

The Dance Centre Podcast Episode 18: Davi Rodrigues

SPEAKERS

Davi Rodrigues, Claire French

Claire French

Hello, welcome to the Dance Centre podcast. I am your host Claire French, and I'm joining you from the traditional unseeded territories of the Musqueam. Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples also known as Vancouver, Canada. I'll be talking to dancers, choreographers, and other members of the dance world here on the west coast to find out more about their creative work and practices, and to discuss what it means to us to be dance professionals today. Thanks for joining us.

Claire French

Davi Rodrigues is originally from Brazil, where he trained and worked professionally as a dancer, choreographer and director, performing and touring across Brazil and internationally. He studied physical education at the Universidade Católica de Brasília, while training and performing as a dancer. Davi also studied classical ballet while he was in Brazil, for over 15 years he created, directed and danced in eight full length shows with his own company. He's built a rich career as an award-winning dancer and choreographer and is renowned for his passion and vision. Davi was a highly regarded faculty member of the International Dance Seminar in Brasilia, Brazil, and he continues to choreograph and work as a mentor and adjudicator. In 2008, he moved to Canada to work as a dancer and guest choreographer for Lamondance company in North Vancouver, and soon became its Artistic Director and resident choreographer. He also became a Canadian citizen. He is infallibly optimistic, one of the most positive, passionate and generous artists you will ever meet. Lamondance is a training and performing dance company dedicated to training aspiring young dancers for a professional career in dance. And under Davi's leadership, Lamondance has become one of Vancouver's premier training programs for emerging dancers, and a career launchpad for young artists. The training program sets out to cultivate thinking dancers who can apply their knowledge, commitment, versatility and skill. The company has toured to Brazil and Germany and many of its dancers now perform with leading companies worldwide. To find out more about Davi you can go to the website, lamondance.com/artisticdirector. And of course, he's joining us to also talk about Lamondance Company today.

Claire French

I am joined by Davi Rodrigues, he is the artistic director of Lamondance and many other things, a choreographer, dancer, a very special person in our community. And I am very much looking forward to speaking with him and for you to hear about his life and his vision and plans and. First of all, welcome, I would love to hear about your career path in dance, as surmised as you would like it to be for our

listeners leading us up to, you know, kind of why we're talking today with Lamondance and everything. But give us a little bit of your history if you don't mind.

Davi Rodrigues

Well, for sure. First of all, thank you for inviting me to be part of this conversation. I have been looking forward to see what we can talk about, but it's quite intense when you ask someone about where, how you got where you are right now. But I will try my very best to comprise everything. I have been always since I remember, understanding my being a human being this planet I have been always wanting to be an artist before was to be an actor. And that guided me through to find dance, because the group that I was, as a little boy involved to be an actor. They were having movement classes, and at that time I was in love with dance. So, I have been dancing since of the age of six. I started with jazz. And I never stopped in my, funny or not, I got a job when I was 15 years old. My dance teacher said there's an audition happening with this company, very famous company in Brasilia, the city that I'm from. And she said, I think you should go, you have something that, you're very talented. So, I did go. To be super honest, I joke about it because it was a group of adults. And then I was just a 15-year-old boy, and everybody would go to the left, I would go to the right and that time I felt that it was good. You know what I mean? Like I am good! Then I got the job. And there with that company I stayed with for five years the company's called the company no longer exists. It's called Aplauso Cia de Dança and the director, Junior O'Hara, whom I learned so much from he was actually my inspiration because while dancing with him developing my voice as a dancer, I also had this passion of being a creator. So, I always asked myself, how does Junior get his ideas I can't understand. And he was really talented.

And I danced with them for five years parallel to that I started to develop my own project I called it a project. And through that project I learned so much because I was the choreographer, the director, the dancer, lighting designer, I was everything. And a younger human being taking care of a large group of people. It was interesting, because in this life, you think you're prepared, but you're always learning. And I stopped dancing with Aplauso because that project, Cia Criatividaça. And then we gave a nickname of Cria which means creativity became a huge thing in my life, we were well known in Brasilia, and around the cities in Brazil too. I started to develop more my voice as a choreographer, dancing less and less. Not that I didn't love dance, I love dancing, I like this stage is a very sacred, magical place for me. I used to miss it. The creation part of it, Claire, it was, has been something that I have always been passionate about it. With Cia Criatividaça I stayed for 13 years of my life. And there was a moment, I started very young, even when I was dancing with a Aplauso, Junior would come and say, I think you should stop, don't do your project, you're young, you're very talented, you should dance more. And when you get older, you should have your dance company, your project, but it was a little bit stubborn. And no! I can do both. Today, I do have a value on, give a value to that feedback that he gave to me. I don't regret the things I did. But perhaps I could have embraced a little bit longer my career as a dancer. But I always think that life is preparing for the future, you will understand why I am saying this to you. With Cia Criatividaça, I stayed for 13 years. And I was young. And I started to miss dancing and with the management of people, show not having support from the government because that project was a dance company but based on grants, whenever we had the grants, everybody got paid. If we did not have the grants, the company itself, the dancers, we would put money to, to produce the shows, right? And I started to get tired of that and then thought I need to dance again. I need to, I want to, I want to be seen, I want someone to tell me what to do. You know, and I don't want to tell

