



**LABO Inclusive Dance Platform  
EXPLORE**

## Exploration of the LABO Inclusive Dance Classes 2016

LABO Inclusive Dance Platform (LIDP) is a research project for inclusive dance practice (2015 - 2017) at the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp. The Platform organizes weekly classes on wednesday, dance workshops and activities for anyone who loves to dance, with and without (physical) disabilities.

- LABO is a place that passes along knowledge from various dance initiatives that work around inclusion.
- LABO has no intention to become a permanent company, private school or a new dance training, but is a place where a team shares the same vision, each their own way.
- LABO is a place which can connect and bring people together through various projects. Schools, organizations, teachers and individual dancers can ask questions on inclusion and dance.

In September 2016, LABO Inclusive Dance Platform started from scratch building up two weekly classes of each 2 hours on Wednesday:

- Beginners Group : Dancers with no/little experience in integrated dance
- Advanced Group: Dancers who feel more comfortable with integrated dance, with dance experience

LABO works with different teachers, all with a particular approach to touch upon different themes:

- Goele van Dijck
- Nienke Reehorst
- Iris Bouche
- Sofie Roels

# Teachers 2016

## Goele van Dijck

Choreographer and teacher Goele Van Dijck first trained as a kindergarten teacher before she trained as a dance teacher at the Fontys Hogeschool in Tilburg. Early 2000s, there were a lot of performances for children in primary school, but there was no offer for toddlers in the performing arts. Goele Van Dijck decided to dive into that openness and founded her organization NAT GRAS in 2002 with the aim of artistic quality. Simultaneously, she created accessible dance productions to an audience of two years and older. Meanwhile, NAT GRAS, in collaboration with Kabinet K, became one of the pioneers in Flanders in the field of dance for children. Next to her artistic work she teaches inclusive dance workshops for dancers with mixed abilities in Belgium and Internationally.

Goele took most of the dance classes at LABO for her account.

**Focus:**  
Intensive research on the different aspects of movement, dance, connection, personal development as well as researching group dynamics. A first opportunity to go beyond movement exploration, through improvisation and partnerwork, choosing to go in search of the initial expressiveness of dance. When actively experiencing dance, the individuality of the participants is always the key element. This is why dance / contact improvisation is one of the cornerstones on which every first physical contact is founded.



## Teachers 2016

### **Nienke Reehorst**

Nienke Reehorst (BE) works with dance, theatre, music, circus and social-artistic productions as a movement coach and rehearsal director.

She danced for Wim Vandekeybus/ Ultima Vez, Meg Stuart/ Damaged Goods, Ted Stoffer and taught contemporary dance classes and workshops for companies, studios and festivals in Europe and South America. From 2002 until 2014 she collaborated with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and his company Eastman as rehearsal director and choreographic assistant. More recently she was interim Artistic Director for Theater Stap and co-directed 'Addio Amore' for theatre company Tutti Fratelli.

She is currently the co – artistic director of the dance department of the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp.

#### **FOCUS:**

Through improvisation and movement material, Nienke shows us how smart our body actually is (Body Intelligence, not re-'thinking' our bodies too much, but rely on it) and learns us what physical 'empathy' is, or how to use it in dance.



## Teachers 2016

### **Iris Bouche**

Bouche graduated in 1993 from the Royal Ballet School in Antwerp. She continued her studies at the Alvin Ailey Dance Center in New York and at the Dance Theater School Rudra in Lausanne under the direction of Maurice Béjart. From 1995 to 2001 she was part of the core of Anne Teresa De Keersmaekers dance company Rosas. From 2001 on, she has been working as a freelancer for Thierry De Mey, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Jan Lauwers. With Lilium (Fabuleus) she proved that mentally and physically limited youngsters can beautifully dance at professional level.

Since her former appointment as artistic coordinator of the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp, Iris Bouche wanted to explore how inclusion dance can contribute to the development and training of a contemporary dancer. From the academic year 2014-2015 on, a module of 10 hours inclusive dance got included in the curriculum in the third year (bachelor 3) of the professional dance education.

### **FOCUS:**

Following the impulses of your body. Movement creation start from finding honest movements in yourself, as a dancer.



## Teachers 2016

### Sofie Roels

Sofie recently graduated from the Fontys Dance Academy (NL) as a contemporary dancer.

During her study, she became highly interested in Integrated Dance. During a masterclasses in the UK (StopGap Dance Company) she met Iris Bouche who spoke about the set up of the LABO classes at the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp. Last year, Sofie decided to do her internship as a dancer and workshop assistant in Antwerp.

