

MANUELA LUCIA TESSI

portfolio recent works



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[MusicDance projects](#)



BIOGRAPHY

I am a movement artist with a great love for music.

My motivation to create dance is in relation to the sonic: movement to listen to, sound to be seen.

I studied at the AHK (Modern Theatre Dance Department) in Amsterdam.

I create in collaboration with musicians and composers.

I believe in the blurring of boundaries of genres, styles and disciplines, and in the fluid relationship between process and product, seeing the product as constantly evolving while listening to its context. With Amsterdam as a base, I work internationally. Some of my recent projects include collaborations with Collettivo Nebulae and Moving Strings, both non-hierarchical creative performing ensembles.

I have created MusicDance projects. platforms for interdisciplinary real- time performances, in collaboration with local artists, in Berlin, Cape Town and most recently Lisbon.

I teach movement research classes and facilitate improvisation sessions in very diverse settings.



MUSICDANCE CAPE TOWN

MusicDance is a platform for the interdisciplinary collaboration of dancers and musicians in performance. The project brings together established and emerging artists in a cutting-edge performance and workshop format. Started in January 2018 by Thalia Laric and Manuela Lucia Tessi at Theatre Arts Admin Collective, an independent Cape Town venue, MusicDance represents an interdisciplinary dialogue across different performing art forms. It brings dancers and musicians into a shared space to exchange creative practice and refine collaboration skills. It offers audiences insight into the immediacy, fluidity and risk of real-time collaboration, unearthing new directions for performance. Since 2024 the project is co-directed with Leilah Kirsten.

[website](#)
[trailer 2022](#)

[Instagram](#)
[Facebook](#)



Core team of collaborators of dancers and musicians: Manuela Lucia Tessi, Leilah Kirsten, Nicolle Vieira, Thalia Laric, Vintani Nafassi, Coila-Leah Enderstein, Sumalgy Nuro, Tamara Ringas, Garth Erasmus. Light design: Frans Mandilakhe Zunguze. With the support of Caroline Calburn and Theatre Arts.

Photography Lindsey Appolis and Tania Lea Vossgetter.

MOVING STRINGS

Moving Strings is a platform for the research of sound and movement, in creative as well as educational context, working together since 2018. We are a matriarchal, non-hierarchical creative performing ensemble, we create our own work and perform it in theaters, alternative spaces and site-specific settings, and collaborate with musicians, choreographers and artists. We hold regular research sessions, workshops and creative laboratories and teach in non/academic institutes.

[moving strings website](#)

My creations for Moving Strings are Increspature (2021) and Maelstrom,(2023) part of Gathering Fantasies

Maelstrom is a movement and sound work that departs from the *spiral*. The spiral recurs often in nature because of its efficiency. At the same time it is a very beautiful structure. When form and function merge with such grace I believe there is a lot to learn and share which has a profound resonance.

Ensemble members:

Maya Felixbrot, Alex Welch, Noortje Kohne – Viola,

Geerte de Koe , Shana Brown: Violin

Jonathan Nagel – Double-bass, Camille

Verhaak – Clarinet,

Irene Sorozabal – Voice and Records

Aina Font – Saxophone

Manuela Tessi – choreographer

photo Shana Raine Brown

[Trailer](#) **Gathering Fantasies (2023)**

THE SHELL



The Shell' is a solo piece, by Manuela Lucia Tessi, created and performed in 2020 in Cape Town and performed in Amsterdam and Vancouver 2021-2023.

Music sources: Arvind Ganga, Karen Dalton, a.o. edited by M.L.Tessi, latest version music by Ben Brown (2023)

Photography, Videography and editing: Lindsey Appolis

Dramaturgy advice: Thalia Laric

Sound advice: Ben Brown

trailer (2020)

The Shell was born from two simple yet fundamental questions: Why do I dance? And why do I choose to do it in front of an audience? These questions became the starting point for an inquiry into the relationship between form, performance, and vulnerability. At what moment does technique, aesthetic refinement, or theatrical form become an empty shell—something that protects, conceals, or distances us from what is genuinely alive and exposed?