anyone what to do. And I'm done. And the huge opportunity happened because in Brasilia, my city, there was this well-known international dance seminar. It's almost like a summer program. But it was for the duration of one month. And my company Cia Criatividadança used to open that because they have a show to open and introduce the guest teachers, the international teachers and local teachers as well. And my company was one of the companies that was always invited to open but in that sense and that year 2007 I decided to take the classes be one of the dancers competing as well. I was a little bit my age was a little bit advanced for that, but I said you know what, if that's the change that I need, I will go through that. So then throughout this month of training, taking classes with this many teachers, I got the opportunity to, to come to Canada because my choreographer from Aplauso, Junior O'Hara he had another company, like a way more professional company like with small, small number a number of dancers. And one of these dancers used to dance with him. But she was no longer dancing there because she moved to Vancouver. Her name is Monica Proenca, and I grew up watching Monica performing and Monica was a star and and I remember as if today, I was in the audience, and she was performing a piece that Junior created and I was in love with her. Years later, she came to visit us at Aplauso. So, in that seminar, Monica was part of the jury, one of the teachers that would come and teach for a month. And she was talking, Davi, what are you doing? And I explained her like, I'm kind of tired. I want to stop my project here. And Claire, you laugh at that time, I was also auditioning for Cirque du Soleil, but not to be a dancer. Funny or not I really enjoy, they call, they call it physical actors. But at that time, I was applying to be a clown.

Claire French

Yeah, like the characters in the shows an actual role in a way. Yeah, yeah. Great.

Davi Rodrigues

I was auditioning for them. I mean, trying very hard. I had a feeling I auditioned. I auditioned for Cirque du Soleil so much the time that used to send DVDs. I had a feeling that whenever someone would get my DVD, they will say hey, again, Davi.

Claire French

Persistence Davi, very important. Yeah.

Davi Rodrigues

So, I mentioned to her. And she looked at me and she didn't say anything. And the day after she said, come here, I want to talk to you. She said, listen, I know you're ready. You're professional. But I want to give this opportunity to you. So, you can open your eyes to see what's happening outside Brasilia, outside Brazil. And I can only offer you a student visa to come and study. You can take my classes, we can develop some works together. But I just want to be that that help or that person that really supports you. The moment that she said that, I didn't think twice. I said yes, I want this. I have no money to support myself there. But I will figure something out. So, I kept that as a secret throughout the whole month. I didn't say anything to anyone, my company, my mum, anyone. It was hard to keep that as a secret. So long story short, I decided to come. I sold my car. I, the semester I was, I went to physical education in Brazil. So, to finish if I'm not wrong, you need to complete seven semesters of that course to get to finish and I was going to finish to the seventh. I remember going to the university and all of my friends what classes are going to take, this and that, because at that time Brasilia did not have an

university for dance. So, I thought physical education with the closest, actually beautiful, the course is beautiful. I learned so much I changed my way of teaching because when you start to know more about the body and everything in deep details, you your mind change your way of moving breathing, everything changed so I really value the people that wants to become a PE, a physical education. So, then my friend said what classes are you going to take I said I'm not taking any classes. I'm actually pausing the course. You're crazy. You're so close. You're so close. Because now I just got an opportunity if I don't embrace that right now, I don't think that will ever happen again. No, finish this finish it I said no, it's already I made my decision. And Claire, I do not regret a thing I do miss going to school is something that I'm thinking of doing right now. But yeah, I don't I don't regret So I came for six months, I worked with Monica Proenca at RNB Dance because they didn't have this program, a scholarship program that brings international students to stay there for six months. And we always do in that I was the second group, part of the second group that came. And then I study here, I came here with no English honest, to be super honest. Second week, during the second week was like, oh, too hard. I don't want to be here. What have I done? I don't know the language. Everything's so weird. But it's consistency, right? You need to understand that things, they don't come easy.

