

we
were
here

2018



HELLERAU

2009

**Wagen wir es, die
Zukunft zu erfinden**

*Let's dare to invent
the future*

Avatâra Ayuso

ENG My relationship with HELLERAU started in 2006, a very cold winter day. I got lost in the garden city of Hellerau trying to find that "special theatre that changed the lives of many". When I finally found it, I felt overwhelmed by its presence, by the weight of its history, by a sense of modernity I had never experienced before. Who could have guessed that my artistic career would be forever linked to this "artistic paradise"?

HELLERAU has changed and grown enormously during my ten-year relationship with it. Dieter Jaenicke and his team have worked tirelessly to bring back the cultural prestige it once had, to put it back not only on the European map but also place it firmly in an international non-Eurocentric context. HELLERAU has become a place where the future of many artists has been shaped, including mine: HELLERAU made me the artist I am now, by offering me a context to grow, experiment and be part of something much bigger than I could ever have dreamed of.

I was made Associate Artist in 2010 and since then I became part of a rather special family that would not only love me but also challenge me. From the very beginning, they made me understand that HELLERAU was home, not a distant entity, but a place where I could grow my artistic practice and flourish in its community. I was nurtured and trusted, always encouraged to be brave, to follow my artistic dreams, to try new ideas, to engage in cultural exchange with artists from other countries, to learn by watching the best, to question, to take the lead, to take action, to change lives.

I feel that becoming a part of the history of this building makes you become humbler, it forces you to look back to define who you want to be in the future. It puts you in a context where questions, more than answers, become your motto, where experimentation becomes your best friend. There are three projects that embody these ideas and became stepping stones in my artistic career and in my relationship with HELLERAU: LOOKING BACKWARD TO TO-MORROW, APPI(A)PPIA and THE HAMS.

LOOKING BACKWARD TO TO-MORROW:

This choreography was the very first full-length production I directed. It was based on the garden city of Hellerau, its utopian principles and its relationship with the Deutsche Werkstätten at the beginning of the 20th century. This production gave me the chance to collaborate with a large cast of 19 dancers (including students from the Palucca University of Dance, Dresden). I learnt many things developing this work, but the biggest lesson was that in order to achieve the biggest dreams, it is important to passionately share your vision with your team. Utopias might never be achieved, but one should never stop striving for them.

APPI(A)PPIA

This project, in collaboration with Ángel Martínez Roger, was a leap into the past, by reconnecting with the theories of Adolphe Appia. He was a visionary, someone that could see beyond his time, that understood that theatre should

not be a dead entity but a living one. The European Center for the Arts Dresden invited several artists to re-imagine Appia's work. Ángel and I wanted to go back to the essence of what his theories were, embarking on a journey of research across his drawings and writings.

The day we saw the set design constructed, standing there in front of our eyes, with all its power and beauty, we understood clearly the modernity and originality of Appia's theories. Performing on such a magnificent set has been one of the most beautiful experiences I have had as a performer. It is quite rare to find a performing space that can make you feel so incredibly special just by stepping onto it. This was, no doubt, one of them: HELLERAU, Appia and us, experiencing an artistic collaboration that might never come to life again but that made us understand the future through the lens of the past.

THE HAMS

THE HAMS ("hams" means "whisper" in the Arabic language) is the international women's group of the Refugee Art Center (RAC). Conversations about this project started in early 2016. My experience empowering women around the world was a good starting point to contribute to the RAC. Refugee women are the most isolated, least confident, least likely to get a job and therefore least integrated in society. Having this in mind, over two years we created a project that grew and adapted to their needs. We wanted to give them a safe environment where they could relax, develop new friendships, explore physical experiences through dance and be free to be who they want to be, leaving aside the traumatic experiences they all went through. My approach when leading the sessions was always the same, even though a great ability to adapt was required every single day. We met every three months in long sessions where we danced, ate, and got to interact with fascinating women from different cultures. Men were not allowed to join the group, babysitters were provided, so they could bring their children with them. It was a space for women with women. We became an international family, where we trusted each other, where we could share our real selves without fear, where we could develop our creativity through dance.

The experience with these women has changed me as an artist and as a person. They have shown immense courage, and an astonishing strength to keep on fighting to reinvent themselves. I have huge admiration for all of them and I hope they never forget how special they are.

These are just three of many projects I developed in HELLERAU as an Associate Artist. Each of them made me grow and produced extraordinary artistic encounters. I feel deeply grateful to the entire team that supported me over the years to fully commit to my artistic endeavours: from Dieter Jaenicke and Carmen Mehnert, who trusted me and encouraged me to be brave and daring; to the team of administrators and technicians, that always did

their best to create the extraordinary set designs I wanted to work with.

The day I got lost in the garden city of Hellerau was nothing less than the beginning of a beautiful love story between a place and a human, one of many stories for sure, but this time my humble story of personal and artistic development. My heart will be bound to HELLERAU forever.

HELLERAU has taught me that we can build a bright future by embracing the performing arts, and contributing to intercultural dialogues around the world. In the current socio-political context, collaboration is the solution to open new doors in the 21st century, to avoid segregation, exclusion and discrimination. Let's dare to invent our future, as Thomas Sankara, leader of Burkina Faso, said: "You cannot carry out fundamental change without a certain amount of madness. It comes from nonconformity, the courage to turn your back on the old formulas, the courage to invent the future. It took the madmen of yesterday..." and I add the madwomen, "...for us to be able to act with extreme clarity today. We must dare to invent the future."

HELLERAU, no doubt, has dared.

The Spanish dancer and choreographer **Avatâra Ayuso** lives in London and works all over the world. In 2008 she founded her dance company AVA Dance, uniting artists from all kinds of cultures and disciplines. She is one of the Associated Artists at HELLERAU – European Center for the Arts Dresden and won the Arras Preis award for the Promotion of Art and Culture in Dresden.