As a freelancer, she is choreographing , dancing in productions and teaching (both to students with and without disabilities).



## Introduction

The LABO classes have touched upon many themes and research questions. Focus for this year was mainly questioning and exploring/experiencing. On top of that, it was important to bring the dance students of the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp in contact with Integrated Dance.

How do we work together? How can we learn from each other? How can we set up high quality dance classes, both accessible and challenging for dance students as well as for dancers with a disability? What is dance/who can dance? Is there a stereotype of the typical 'dancer's body'?

Because of the alternation between the different teachers, there's a mix of impulses, possible angles of view and many try-outs of how something works.

There is an important outcome for the many dancers that were involved in the classes, as well as for the teachers and viewers of the class. There is something happening.

When looking at the content of the first couple of LABO classes, the focus was mainly on the acquaintance with each other's bodies. Explore basic elements as space, give and receive pulses, use stops in the movements, and make translations of movements to your own body.

Next pages will show an insight of the first five classes.

Picture made during the Rethinking Bodies 2016, showing Laura Jones (StopGap Dance Company, UK) leading a class.



# LABO class 1

Taught by Goele van Dijck

Warm-up: Walk through each other in the studio. try to take all the space with the group so there are no empty spaces. When the music stops: shake hands and say your name while shaking hands.

This "handshaking" encounter can be extended with soft, harder shaking and by calling name games on top of the other exercise: Someone can call a name and everybody is running around to give him/her a hand.

-> The class itself revolves around **meeting**, making short contact and releasing again. The contact starts by giving a handshake and slowly moves towards a search for other contact points (in terms of other body parts).

After executing an exercise, some small moments of thought and analysis get installed. The only way of understanding each other and progress, is by communicating and sharing.



During class, Goele also makes a verbal assertion of some points of attention such as:

- You can't meet a person/dancer in a wheelchair by holding his or her wheelchair instead of touching the person himself.
- Always 'invite' a dancer in a wheelchair to dance/improvise together. Dancing together is an initiative which comes from both sides, so don't grab the wheelchair instead of the person to drag him/her from point A to B.
- A visual impaired dancer is in need of some silence in class in order to orient himself and to be able to get softly in touch.

Off course, this shouldn't be generalized, but this was important for some dancers during that LABO class.

The class got finished with a short improvisation in two groups. Half of the group could dance with each other, moving with the past exercises in the back of their head. The other part of the group could watch. Switch groups.



In the advanced group, we work on the same topics, but in a faster pace. The class focused more on the exploration of meeting with different body parts and how it start naturally from within the body.

We (try to) work with eyes closed. This slows down, softens the contact with each other. Like this, we're able to feel where a meeting starts and how it further develops in the body.



**FOCUS:** Get to know each other as a person and a dancer, to **meet** each other in different ways.

**TOOLS:** Improvisation, contact improvisation



## LABO class 2

Taught by Goele van Dijck

Global warm-up: Paying attention to occupying the complete space, building in 'stop'-moments and decision making in making contact or not.

Teaching of a movement phrase (8 count) including arm movements, a turn, and a bend forward. All of this can be executed in different directions.

-> How can you translate the movement phrase for yourself on the spot? How do you think the phrase should be translated for someone else's body? How many possibilities are there to translate?

First conclusion during class: It's a great hassle to learn the phrase to the whole group and especially for Jempie, a visual impaired dancer.



Jempie (who is blind): “Such a phrase isn't really interesting for me, because I can't move synchronously with the rest of the group. First I have to FEEL every move and this takes a while. I don't like this kind of assignments.”

Afterwards the group explained him that it's visually strong if Jempie simply repeats one move.

-> This is a point that we'll be coming across in subsequent LABO's. During these, we'll be playing with breathing, sound, images and proximity.



**FOCUS:** Learn a fixed phrase and translate it to each other's body (with or without a disability)

**TOOLS:** Movement phrase, improvisation, creativity



## LABO class 3

Taught by Nienke Reehorst

Warm-up: Stand in a circle, hand in hand while closing your eyes. We breathe in and out and name it as filling and relaxing. When breathing in, the arms go up. When breathing out, back down. The movement gets slowly increased by moving to the center of the circle during an inhalation and exiting back to the original place while exhaling.

Important: Don't place two wheelchair users side by side because that is impractical.