Claire French

And you had another, there was another why, right? There was another motivation for you, that you'd already put into the world, by going back as a student, as for the month long, you know, you kind of made that meeting happen with Monica. So, you know, I think there's something quite wonderful about...

Davi Rodrigues

I always say that the dances that I teach, when I came here, there wasn't a level class for me at the school. So, I honestly went back to take baby classes. Yeah, of course, there was a 16-17 year old class that I was taking with them. But I went back to the foundation and was amazing. Because you give the value and the time to understand the foundation of everything again. It was, it was quite something.

Claire French

That's great, because I think there's something about the also being in a new environment completely where you, you are already having to adapt, because you know, you're learning so many new things, and to allow that to actually influence and, you know, infiltrate your own body as a dancer, is so valuable. And that's obviously what you continue to share and teach. And, you know, you can do that from experience with your students, you're not teaching them, you've had experience of change, right. And so, you are able to use that in their experiences. And I feel like help them be open to changes that are happening in their lives, especially kind of at the ages that they're at and the opportunities you give them. So I think maybe this could lead quite nicely, and as you've alluded to already, your earlier days of wanting to do everything, and like almost kind of being controlled or lead a project or have the vision come from lots of different angles, that's how I like to see it as a choreographer is that the dancing part is one aspect of being a choreographer, there are all of the other elements that your ideas or visions are being influenced by, or are inspired by, and you're working out how to put them into a dance form, or how dance form relates to those ideas. So, some of the ideas can be physicalized. But some of them are in other disciplines, they're in the lighting design, they're in the, you know, kind of other things in the

composition, not necessarily the dance moves, right? They're in different places, and so and how you're exploring. So, I feel like this leads quite nicely. You as a choreographer is one thing, and then as a dancer as another, and then as a mentor, and as a leader of a group of people, both at the level of training, and then at the level of company. Could you talk a little bit maybe about that first in supporting and nurturing young dancers, and then maybe the model that you work with, where you have that training, but then you also offer the opportunity for company. So maybe just talk about how you nurture? Or even maybe how you I know, auditions are coming up, as well for you. So maybe there's a could be a little bit of insight into what you are looking for, because of how you work with the students. Does that make sense? So how do you support them? Yeah.

Davi Rodrigues

Absolutely. I believe I can start talking about this, explaining the audition process. And then I believe from there, you can have a perhaps a better vision of Davi's take as a mentor. So, the audition process as a dancer myself, I find a very difficult thing for dancer. Because you know, today is the audition, I perhaps not feeling well. But that's the only day that I have to show the director everything I have, but what if physically I'm not capable to and then. The way that I like to see in the history of Lamondance itself we only had one audition that I had to ask people to leave as we went because it was too many, otherwise the audition would be hours and hours and hours. It was in Brazil actually we had like in one day 150 dancers applying. So that day was brutal because I was confronting the things that I did not want to do but had to, but we usually let everybody stay for the class, a ballet class, which is just a short portion of the audition. And what I'm interested to see, Claire, is the passion. Is the passion that that individual will bring to the phrases, the repertoire of the company that they are learning, we usually teach them two completely different phrases. So, we can be considered the, the differences of the approaches that the individual, the dancer will be bringing to both. And from there, we see how as a dancer as a passionate dancer, that dancer will be collaborating with environment, which is, again, going back a stressful audition, everybody's nervous. Me behind the table, I'm also nervous, right. And I want to make sure that everybody I keep saying, don't think of an audition, think about you sharing the love of dance. Of course, there's some aspects, technical aspects, certain years that you need to the dancer needs to have in terms of technique and stuff like that. But I have beautiful examples of a dancer that came to us during the ballet class, she wasn't as advanced, like the other dancers, but throughout the repertoire, I was so in love with what that dancer that I was like, I really need that, to give the opportunity to that lady, because technique, I can always think that we can improve because the training program, the company will always offer classes. And I know that dancers are very disciplined and dedicated. So, they will approach that, but passion is something very hard for you to really implement in some. Of course, people fall in love, but I want to see a dancer that has the passion already. Because that will elevate the work environment, the space for the longest time, the artists that I bring to guess teach or be a choreographer for Lamon, one of the first things that they always tell me is like, wow, you have a group of passionate dancers. When I arrived, I felt the love, I felt the respect, I felt that there needs you to give me more and learn from me. And it makes me happy because that's the type of environment that I believe I would be as a dancer, I would like to involve myself with, of course, there always the little things that each dancer treating each dancer as an individual not as a number. Because imagine you, you're valid, you're there, because you love to dance no matter where you come from. No matter how many dance and many years of study of classical ballet training you had. The worst thing for me is to be treated as a number. And that's how I tried to guide to each dancer at

Lamondance as an as a mentor. And I think that's important, at least from what I have seen around right.

