

VENICE INTERNATIONAL

# PERFORMANCE ART WEEK *Under Scars*

*Libretto and Performance Score*

A performance opera devised as a collective form of care  
to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the  
VENICE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART WEEK

December 17, 2022

European Cultural Centre | Palazzo Mora, 30121 Venezia, Italy

Envisioned by VestAndPage (Verena Stenke & Andrea Pagnes)

In collaboration with Andriago & Aliprandi, Irina Baldini, Sabrina Bellenzier, Giorgia de Santi, daz  
disley, Nicola Fornoni, Marisa Garreffa, Fenia Kotsopoulou, Ash McNaughton, Aisha Pagnes, Enok  
Ripley, Sara Simeoni, Mauro Sambo, Joseph Morgan Schofield, Marcel Sparmann and Emily Welther.

Duration: Two hours



*Photograph by Alexander Harbaugh*

**PART 1**

*All performers gather and perform in the main hall (50 -60 minutes)*

**ANTECAMERA**

- Giorgia De Santi's video projected on the façade of Palazzo Mora
- Sabrina Bellenzier's video projected on a wall (English text subtitled in Italian)
- Marisa Garreffa's video projected on a wall (English text subtitled in Italian)

**OVERTURE (3-5 minutes)**

Music/Sound:  
 daz disley: background light sound  
 Aldo Aliprandi: strings crescendo  
 Aisha Pagnes: vocals

**AWAKENING SCENE (45+ min) Main hall**

Verena Stenke and Enok Ripley standing in the middle of the main hall

Music/Sound:  
 Aldo Aliprandi: Solo Live  
 Aisha Pagnes: Vocals  
 daz disley: electronic music and sound effects on the texts below

**1. Nicola Fornoni's Text on Dis-Ability in Italian (Recorded Voice)**

The origin of everything is in the body, in the clash-encounter of atoms and cells. There is something peculiar in relating to ways of life that are not one's own. To conform, to get used to, to improve. Not only in a wheelchair but in the face of barriers to overcome. The obsession with feeling useful. For example, what makes me crawl down the stairs, limb after limb, at the risk of breaking my neck? Isn't it unnatural? Any object can be shattered down, and each piece of architecture can be shaped to the body. A roof can be a floor, and a railing or rigid rope can be a line. Without one hand, one leg, one arm. With a stick. On a trolley. Being guided without wanting to. Will I be able to make it by myself and become independent? This question arises continuously with the disability. Novelty increases the risk, and the tension builds. Places change.

Prostheses are indispensable to acknowledge what is around you. Finding always different methods of movement. Never make rash moves that could harm or be fatal. Anything can be a minefield. You have to look down at your feet. Stand on a tool that glides, slides, rotates, curves, and rears.

The movement is oscillatory and rotatory. One hand remains stationary. The other pushes and holds. Coordinate the body: the back, the shoulders, and the head. Try to take things that are up there. No elasticity, no chance to stretch or squeeze. It all depends on the type of disability. Someone can fold their legs. Others do not fully extend or flex them. They wouldn't even go through a narrow passageway. You can't hide much under a bed sheet. Extend. Hold the position, melting, tendon by tendon, muscle by muscle. This is the Carthusian way of my body. A wader with the only certainty of the ass as support and feet that slide. Some obstacles contradict the "ease" theory, such as having to sleep on bunk beds that are too high. One push, one step after another. You can't jump. Not even fall. It would mean facing a new trauma.

**2. Andrea Pagnes (VestAndPage)'s Text on Addiction In Italian (Spoken Live)**

Between the body and the body, there is nothing but me. Addiction is not a state or a condition. Not an object, not a fact, even less the emptiness of a being, absolutely nothing