The work explores the tension between the disciplined, highly trained body and the raw, instinctive essence of dance. Years of technical training shape the body into an instrument of precision and control, yet beneath that cultivated exterior lies a more primal impulse: the desire to move, to feel, and to connect. *The Shell* navigates the fragile space between these two realities,

Today, my desire to perform stems from a wish to embrace the body as a conduit for an embodied spirituality. The body is no longer merely an object to be seen or perfected, but a living archive of memory, emotion, intuition, and transformation.



SINGASHORE by COLLETTIVO NEBULÆ

Collettivo Nebulæ is a performing research collective founded in 2022 by four dancers: Valentina Campora, I-Chen Zuffellato, Marta Sponzilli and Manuela Lucia Tessi with the decision to embark on a journey together, both physical and non-physical, artistic and personal, based on research and mutual support, straddling two countries, Italy and the Netherlands.

The questions that the four artists start from are “how to be together, how to be a collective, and how to live with what is happening around us?” This led to a phase of exploration into the sense of alienation and isolation of the environment in which we live.

Thus **Singashore** was born, a place with an invented name. Singashore is the vision of a landscape in burnout, or the memory of our ancestral body that preserves the past and foreshadows the future.

Singashore is not intended to be a finished production but an ongoing research project that focuses on questions that gradually emerge and reflect our perception of the present. Singashore is therefore an ever-evolving project that reveals itself through performative stages before dissolving and continuing its mutation .

[instagram @collettivo_nebulae](#)



Excerpts from Singashore

Dom Shemesh

A new project of Omer Sigler – electric guitar and Manuela Lucia Tessi – dance

From the poetic to the unutterable, a duo meandering intuitively with sounds and movement.
A delicate and rough play of form and formlessness.

excerpts from performance



Photos Brian Crawford

Sela (AIRE) by composer Margriet Hoenderdos
Fie Schouten – bass clarinet Manuela Tessi - dance, choreography



trailer



The Weight of Words

A performance by and with:

Manuela Lucia Tessi- concept and movement,
Tamara van IJperen - words Sarah Hermanutz -
visuals

The Weight of Words (TWOW) is a performance in which written text and the moving body interact in real time in the presence of an audience. While the dancer moves, the writer composes text that is sent to the visual artist, who manipulates the text appearance through a computer program, giving the text a “body”, and projecting it onto the walls. The words appear, disappear, slide along in different directions, shrink and enlarge, interacting with the mover as her dance partner or a sort of instant scenography. As the words are projected the dancer responds to them as a part of her instant movement composition. This creates a feedback loop between projected text and body which emphasizes the materiality and ephemerality of each.



Trailer



Photos Brian Crawford

MUSIKTANZNULLDREISSIG



The events take place in Berlin and sometimes in Amsterdam.

Since then they have jointly created more than 40 performance events, inviting numerous ad hoc collaborators to perform with them, as well as numerous sessions and workshops.

In 2017 they created The Loom, a quartet for the Soundance Festival in Berlin.

They have recently started performing for young audiences, creating the KlingKlang quartet and the Paraplü duo. In their work they like to combine spontaneity with a careful approach to real-time composition.

Musiktanznulldreissig is the ongoing project by flutist Friederike Wendorf and Manuela Tessi. They have an ongoing collaboration since 2014.

They met in the Amsterdam improv scene and, noticing the interest and potential of Berlin's local artist community, they decided to create events in Berlin that would provide a dedicated space where dance and music could contaminate and inspire each other. In 2014 they created Musiktanznulldreißig (MT030), a platform aimed at promoting the collaboration between dance and performance-oriented music. . It consists of a series of performances, workshops and practice sessions.



fb
website/archive

Manuela and Friederike duo, 2021

MUSICDANCE PORTUGAL



photos Camila Soares



The project , born from MusicDance Cape Town, took place for the first time in 2024, from a colaboration of Nicolle Vieira, Vintani Nafassi and Manuela Tessi. The three artists facilitated an intensive week of of workshops in which participants were guided to practice interdisciplinary composition. The workshops culminated in a public sharing at the end of the process, which consists of a program of short compositions in different constellations (grouping). All compositions are created in the moment, based on choices of movement, sound, text and presence in real time, where the audience is invited to witness the creation of new collaborations and unique expressions.