Claire French

Yeah, it seems to me that you also, there's something about them learning to trust in their own passion, to trust their own passion, so that they're so when you say they must be passionate, that doesn't look a certain way. Like every individual shows their passion for dance in a slightly different way. But it's the trusting in their passion for dancing, that then an audience and you in the audition room, and then their colleagues and the choreographers they work with and the audiences can actually also, you know, can resonate with them, you know. So, I think that's seems to be what you do really do help nurture and cultivate that. It seems.

Davi Rodrigues

I think you said it beautifully, that the trust, to trust is to give people the opportunity to do more to further know you, right? It's just vulnerable. When we did when we closed the Vancouver International Dance Festival, there was a Q&A. And someone asked me through the online YouTube questions, why my pieces were so vulnerable. And why the dancers were able to portray that on stage. And I believe if I said something along the lines saying I cannot ask my dancers to be vulnerable if I'm not vulnerable in front of them. I don't believe I like to sit and talk with them. Like on the same level. I don't stand and they are below me. I believe in this environment. We are always learning, I'm not only the teacher, but I'm also the student, because society is changing, this new generation is changing. And I need to learn from them too. I have a huge experience but that's not enough, I need to continue to add my experience with whatever the word is becoming right now. So, when I'm rehearsing them, either my pieces or other creations, I'm very honest, saying, wow, I need a minute to, to digest what I just saw. Because it was so the honesty, the trust, of whatever they were doing at that moment made me feel something. And as an educator, as a choreographer, as an artist, and as an audience member, watching someone on stage, that's what I'm interested, I want to be moved, I want to be transported to a place where, when I go home months after watching them perform, I'm still thinking about the feeling about how they made me feel. And I think that's the thing, we always remember how people made us feel either good or bad, right. And that's a memory that stays with us, either positive or negative.

Claire French

Yeah. And I think as well, in the same, that's also on us and our responsibility to put things out in the world where people can feel positive, you know, we have a, we have a responsibility to act in a certain way so that people can respond to something. So, if we put out negativity in the world, for example, and then they're going to respond to that they will remember, a negative feeling. You know, they will remember a negative response in that situation. So it's kind of yeah, it's, it's interesting for me, because there's this element of theatrical, or intention or an element but bringing back your acting, kind of penchant for acting back in the day in your youth that maybe is also informs a level of performance, right, or a level of performance that you're interested in with the dancers and a theatricality that you're interested in the scale of the work also then kind of allows for narrative or emotions to come like subtext and all of those things to come up? Yeah, yeah, it's very, it's very beautiful. I do want to mention, though, I think, and I told you this in advance that I might mention this, as I was doing my research around your website, and things, I was intrigued by how you had added a success stories section to

your website, and how so you mentioned, graduates of the program, which is beautiful, and there are testimonials about Lamondance. But more than that, the people that are on there actually show that some of them didn't, they'll always be dancers, because you know, once a dancer, always a dancer, but not as professional dancers, and they've moved into other careers. And there is something about the confidence that was instilled in them that they've declared, you know, announced in their testimonials, that helped them decide what they wanted to do with their lives that helped them decide, you know, how they, who they wanted to be in the world. And I think that's a really powerful thing. So, I think that's obviously important to you, because you've added it to success stories. But I think there is something about that, which I think is maybe sets you apart a little bit or the company and the training apart. Because it feels like, it feels holistic, not that others aren't holistic, but just that it has this, it's part of, you know, the motivation behind it for you too, I think. Would you like to talk to that a little bit?

