**AIRDanza** (Associazione Italiana per la Ricerca sulla Danza)

in collaboration with **aCD** (association des Chercheurs en Danse)

**International Conference on Research in Contact Improvisation**

***Call for Papers***

30 November, 1 and 2 December 2018

MACRO ASILO, via Nizza 138, Rome (Italy)

***You Come. We’ll Show You What We Do***

*History and Practice in Contact Improvisation*

Selection Committee: Romain Bigé, Francesca Falcone, Alice Godfroy, Alessandra Sini

Organizing Committee: Francesca Falcone, Noretta Nori, Patrizia Veroli, Elena Viti

*Contact Improvisations* (in the plural form) is the title of an event created in 1972 by Steve Paxton in New York, during which seventeen performers improvised five hours a day for a week, exploring the forces of gravity, collision and rebounding, jumping and rolling around and on top of each other.[[1]](#footnote-1) Starting with these first experiments, Contact Improvisation has become a choreographic practice spread internationally and employed in different ways, in the daily training of contemporary dancers, as well as in the practice of communities of “contacters.” Contact Improvisation dancers regularly practice the dance form in “jams” (similar to jazz jam-sessions and tango milongas), during which people who do not know each other learn step by step, through rolling and acrobatics, to engage in sensitive bodily contact.

The choreographic micro-culture of Contact Improvisation, endowed with its own codes, techniques and verbal language, contributes in a singular way to expanding the discourse on the moving body elaborated during the last half century – as much in dance studies or the sciences and philosophies of perception, as in some somatic and therapeutic practices. As Cynthia Novack emphasizes in her fundamental monograph on Contact Improvisation, this form of dance reflects the American movement culture of the 1960s and 1970s: a culture attentive to reciprocal or egalitarian intersubjective relations (as expressed in the sexual revolution as well as in social dance forms, for example in rock ‘n’ roll or the lindy hop) that also highlights a particular approach to the forces of nature (as in board sports, such as water or snow skiing, surfing and windsurfing, skating and ice-skating, with their emphasis on sliding and following the fluxes of the environment).

This international conference proposes to showcase diverse approaches to research in Contact Improvisation based on two principal thematic axes:

(1) the *historical* axis, which aims to retrace the origins, influences and contexts of the diffusion of Contact Improvisation in the United States and in Europe[[2]](#footnote-2);

(2) the *practical* or “poietic” axis, which aims to highlight the lived experience of the dancers of Contact Improvisation and the different techniques adopted during the transmission of this form of dance to stimulate attention to and experience of shared movement.

We solicit, therefore, contributions that, in different ways, will address these questions:

(1) For the “historical” orientation:

What does Contact Improvisation teach us about physical and motor cultures active in the United States, in Europe or elsewhere, from which this form of dance originated?

From which sources (e.g., martial arts, somatic and choreographic practices) has Contact Improvisation drawn its own imagery of movement?

What elements of alternative political practices (such as hippie counterculture, non-violent resistance movements, libertarian or anarchist movements) find resonance in the Contact Improvisation?

(2) For the “practical / poietic” orientation:

What are the descriptive and practical communication tools, elaborated by participants in Contact Improvisation sessions, which refine their ability to improvise together, to perform with each other?

Is it possible that some fundamental motor activities of Contact Improvisation (for example, touching, weighing, falling, and playing) contribute to deepening the knowledge of the lived experience of movement and dance in general?

How can the technical, practical and sensorial knowledge incorporated by the participants in Contact Improvisation encounters, contribute to the knowledge of movement in general or to choreographic practices in particular? Can we consider Contact Improvisation as a paradigm for dance movement research?

Scholars who belong to different disciplines (including professors, independent scholars, and Ph.D. students) are invited to share their research. Proposals for participation can be submitted in English, Italian or French; the conference will be conducted in these three languages.

Membership either in AIRDanza or in the aCD is required for any scholar whose proposal is accepted for presentation.

It is anticipated that the proceedings of the conference will be published.

Please send abstracts of proposals (2000/2800 keystrokes) and a brief *curriculum vitae* (1000 keystrokes) **by 16 September 2018** to: **info@airdanza.it**.

Acceptance of proposals will be announced **by 25 September** 2018.

ino Editore (in stampa).

1. The title of the conference, *You Come. We’ll Show You What We D*o, also echoes the theme of a series of performances of Contact Improvisation realized in 1973. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Particular attention to the development of Contact Improvisation in Italy is desirable, especially since this type of dance arrived in Europe thanks to Fabio Sargentini, director of the Galleria l’Attico in Rome. The European debut of Contact Improvisation came about in that locale in 1973 by way of the Judson Church dancers (including Steve Paxton, then a performer in Yvonne Rainer’s *Trio A*). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)