

## Tips and tricks for finishing an artistic education and venturing into the void

- **A highly subjective list of advice to myself or anyone else from two years in the so called freelance field of dance and choreography**

### **1: You have time.**

(Working as a dancer/choreographer doesn't have to happen the second you leave school. You can take a few years to find out how you want to work. You can take a break. You can travel. You can have another job. You can do a dance job and hate it and study to be a physiotherapist and finish your education and work with that for a few years and realise that also sucks, go back to dancing and spend the rest of your working life in dance related jobs. An artistic career is not magic. It's an action, a collaboration, a job, a choice, an identity and/or a fiction. Take your time. Your dancing skills won't disappear and you won't become less interesting. Hurrying is not a key ingredient.)

### **2: It's not either or.**

(You're not either 'a dancer' or 'not a dancer'. You won't 'make it' or 'not make it'. That's a simplistic polarizing individualistic boring fiction. Living in this world after having finished an artistic education is like living in this world before having finished an artistic education. You make choices and do things based on different circumstances. You navigate through life with the tools you got from your education and from elsewhere. Every turn is OK. You're always a dancer *and* not a dancer. You're always an artist *and* not an artist. This field is filled with boring preconceptions of strain and struggle and success and failure. Ignore them and get on with your life, however it might seem most preferable or possible to you at the moment.)

### **3: It's hard and problematic but so is everything else.**

(It's easy to see the faults and breaches of the field of dance and choreography. It's a neoliberal, racist, sexist, precarious, pretentious and unqualified gathering of flawed structures that's full of shit and blind to its own inadequacies. But so is every other field. Make your choice on whether to stay in this line of work or not based on the specifics of what kind of life and work you want and are able to lead – not on the general fact that it's hard and problematic. Choosing something else than dance is not ungrateful and it doesn't prove anyone right or wrong. It's just a choice, and it can be changed. But the problems you find here you'll find everywhere else, just in different ways. So take into consideration the specifics of your gut feelings as well as what possibilities you actually have in this field. Following is a list of problems I faced that might help you prepare for some of these administrative and concrete specifics)

## A list of unanswered questions surrounding 10 basic problems of my work life

### Freelancing

What kind of everyday life do I want to lead<sup>1</sup>? Do I need routines? Do I need physical training? Do I need to leave the house? Do I need to be social? Do I need to separate my administrative, artistic, private and social lives? By time, place, clothes, overview? What do I need to do on an everyday basis to maintain my mental health and general joy of living? *How many different projects and contexts do I want to deal with simultaneously?*<sup>2</sup>

### Base

*Where do I want to have my base?* Do I want to live in a) a place where I can have basic structural support b) a place that inspires me artistically c) a place filled with work opportunities d) close to my family e) close to my friends f) a place that supports my sense of self and identity (etc)? Do I like to travel? *Do I want to move around or stay in one place?*

### Economy

What's important for me to spend money on? *What do I need in order to live the way I want to live?* Do I need a safety-cushion of savings? Do I need a steady income? Does it make me excited or stressed not knowing my economic situation the coming year? Do I need an overview of my spendings and savings or do I prefer not to know?

### Dance jobs

Am I interested in working as a dancer for others? For who? In what kind of work, and in what kind of role? What am I artistically interested in taking part of? Do I want to work for a friend, a small production, a big name?<sup>3</sup>

### Getting paid

Do I want to start my own company or to be invoiced through another company? Do I want the full amount of my fee and take the time and responsibility to fix taxes and admin myself, or get 55% of the fee as salary + pension while someone else takes care of the admin? Do I chose invoice company based on price, context or ethics?

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<sup>1</sup> I answer these questions differently in different periods. I believe having answers to them, though temporary, helps me get jobs, sustain my everyday life and feel somewhat on top of this situation. An artistic career is very precarious, so I assume you do this because of the fluffy reason that you want to. So keep your wants in the center. Let yourself be guided by what you feel is important to you – and not by some external fiction of what is necessary in order to live a magic artist life.

<sup>2</sup> I put questions in cursive that have been especially important for me to answer, or that I'm still asking myself.

<sup>3</sup> Tips: 1) don't apply for everything, it's not worth it, and they will probably know you're not interested. 2) once you know, or have a guess at what you want: Write an email. Tell them if you meet them. Ask when they have a workshop next. Let go of your pride and give a compliment.

## Own projects<sup>4</sup>

Do I want to lead an own project? Do I want to work collaboratively? How? With whom? Do I want to be in charge? If not, why? Do I want to keep reformulating the same interest or do I want to make new projects all the time?<sup>5</sup> Do my applications represent my work or just fulfill the formalities in order to get money and do whatever I want? *Do I do open calls or hire my friends? Which ones?* How do I sign my work?

## Applications

Can writing applications be OK? How many, and how well?<sup>6</sup> Is it part of my artistic work or not? Will I be OK with rejections? Do I focus on the big funding bodies or the smaller local ones? Project money or living money? Touring or creating? Residencies or festivals?<sup>7</sup> Do I need to write these applications? Do I need to get a yes? *Do I want to write alone or with others?*

## Money Jobs

Do I want to work with something related to my artistic work or not (museum or store)? Do I want to work intensely in one period or now-and-then parallelly with my artistic work? What kind of routine do I need for my non-artistic work? Is good working conditions necessary? Does it have to be an ethical place?

## Organize

Do I want to be part of a context? Am I interested in implementing my interests ethics and needs in structures? Can I collaborate? Am I OK with formalities? How do I want to organize myself? With whom? Can it become easier to be in a problematic field when I can make it change, or does it make it worse? Can I be less alone and individual? (tip: yes)

## Success

Do I want to be successful? Do I meet people within my field as colleagues or competitors? What do I tell people and social media about myself and my work? How do I want the field to see me? What's important for me to communicate about my work and why? What's my relation to PR? What makes me happy and what gives me anxiety?<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> You don't have to create own projects to be an experimental dance artist today if that's not your interest. But speculating about them can help you get to know your interest and get into collaborations with others.

<sup>5</sup> Tip: Apply for stuff to happen in 2 years. Things take longer than you'd expect. Don't be in a hurry.

<sup>6</sup> Tip: copy paste

<sup>7</sup> These are very generalized questions. Of course, the answer can be 'both', 'none', 'I don't know' etc.

<sup>8</sup> These last two headlines are really colored by my opinion, but just because I like to organize and because I failingly try to kill every tendency of success-striving in myself, it doesn't mean the same is the case for you.

**Last note:**

Don't feel like you have to know the answers to all these questions. I answer them differently in different periods. I believe considering answers for them helps me get jobs, sustain my everyday life and feel somewhat on top of this impossibly buried situation. An artistic career is very precarious, so I assume you do this because of the fluffy reason that you want to. So keep your wants in the center. Let yourself be guided by what you feel is important to you – and not by some external fiction of what is necessary in order to live a magic artist life. People who work with art are not special. You have not been chosen by a divine entity. You have nothing to pass and nothing to fail. You don't have to be better than anyone to work as a dancer or artist. So keep close to your needs and wants and navigate through your life as anyone else would. Don't do things that don't feel good or important. You don't have to suffer to be an artist. (Sometimes you might suffer from ex. lack of sleep as a side effect of doing a poorly planned and overambitious project, but if in the end that makes you happier than you would have been if you had not done the project and thus had not suffered, I will claim that you still kept close to your wants and needs.) Anyways; whatever you do, and however you do it, it's OK. Working in this field is is a choice or a coincidence, and most likely a mix. Forget romantic notions of talent and instead try to define what quality, responsibility and ethics mean to you, now that you're here.