Davi Rodrigues

Yeah, at the training program, I can say that when they get to us will be lovely in the sense of Lamondance is just a small organization hopes one day, we could grow a little bit more, but at this point we're still a baby organization. And when comes to a training context, I tried to give them to share the experiences that I had in my own company Criatividade and with Aplauso, where we were also small and then we had to do everything. We need to put the Marelly down, we need to help cleaning the theater, we need to help creating the set design or costume so that gave us, my two projects that I did in Brazil, this idea where dance is not only about dancing, performing on stage, but it gives us a range of possibilities that you could go. As a training dancer, you may get a dancer that really loves to dance, but perhaps discover the passion to become a teacher, to become like Davi, a choreographer, or rehearsal director or any, any possibilities that the world of performance can, can provide in, at Lamondance training, we make sure that they all go through that process of understanding the possibilities that dance can, can take. So, I think that's important. Because when I also mentioned that to the dancers, when you are paying for training program, you're investing in your future. And if you tried auditioning for places, and today's quite hard to get a job as a dancer, there are so many beautiful artists out there, and the spots are just a few. But what if, okay, I, I want to open my own studio, I want to work for a big company that just opened a job position as a rehearsal director. So, the idea behind is, of course, to train them, to put the performance work, but also to show the possibilities ahead, because, look, I am a proof, a living proof of that, right. And I think that's fantastic. So, with the program, and the company itself, they, they are asked to help to with the production of the show with, for instance, sometimes we ask the professional dancers from the professional company, to teach a class for the training program, or to support a rehearsal director during the rehearsals, and that creates, like a merge in between the training in the company. So, they both see the possibilities, either or, I could be a dancer with the professional company, but also could help the training program with whatever they need. So, I think there's something magical that we provide.

Claire French

I was just gonna say in that merging, is it usual for somebody from who's been trained by Lamondance to become a Lamondance company dancer?

Davi Rodrigues

Yeah, right now the majority of the members of the company, they came from the training program. The company is a baby, the professional company's a baby we did, we started the prototype before COVID, COVID happened, everything, you know, the whole kerfuffle that happened with COVID. And now, most recently, we were able to solidify what the company is. We have six dancers there. And now we just have the first leg of auditions. And the majority of people that were applying for that position for the company was huge. So, we have three auditions over the course of the six months that we are about to experience. And so far 82 people applied, which is a huge number for us. The majority of them came from the training program, and which makes one of my goals to always have a company, professional company attached to a training, because then we some of this training, dancers would like to continue dancing, involved with the company, Lamondance itself. So, we'll be a hub of, you know, that, almost like they said this word the other day, like, you have your own ecosystem, you know, you produce your dancers, you hire dancers, and you hire them to other things as well, not only as a dancer, but to do other things. So, I find that really important. However, we do not limit these positions, those positions only to our dancers because then won't be fair. So again, it's not everybody from the training program that wants to continue to be a dancer or to actually perform with Lamondance, they also apply for the companies around the world. And etc.

Claire French

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Davi Rodrigues

I hope I answered your question.

Claire French

Oh, yeah. Yeah, no, it was it was more about the it was about the merger, you know, actually how it practically works. And you definitely did answer the question, but I also in your answer to the question, there's also for me, I can very much feel the potential of what you've what you built, and what you're interested in the vision, the bigger vision that you have. So, I feel like I, it kind of is how it's working now. And then there's all this potential for how it could potentially work in the future and what you're working towards, I feel it's very clear, it's very clear. So that's really wonderful. And congratulations. That's a wonderful amount of people. And even being able to offer people the opportunity to audition for something like that, I think right now is huge, like, to help the positive, you know, to keep it vital, to have an active presence for people to come and be able to join in, and to contribute and to be part of these worlds is it's all the more important for us to feel like that's what we're doing, you know, the inclusivity of it, but also the yeah, inclusivity and then the, and then the presence, you know, having a presence in the profile, I think is really important. So that's really great. So how would you, I think you've explained a little bit how Lamondance fits into the dance scene in Vancouver. I think that's quite clear. But is there anything else you'd like to say about that? Because I feel like there, there are two things like you, yourself, and your experience in Brazil and, and being able to bring that and bring a community and go back to that, to that community, I think is one of the unique elements. And I think also, it feels like it's a very contemporary company, and not necessarily contemporary ballet, which I think is another thing as well. So maybe you could talk a little bit about that, the kinds of choreographers, you work with, your experience and your connections with Brazil still.

Davi Rodrigues

Oh, my goodness, I love that.

Claire French

Oh good.

Davi Rodrigues

How Lamondance fits in, in the community. We have been around for 15 years. That's how I said we are still a baby organization. And I think one of the things that I find that could be absolutely wrong about this. There is a thing about artists or even dancers not wanting to cross the bridge, because of the commute. So therefore, sometimes I feel that we are not...people don't know about Lamon, there's because of that, understand? But we have been here for the past 15 years. We are very...

Claire French

So, meaning that you're in North Vancouver?

Davi Rodrigues

Yeah.

Claire French

Yeah.

