. After

earning her degree, she trained in circus arts under the circus tent of Accrofolies school in Lescar, Aquitaine, specializing in aerial silks and contortion with Eléonore Bruel. The following year, she trained in vertical rope in Buenos Aires with Ile Munay, Victoria Marecos... She also delved into street arts and learned juggling, unicycling, and clarinet. She toured in Argentina, Brazil, and Europe with the De Berenis Circus company, and performing her first clown solos, such as Caracola, a character full of humanity, funny and tender.

From 2014 to 2017, she studied in Buenos Aires physical theater (Jacques Lecoq technique), clowning (with Lucia Schnicotsky), contemporary dance, jazz, rock'n'roll, and tango, and she started learning corporeal mime (with El Chuma, a student of Angel Elizondo). Back in Europe, she met Jean Méningue in Italy, with whom she worked on the play PRR!. She then studied in Montreuil at the International School of Dramatic Corporeal Mime (EIMCD) as a mime artist and teacher (with Ivan Bacciochi, a student of Etienne Decroux) and with Darrel Davis in classical dance. She then collaborated with contemporary gestural theater companies in Paris: Cie Elizabeth Czercuk, Fer à Coudre... At the same time, Erika met Isabel Lagos in Gothenburg, Sweden, who invited her as a collaborator and actress in her artistic projects in Sweden and Europe: Libertalia (Creative Europe), Ship of Fools (with Clown Spirit and Panjalscenstudio), Amor Fati (a performance on Parkinson's, with Joel Heirås)... and the film Pirates of the Future (with GAO-Gothenburg Alternative Orchestra), after which they co-wrote the feature film État Théâtre and co-directed two short films—Résonance and Echos du Silence—within the project Cultural Weavings, where Erika was also a choreographer and actress. In 2019, she founded the company Espuma to develop her own projects. Erika defines herself as a transdisciplinary artist in perpetual research. She places great importance on sensory exploration and marginalized sectors, and she deeply believes in art as a means of transformation.

www.erikawebe.com



Isabel Lagos, artistic accomplice, hearing.

Isabel is based in Gothenburg, Sweden. She is a project manager, director, writer, and independent producer. She began her career in South America before settling in the United Kingdom. She co-founded Sweet Venues at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and, alongside Julian Caddy, programmed over 700 productions during their collaboration. In Sweden, she created and launched a three-year theater and film studies program at Vänerskolan High School in Trollhättan and contributed to the opening of Stormen Theater shortly after driving the development of the Gothenburg Fringe Festival and the Nordic Fringe Network. Isabel has produced and directed operas, as well as a wide variety of live performances, both indoors and outdoors, including

an inclusive production for both deaf and hearing audiences.

Alongside her film projects, she develops innovative cultural centers within the Gathenhielmska Huset Foundation, a Swedish cultural heritage site, and in the Kronhuset cultural house in Gothenburg.

Isabel's passion lies in the artistic and co-creative aspect, which has led her to a deep commitment to this field. Isabel and Erika have been artistic accomplices in their creations at every level since 2018.

www.uinverse.art



Elena Sadkova, artistic accomplice, hearing. Elena was born in 1975 in Saint Petersburg, Russia. She is an actress, clown, director, teacher, and event organizer. She was one of the creators and authors of the company SEMYANUKI, a theatre of auteur clowning. From 2013 to 2019, with the «SEMYANUKI» theatre, Elena toured worldwide. She has trained with renowned masters in creative and physical theatre trends and has extensive experience teaching rhythm, clowning, juggling, basic acrobatics, movement, liberation techniques, pantomime, and popular theatre. From 2015 to 2022, she was the lead teacher of clowning, physical arts, and eccentric theater at the Doctor Clown Charitable Foundation in Moscow. For 15 years, she has collaborated with the vocal school «GoGolos» in Saint Petersburg, where she has developed an original theory for body liberation, acting development, and rhythm training for singers. Over 20 years of work, she has created her own series of exercises: «Philosophy of the Body.» Since 2020, she has been a professor of Theatre and Film Studies, a director, a teacher of rhythm-plasticity, and a choreographer. In 2022, she began working in Sweden on the project The Borders, where she performs alongside Erika Webe as a partner.



Eric Whiteford, external perspective, deaf. I am an actor and was born deaf. Originally from England, I grew up in a theatre family. At the age of three, I moved to Sweden, where I began learning sign language and immersing myself in theatre, mime, and film courses. I even took drumming lessons! I have always loved movement and exploring new ways to communicate through the body and emotions. At the Fallens Dagar festival in Trollhättan, while presenting my original creations, artist Hans Hugo Ferdinand (Clown Manne) encouraged me to pursue my work, particularly in using physical expression to raise awareness among the hearing world through alternative means. For Gothenburg's 400th anniversary celebrations, I created a physical performance for a piece by Lena Johnson, which interacted with hearing actors and singers. Currently, I am collaborating on the film project Theatre State and a series of short films written by Erika and Isabel, which reflect my ongoing efforts in theatre, opera, and visual storytelling.