During class continuation, we work around support points together. Nienke explains that 'stops' in dance are not actually 'stops'. "You only stop when you die. Even while you are still, your body moves: your heart is right, you breathe." In fact, a 'stop' is a search for support. This can be done in yourself: you can support your own legs, arms, wheelchair, breath or you can find a support point with someone else.



Exercise: Everyone moves through space on his own and searches moments where he finds a point of support for himself. Occasionally we get music, sometimes not. In silence we are looking for support points.

In pairs: One person is dancing, the other person observes. When the dancer finds a support point (in rest), the observer suggests to relax a particular body part. He appoints the body part and touches it shortly. It always remains a suggestion, no obligation.

Moving on: we will go on with two dancers together. First come to rest, relax and then feel how the flow of those two bodies wants to melt and comes to a new point of support. Then let go and flow further.

From 'two', it goes on to three, four or five dancers, till the whole group moves at the same time. Someone can make suggestions about movement qualities. The group is free to pick up what they want.



Right after this assignment, a spicy discussion finds place: some dancers give a **claim** instead of making **suggestions**. Others do not respect their physical limitations by entering into each suggestion. We try to talk about ways of analyzing suggestions and how we can deal with them (in terms of translation).

There is a small conflict about **interpreting each other's limitation**. Nienke appoints the sensitivities with regard to self-limitation and asks for patience with each other. Everyone still needs to get used to the other functioning bodies, which requires time and healthy communication.



In the **second part of the class** we talk about positioning: where are you in front of another person: sideways, backwards, front, diagonal, close, far, face to face?

Exploring in pairs: One dancer takes a position and relaxes, is the support point. The other dancer positions himself towards that person and holds that position. The first person is undergoing and can't respond. In this way, many different positions are explored.



-> A discussion follows on how it feels to not have the chance to respond to a position but just to undergo it. What does everyone experience?

The group gets divided into trios. One person can move freely, the other two dancers dance in function of that person by following and supporting. Purpose: make your own dance and focus on one person without losing yourself.

GOAL: Learn how to dance in relation to someone (support) while not forgetting about yourself.

Wietse Vendrig (dancer): *"I saw some beautiful poetic moments today"*



FOCUS: Feeling, supporting, giving attention, focusing makes it possible to connect to each other. Still be aware of what happens in the group, how you move. Your body is able to handle this.

TOOLS: Improvisation, Contact Improvisation, critical thinking



## LABO class 4

Taught by Goele van Dijck

The sun turns the room into places with sunlight and places without sunlight. We take this as a starting point for an improvisation class.

The space that is in the sunlight is the space in which we meet, but also clash and stop each other. Those who don't want to meet, will have to move away from the sunlight.

We play with how we stop each other, how we clash or hit and how we respect each other's boundaries or not. Different ways of contact (hard, soft) get explored. When is taking the initiative yourself to meet or clash (with someone) justified? Are we able to read each other's body language?

Next experiment is executed with a narrow strip (divisions of the tape on the floor). How do we stay and crawl together to be able to continue our way together?



In the advanced group, we work around hinge points: where do your joints rotate and what movements are there when you focus on a particular joint? How does a wheelchair turn and work? We research this by two. By executing this exercise, you get information about which joints you don't use often, or which hinge point your favorite is.

How do we move towards or around each other? How do you decide to get out of a group of people or smoothly go away from a meeting?



**FOCUS:** Playing with sunlight and shadow (improvisation with space), hinge points (get to know the habits of your dancing body)

**TOOLS:** Improvisation, contact improvisation



## LABO class 5

Taught by Iris Bouche

In this class we investigate in getting impulses and whether or not to follow an impulse.

Starting on one line and only move forward when you FEEL that your body wants to move forward. After exploring this, ignore the first impulse of your body and react only to the second impulse.

-> Reaction of the dancers: "Is a second impulse really a different impulse or just a deferred first impulse?"

Continuing: What makes us move in a certain direction? How do we get back, how do we leave? Exploring this, we are sitting together and giving each other a hand (like shaking hands). You both close your eyes and feel how your hand rests in the other's hand. Then let go very slowly as if your hand is traveling. Not too fast, not too far because you always have to find your partner's hand back by taking the same way back. Ultimately, you can feel so confident that you can move further away and still find the way back to each other's hand.



Next up: Dancing in pairs, leaving from the handshake. Moving away from each other, but trying to find a way to come back together.

Important: During this class, the group got split up in two. One group could observe, while the other one was exploring and moving together. By watching each other, we are able to learn a lot.



**FOCUS:** Following or ignoring impulses, making contact  
**TOOLS:** Improvisation, contact improvisation





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