Davi Rodrigues

So, we were born from a studio called RNB dance, we were a program, a professional training program from their studios. So Lamon became this huge thing. And then we decided to become a nonprofit organization to support us for grants and all of that. And we used too, in partnership with RNB, they provide us this beautiful space. And sometimes I find hard to how can I say this nicely. There is a cost for us to bring artists to North Van. And because of the commute, you know what I mean? That they need to that side of the picture makes me sad.

Claire French

I know what you mean because I grew up in London, and I used to go to stage school part time. I went to another, I got the train to school, I was in different places all the time, I was always commuting was like at least two hours of my day. And I don't ever regret that travel time to get the experiences, you know, to have the experiences I had ever like it's part of it was part of living in a city. So, I think there was something about if you want that level of training, you will travel for it. But how do you get people to understand the significance of the training they're going to get. And until they are in the room getting that training, they can't know how important and relevant is to their lives that they're getting it, so I think I think there's something about...the only advice I could give is just be doing something when you're commuting that is worthwhile to you. And use that time, that commuting time wisely, because it's so worth it. Because of the stuff that happens in the middle. So just time management. And also as freelance dance artists, that will be one of the biggest things that you can learn is how to manage your time. And that kind of time because there's an awful lot of commuting in Vancouver - in Canada, right?

Davi Rodrigues

Absolutely. And there is a talk that we could potentially bring their organization to downtown Vancouver. But as I said, we are baby organization, it requires a lot of thinking. That's the part I would love to see more artists from the, our community saying yes, I would go to North Van. Of course, I understand that people are busy with their own grants and projects. I'm talking about some guests that I potentially invite.

Claire French

Yeah, Yeah. choreographers and teachers. Yeah.

Davi Rodrigues

Some of them, the ones that actually approached me, that we have seen what you're doing for Lamondance, so we love to go there. And then that's so easy. And they go and they have fun. And some of the other guests that I would love to the students to have an experience. They're all so busy. So, there are a lot of things that adds to the picture as well. But I'm very proud to be in the community and for being active in a community at Lamondance company providing not only the training not only the company, but small projects here and there, helping emerging choreographers to establish themselves, offering them a place for them to work with the training or with the company that has been one of my mission to provide that space because there are a lot of beautiful voices out there and they just need one person, I always tell everybody, you only need one person to see what to do. Because first, of course, you need to believe it, that you do is valid, you want to be sure, but someone that's not you needs to see the work you do, and give you that little push, because then the rest is on you and the work to, to provide that space for you to grow as an artist, right. So, I'm proud to say that Lamondance has been a place that my focus is to first give the opportunity to local choreographers, then international choreographers, because there's so much to explore here in BC, so many artists. So, for the past three years, we had Dance//Novella, directed by, co-directed by Racheal Prince and Brendon Alley, being choreographers in residence at Lamondance. And I am extremely happy to be, for being able to give them three years of opportunity to develop their voice, continue to develop their voice. So, I'm happy to provide that, a space for them, for emerging choreographers to flourish, to continue to explore ideas. Because Lamondance is not only the one winning, the choreographers are winning, the dancers that are in the projects are winning, the other people involved in the project production will be also learning. It's like a hub where everybody will be learning. So that's quite phenomenal.

Davi Rodrigues

And how am I connected with Brazil, the international dance festival that I used to go no longer exist. COVID was a huge factor to make that decision, which is very sad. It was a beautiful project that put together got together artists from international choreographers, teachers, and also choreographers from Brazil all together, sharing the room, sharing the knowledge with so many dancers throughout the month, but I do have friends, most recently we have, my way to connect with my country was to bring a guest choreographer from Brazil, Alex Neoral his company called Focus Cia de Dança. He's based in Rio de Janeiro, we first saw each other when he actually came to Vancouver through the Dance Centre. I'm not so sure what the program was, but the Dance Centre brought them to perform. And I was like, wow, I want you to come and work with Lamon and we finally made that happen this season. Last November, actually, we had the show at the Dance Centre called *Triple Bill*, and he was one of the

choreographers and my way of connecting with my country is to make sure that I don't lose my voice. I am a Canadian. I'm a Canadian citizen right now. But I am also Brazilian. So, I tried to stay with truth through my roots. And there's conversations of bringing choreographers from Brazil. That's one of the things that I want to continue on doing. But again, the financial side of things, I need to be very smart as I do that and of me going back there and choreographing and teaching as well. There's those things that I want to continue doing. I wasn't able just because Lamondance is so demanding. My time is crazy.

Claire French

So, do you run like September? Do you run like January to December? Or is it September to..? Do you go September to June or September to is that how you tend to...