of a spirit, nor of nature, not a body. It is the un-transplantable I. But not an I. I have not an I. I have no I but me. There is nothing but me and nobody, no possible meeting with the other. What I am is without possible differentiation or opposition. It is the absolute intrusion of my body everywhere. Addiction allowed me to reach some consistent results. I could let myself be ashamed in public without anyone noticing it. When people talked and I listened to them, what came out of their mouths seemed to me more like the fantastic product of bewildered brains. The stigmas of addiction may vary. They can indicate psychophysical disorders, behavioural difficulties or even cardiac anomalies. Deviations and curvatures rather than linear systems. Sometimes the mental aspect is represented as worse than the physical one. Why? Try grinding a madman with wheat in a mortar, and you will never be able to remove the folly from him. Other times, it is the opposite. If physical appearance fits the norm, there are still good chances to be socially acceptable. Abusing class A drugs is an attempt to dare the body a dream, or take the quickest way out. Except that the body leaves no way out, it always confesses. The signs inflicted are a way of affirming one's existence to a reality that you reject. Implausible stories to tell. Too late for everything and beyond any help. But the soul resides precisely in those signs. The soul sees through affliction and is forced to always get sick because it never gets what it wants, if not oblivion, out of pure spirit of survival. Then it would be better to get it over with immediately, to kill ourselves in the cradle, rather than just rocking unattainable desires for a lifetime. It is the truths spoken in an understandable way that are always the least believed. You get to the point where the mask crumbles, by force of circumstances, or by having harboured a desire for total carnage. The uncontrolled desire to test one's gaze in the face of tragedy. I always wondered: "How many different deaths can I die if losing hope is never an option? Standing, sitting (on a chair), lying (on the bed). As if what was yet to happen to me had already happened. The body waiting for a spasm, an effort, an abjection close to freedom or disgust.

**3. *Emily Welther repeats Marisa Gareffa's words (in English, German, and Italian):***

"I couldn't hear you, I couldn't see you, I couldn't feel you, I couldn't touch you."

Before the transition from the main hall to the six adjacent rooms:

\_Performance ensemble/dance with Marianna Andriago, Irina Baldini, Fenia Kotsopoulou, Ash McNaughton, Joseph Morgan Schofield, Sara Simeoni, Emily Welther.

Music/Sound:

Irina Baldini's, Emily Welther's, and Sara Simeoni's pre-recorded music tracks.

**4. *Andrea's Text on Waiting and Abstinence in Italian (spoken impromptu)***

Transition from the main hall to the six adjacent rooms

Music/Sound:

daz disley's *Home* track

**PART 2**

The performers situate themselves in the six adjacent rooms for their solo or collaborative performances.

Marianna Andriago, Aldo Aliprandi and Aisha Pagnes perform in the main hall.

Room 1: Joseph Morgan Schofield (Rituals of queerness and ecology)

Room 2: Ash McNaughton (Rituals of the fire, the soil, and the body)

Room 3: Fenia Kotsopoulou and Verena Stenke (VestAndPage) (Ritual of the skin and transitions)

Room 4: Marcel Sparmann and Sara Simeoni (Rituals of family matters)

Room 5: Irina Baldini (Ritual of the invisible, between light and darkness)

Room 6: Andrea Pagnes (VestAndPage), Enok Ripley, and Nicola Fornoni (Rituals of the blood writings)

Before the actions start in the main hall:  
Joseph Morgan Schofield's video on the walls of the main hall

Texts during the hour in the main hall:

- Spoken words and recording by Marianna Andriago while she performs (texts by Andrea Pagnes inspired by poems by Antonin Artaud and Sylvia Plath)
- Emily Welther's impromptu spoken words in English, German, and Italian languages; sound effects by daz disley

Music/Sound/Voice Effects:

- Aldo Aliprandi bow cellos and percussion, and Aisha Pagnes vocals for Marianna Andriago's performance
- daz disley sound effects on Emily Welther's voice

## HIGHLIGHTED TOPICS

### *The Wound*

A wound is a traumatic laceration of a body part caused by a weapon or other sharp objects. It is characterised by the continuity of the skin or mucous membranes and possibly of the underlying tissues. It is when the skin or other body tissues are cut or broken by injury, surgical incision, slash, blow, or different impact (as by violence or accident). Also, a wound is a hurt to a person's feelings or an intimate, painful experience accompanied by resentment or deep grief.

### *The Scar*

A scar is a mark on the skin or within body tissue where a wound, burn, or sore has not healed completely, and fibrous connective tissue has developed following a healed wound. Also, it is a painful memory, a lasting effect of grief, fear, or other emotion left on a person's character by an unpleasant experience or a trace of past experiences. Similar: cicatrix, blemish, disfigurement, defacement, lesion, burn, birthmark.