Joel Heiras, musical composition, hearing. Sometimes—or constantly, in fact—I feel like a stranger to this world. It no longer makes sense. The links in the chains of equivalence break apart, and the connotations—the ones that keep a being tethered to this planet of meaning and logic—scatter, spread, becoming bubbles that float at the margins of everything. Even though I am this somber man of our times, I stubbornly cling to a sense of playful naivety. When does an image become real? From my distant planet, I see how everything is, in some way, fiction, and how reality is nothing more than a fairy tale. Or a performance. Yet still real. Undoubtedly. So maybe I'll manage to alter reality by a shade or two. Just a small crack in the thinnest membrane, to let surrealism seep in. Like a kind of magic. www.joelheiras.se



Fabio Zindaco, musical composition, hearing. Born in Merano, Italy, Fabio began playing the flute and piano at a young age, exploring classical technique under the guidance of Roberto Saccoman. After studying physics in Munich, he dedicated himself entirely to music. In 2013, he co-founded the DJ collective Feelgood Selection and joined the artistic team of Import Export in Munich, where he launched the Flying Piano project, using a mobile piano to create intimate musical spaces in the streets. Based in Paris since 2017, he studied piano and voice at CIM under Françoise Pujol and developed three mobile piano structures used in Munich, Merano, and Paris for music and repair workshops. In Bolivia, he was introduced to dance and the charango by Roberto Sahonero, later joining Los Masis on their European tour in 2018. In 2020, he founded the Garde la Pêche collective in Montreuil to run a socio-cultural center. In 2021, during a theater residency, he collaborated with Erika Webe on Adam, a play by Nadia Chérif, and later, through Takata, they developed a shared artistic practice.

ESPUMA COMPANY



Espuma is a performing arts company based in Montreuil.

Erika and Daniela, two artists originally from South America (Argentina and Brazil), one from the world of circus arts and the other from gymnastics, met at the International School of Dramatic Corporeal Mime (EIMCD), where their artistic connection was born.

They have developed a unique visual aesthetic: minimalist, unconventional, and centered on transdisciplinary gestural theatre, where the body becomes the primary medium of expression.

The artists draw inspiration from human relationships to create their works, exploring self-awareness, connections with others, contemporary female experiences, fragility, uncertainty, and fantasy. Through memory, intuition, and imagination, they use fiction as a powerful tool to invent new realities, giving rise to sensory experiences that are as immersive as they are unprecedented.

In 2022, Espuma began a collaboration with the Gathenhielmska Huset Foundation in Sweden, led by Isabel Lagos. Together, Erika and Isabel launched the project Cultural Weavings, which focuses on creating «visual language bridges» as tools for inclusion, communication, and artistic expression. A team of Deaf and hearing artists and technicians was formed to support this initiative. Documentation of a first meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPP69GkbaO0>.

In 2024, with support from the Gota-Västra Götaland region in Sweden, two short films were produced and are currently in the editing phase. Presentation of an early draft: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUwOFkTymTo&t=1s>.

The piece COUNTERSENSE, though the darkness of light is part of this artistic process and the new production of ESPUMA Company. The Première has take place on the 23rd February 2025 in Buenos Aires.

PROPOSAL FOR A WORKSHOP

Gestural Dramaturgy and Body Writing

Intended for adult individuals passionate about the performing arts and eager to delve deeper into the creative act.

Contents:

-Introduction to corporeal mime and the development of theatrical gestural techniques (Decroux, Lecoq).

-Tools for listening to organic, rhythmic, and sonic movement.

-Creation of gestural dramatic structures based on the concept of «Countersense.»

Duration: Two to three hours per session, 3 days, with a final presentation to the audience on the day



SUPPORT

A production by Cie ESPUMA (Montreuil, France)
In collaboration with Gathenhiemska Huset Foundation (Gothenburg, Sweden)
Supported by Culture Moves Europe.

Partner Venues

In France: Théâtre des Roches, IVT (International Visual Theatre), EIMCD (Ecole Internationale de Mime Corporel Dramatique), Association Garde la Pêche, Faun'arts, Théâtre Clandestino, and La Parole Errante.

In Sweden: Lilla Kaparen, Théâtre Stormen, and Théâtre ACTA.

In Argentina: Theatre Nobles Bestias and El Tanque Cultural

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