Davi Rodrigues

We start September... Yeah. Yeah, nine months. September to June, but it's so it's really like, demanding of like so much to do. And then I really try to make sure, too, that the training program are well assisted, you know, because I think that's a fundamental part, fundamental part of them to get. And now with the company working side by side, it's a lot of things to do.

Claire French

Yeah, it is. And you do you put on shows downtown, you know, you choose, you know, theaters to put the shows on, which I think is wonderful, because you bring the work to, you know, the downtown, which is, which is really great. But that in itself is an ordeal, you know, like a worthwhile obviously, but it's a thing in itself to put on the shows. Yeah, that's really wonderful. So, I would just like to mention, well, you've talked about COVID a little bit and how we were all you know, everybody globally, had to adapt and, you know, a lot of people had to kind of stop for a while. And I know that did impact obviously in you been able to run the program, but I do think you adapted very well and very quickly and coming out of COVID. I think you're one of the most positive people and a resurgence of Lamondance, and, and kind of feel with it, not just an urgency but a kind of momentum to actually use this to grow. And I know that you said with Janet Smith, I think in Stir Magazine, and Janet Smith mentioned your powers of visualization, which I also feel very strongly from you, and that you're kind of willing all of this positive energy and focused energy into existence. So could you talk a little bit about what Lamondance's future is, and at the same time, maybe what you're doing right now, like this, the Vancouver International Dance Festival, the Dance Centre, so those things, but then also a little bit beyond. So just give us a to finish...let's just do a Davi vision board on Lamondance's future.

Davi Rodrigues

If I share with the two hours of podcast here.

Claire French

Ha I know, How about how about, I give you three minutes.

Davi Rodrigues

So, I mean, one of the things that I really wanted to do in terms of what's the future of Lamondance is its continued to flourish, the company and the training program, of course, and to bring to try to bring

the company and the training to downtown to be located downtown. It's hard, because, again, we have this beautiful organization that has been helping us for the past 15 years. But then I feel that bringing the company to now work from downtown will allow us to see a little bit of lot more dancers in terms of accepting more dancers, the training program, we limit ourselves to only accept 20 dancers, because as I said earlier, we want to treat the dancers as an individual with something to offer instead of a number. So that's one of the goals that we have, I don't know when this will happen but..., and to continue to provide the shows that we would do for the community and travel with them. I think the most powerful thing is to give the dancers also the opportunity to tour and to show what we produce here in BC, worldwide. So, we used to take them to this festival that I mentioned a couple of times, the international dance festival. And it was transformative experience for all of the Canadians, especially because they were able to see to go to a third world country and see what we Canadians we have and compare with a different world and see, hey, I will value way more the things that I have based on the things I saw their experience. So, I have been distanced myself from creating new things, I'm supposed to be one of the choreographers for the triple bill that we performed last November, but I felt that I wasn't ready. I had an idea and a project everything was there for me to work with the dancers, but I didn't feel ready just because for the past few years, my voice as a mentor and as an administrator, it's grown because as I said, it's a baby organization we don't have the funds to hire yet other professionals to take care of certain things that you may know a little bit but you're not good at it because other people they are, it's happening. So, it's only a goal. My goal is to hire, to have a support system, a team that will actually flourish Lamondance to its full potential. So, then I can really exercise my voice as an artistic director and as a visionary choreographer, because I do have two projects that I really want to create. And next season I want to bring *Before Dawn*, which is the creation that I did, I spoke to Janet, for the International, Vancouver International Dance Festival because so interesting, before COVID happened, I had the urge to talk about exactly that, like, we need to value now we need to love, forgive laugh cry now, before it's too late. So, I was writing this piece. And all of the sudden the word went upside down with COVID. I was like, this is insane. So that's the creation that I ended up doing for the Vancouver International Dance Festival based on that, and I be bringing back that next year. And I think that will be a great step for me to go back to my roots as a choreographer.

Claire French

So, are you saying that that will be performed this year?

Davi Rodrigues

When I say we are in season 14 of Lamondance we are, the company's performing next year, part of the program will be next year.

Claire French

Lovely. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it's so true now right? It's helpful at the moment to also be thinking of that we need to laugh, cry, and now we need to stay, you know, we need to stay with our feelings and with things that are resonating with us so that we can act on them and move forward with them. You know, like an actually, with awareness, you know, with awareness about how we're feeling about moments and what we can and cannot do what we can and cannot achieve at this moment without losing our dreams.