### *The Stigma*

The stigma consists of an attribution of unfounded prejudice that results in the patient's isolation and incurability. It is a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person. It is a set of negative and often unfair beliefs that a society or group has about something. Usually, a stigma is associated with mental illness, physical impairment, behavioural deficiency, or, e.g. poverty. A social stigma is attached to receiving welfare.

### *The Trauma*

A trauma is a response to an intensely stressful situation. The effects can be long-lasting, but healing is possible. Traumatic events can happen at any age and have lasting effects on physical, mental, emotional, social, or spiritual well-being. Each person's experience is unique, but there are common causes, and many people share some symptoms of post-traumatic stress, like anxiety, flashbacks, and sleep disruption. Trauma refers to your response following an event you experience as harmful or life-threatening that psychologically overwhelms you, often resulting in shock, denial, and changes in the body, mind, and behaviour. Trauma is typically associated with significant events such as physical or sexual assault, violence, accidents, ongoing emotional abuse or childhood neglect.

### *The Symptom*

The symptom is a sign of something that is already in place, or that is about to manifest itself. In sickness, it is the state of suffering of an organism as a whole or of its parts, produced by a cause it damages it, and the complex of reactive phenomena that derive from it. In psychology, it is the coherent complex of attitudes assumed in reaction to certain stimuli or the activity of a subject in its manifestations. In Lacan's definition, the symptom is a metaphor, "that which comes from the real," or "doesn't work," as a structural fact whose necessity must be questioned. A symptom, even

if it is neurotic, is also clearly marked. Treatment aims not at normalisation but rather at learning “what to do with it”.

### PART 3

Main hall:

- Joseph Morgan Schofield pierces Andrea Pagnes’s arms with needles and feathers while Pagnes is writing with his blood on a bed of mirror shards installed in the main hall. Pagnes leaves.
- The performers leave their rooms, return to the main hall, and gather under Marianna Andrigo, who moves suspended from the ceiling for the final performance of collective embrace.

### FINALE

#### 5. *Nicola Fornoni’s pre-recorded text. daz disley’s sound edit.*

Many life events make us realise that we need a breakthrough. A humiliating society alienates those who have different anatomical potentials. Daily hardships. The notion of rebirth is applied in an apparent stasis situation. The body produces movements through effort and fatigue. Its mutations throughout life are already unique and incredible performances. Have I ever performed without having health problems? The acute lymphoblastic leukaemia when I was five years old and the relapse when I was eight. The first transplantation I had of the bone marrow, then Scleroderma and the second one of stem cells. Scleroderma is an autoimmune disease that, from the standing position, constrained me to the sitting one. Body art, love, body limit, transformation, relations, life, and its transcendence. I do not hide or run away. I perform and put myself on the line. It is my being in revolt.

#### 6. *Recorded text “Interjections n.1” by Antonin Artaud (The Body Without Organs).*

### CODA

#### 7. *daz disley’s reading of the human body’s chemical composition (Andrea Pagnes’s and daz disely’s editing).*

A finite universe naturally supports the chaotic classical motion. In the classical-to-quantum transition, the underlying fractal can persist as scars. Humans are made of fractal systems such as the lungs, circulatory system, nervous system, and brain neurons. Our behavioural patterns are also fractal in nature as individuals and from one generation to the next. Bodies enclosed or suspended in space seem to always wait for something to happen or make an effort to become something, as the body is the only source of movement. It is not a matter of ‘where’ but rather of ‘when’, for the human body consists of:

	mass percentage	atoms percentage
Oxygen	65.0	24.0
Carbon	18.5	12.0
Hydrogen	9.5	62.0
Nitrogen	3.2	1.1
Calcium	1.5	0.22
Phosphors	1.0	0.22
Potassium	0.4	0.03
Sulphur	0.3	0.038
Sodium	0.2	0.037
Chlorine	0.2	0.024
Magnesium	0.1	0.015
All others elements	<0.1	<0.3

### END OF THE OPERA