This project will happen again in 2025, with the idea of creating a community of practice of interdisciplinary real-time composition in Portugal.



excerpts from 2024

Supported by Goethe Institute - Culture Moves Europe, and CEM (centro-em-movimento) Lisbon



By and with: Ilaria Carlucci and Manuela Tessi , Artistic Advisor : Tonio De Nitto
Set design and technical consultant Alberto Cacopardi
costumes Lilian Indraccolo production Factory Compagnia Transadriatica
(Lecce) / Stichting Knopen (Amsterdam)

How many “Shhh!” are needed to rein in the irresistible energy of sound and movement? Shhh! – The Touch of Sound is a sensory journey in which sound becomes the absolute protagonist, explored through the body, the voice, musical instruments, and everyday objects.

A ritual, a dance of perception designed to spark curiosity and wonder in children aged 2 to 5. Two performers gently guide the audience with delicacy, lightness, and deep attention to children’s perception, immersing them in an experience that connects sound with movement, shape, and energy. In this world, the boundary between dance and music becomes blurred, and every small visual or rhythmic stimulus can awaken a sense of enchantment and wonder in children’s hearts and eyes. Like true “sound magicians,” the two performers create an atmosphere of total sensory involvement, inviting young spectators to “feel” the dance and “see” the music. Through the synergy between choreography and musical composition, the performance stimulates rhythmic perception, sound recognition, and the exploration of personal sensations through the body and attentive listening. Shhh! is not just a performance, but an exploratory ritual in which the audience is not a passive spectator, but an integral part of a sensory process where every movement of the dancers becomes a visual and sonic message for the children.

Shhh! The Touch of Sound is produced by **Factory - Compagnia Tansadriatica** (Italy) and **Stichting Knopen** (Netherlands)

(2024-)

Shhh! The Touch of Sound



Trailer

Collaboration with Makiko Ito-Wonderland Collectief

trailer Koro Koro



Wonderland is an Improvisation dance and music performance for families and kids (0+)

Koro Koro is a piece for the youngest (0-18 months) , in which the dancers and musicians also work with improvisation as the base to create the performance. Both performances are shown in the Netherlands and other EU countries.

Music: Alan Gunga Purves and Kristjan Martinsson, dance Makiko Ito Manuela Tessi. Direction: Makiko Ito

Wonderland Collectief

photos Giovanni William Palmisano

TAH DAM!

TAH DAM! is a music and dance performance for children (2-6) and their families. The show includes music from African and Western traditions, and has many interesting instruments like Mbira (from Zimbabwe), Djembe (from West Africa), Umtshingo (from South Africa), Adungu (from Uganda), as well as piano, rain-sticks, and singing.

TAH DAM! was created in June 2020 in Cape Town through a research grant from FRATZ International and toured Europe in Spring 2022 performing at FRATZ international Berlin 2022 and other venues and festivals in Sweden, Netherlands, Germany and Belgium.

www.tahdam.com



photo: Lindsey Appolis

TAH DAM! has five performers who come from South Africa, Italy and Mozambique. The group came together through the project **MusicDance Cape Town**, which is directed by Thalia Laric and Manuela Lucia Tessi since 2018. The project brings together dancers and musicians from diverse backgrounds and promotes collaboration across disciplines. The emphasis of the work is interdisciplinary and real-time composition.



TAH DAM! also has a website with narrated videos and activities that offer opportunities for extending the theatre experience at home. We hope to inspire children and their parents to continue creating music and dance together at home. Together at Home – Dance and Music! (TAH DAM!)

[narrated videos English](#)
[narrated videos German](#)

Direction: Thalia Laric Performance:
Manuela LuciaTessi, Vintani Nafassi,
Sumalgy Nuro, Coila-Leah Enderstein,
Thalia Laric
Dramaturgy: Nicola Elliott

Duration: 35 minutes

TAH DAM is a production by MusicDance
Cape Town supported by FRATZ
International and Assitej South Africa.

[TRAILER](#)
[FULL LENGTH VIDEO](#)



photos Lindsey Appolis