Davi Rodrigues

Absolutely, especially now coming has been what, yeah, three years from COVID now? So huge difference in what the training from the training program and experiencing, I noticed that we need to respect and be honest with what they are feeling right now. Because they just came back from a time where no, nothing was possible. And now we come to this scary world that I'm allowed to touch, but I don't know how to behave. So has been a very interesting learning curve, to get to mentorship these young artists after COVID. So yeah, we need, I really value when they are crying when they are laughing. But we still keep the professional level. And I think that's a beautiful thing for us to take in consideration because tomorrow, as Nina Simone says, may never come. So, you may be present today, and valued the feelings that you're feeling today.

Claire French

And I think that's a really wonderful place to, you know, just be reminded of your, of the, what being in a professional environment means today also has, you're in this place, right. And it might be very different to how you trained, how I trained how, like certain environments, but then, then there's a certain, there's the necessity of the time we are in, and, and the interactions that we are having as human beings in these professional environments. So, there's a kind of sensitivity, and like you say, but it is a professional environment. And so, managing that, and being able to kind of steward, you know, the young people into that environment, but at the same time being open to what they consider to be a professional environment or environments they want to be in, and they want to work in. That's the other thing, they're able to kind of show you right in how they are relating to each other and to you. So, I think it's a beautiful time to be a mentor, and an educator, very important time.

Davi Rodrigues

It is, it's quite challenging, because there are moments that I'm so vulnerable in front of them that that I say, I mean, there are sometimes that I'm so like, no why you're doing this. And then I go back and say no, go back, they are not they were not trained from the time that you were trained, things happen. Listen, sit down, observe, say nothing. And from that mantra, I go back and understand way more how I could, you know in a way facilitate the room for them, because that's what I'm telling them. I'm not there to drive their cars, I'm just in a passenger seat, that sometimes we say, Okay, keep driving, okay, now it is time for you to stop and enjoy the view put some gas on. So, I really use that analogy about the car with them. Because I think it says it all because sometimes around their age, they just want to drive they really want to get that job as professional dancer, but they're not putting gasoline, they're not stopping, they're not resting. They're not doing the things that they're supposed to do when you're driving a car, really seeing who is around. And that takes away the opportunity for them and then they get burned out. I no longer want to be a dancer anymore. I hate dance. That happened. That happened. So, I think it is time for us as mentors to be present. And to treat each individual, each dancer as its own and facilitate, open the room for them to grow and flourish.

Claire French

Yeah, wonderful. Drive our own cars and be in the passenger seat of the other people. Thank you so much for spending the time Davi, I really appreciate it. It was really great. And yeah, look forward to seeing your shows at the Dance Center. Do you have a date for us?

Davi Rodrigues

Yes, we have, we have a few shows. Coming up. Our next project will be actually at the Dance Centre April 20. Part of the discovery...

Claire French

Discover Dance! Yeah, the Discover Dance! series and noon show.

Davi Rodrigues

Mmhmm and we are performing a new work from a guest choreographer from Toronto, Jera Wolfe. He's an Indigenous choreographer, so it's super exciting to be creating that and our season finale show which will happen June 1st and 2d at the Blueshore Financial Centre for the Performing Arts at Capilano. There we will be sharing pieces of guests, choreographers and a few works, three works from, from my repertoire. So, it's going to be a beautiful show, a small show, not long, but very powerful. So, all the activities that we are working on if people wants to get all these days are all on our website.

Claire French

Yeah, on your website, and we will add them as well to the podcast, we'll put links to your website.

Davi Rodrigues

Thank you for having me. I hope I was able to share a little bit, I have a tendency to talk a lot. And,

Claire French

Me too, but I enjoyed listening to you. So, I didn't talk as much as I usually do. But, you know, that was really great, though. There's lots of wonderful information there. And it's always lovely to have the context, context. And of course, you know, I'll probably speak to you again, further down the line and maybe even about a specific piece. And so, it's nice to have different conversations and just have this opportunity to connect so and connect you to our listeners too.

Davi Rodrigues

Well, truly, I'm thankful for the opportunity.

Claire French

A pleasure. Have a lovely day.

Davi Rodrigues

You too. Okay, bye bye.

Claire French

Bye.

Claire French

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back next month. In the meantime, you can follow us on Facebook at the Dance Centre, Twitter at dancecentre and Instagram at thedancecentrebc. And if you'd like to support our work, please consider making a donation, just go to our website at the dancecentre.ca where you'll find extensive information about our upcoming programs and events. The music for the Dance Centre podcast was composed by James B. Maxwell. Always a pleasure to connect with you through dance. Until next time.