

AFFLUENT

a publication by

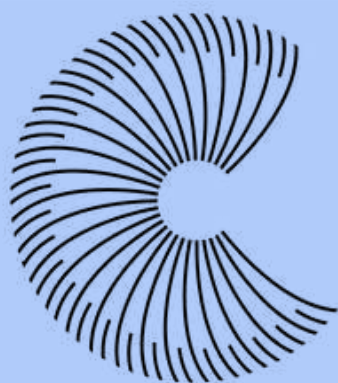
CONFLUENCE
CRÉATEUR DE VOCATIONS

VOL.1 - SPRING 2023

« UNRAVELING »

reflections on the study report

« LA TRANSITION DE CARRIÈRE DES ARTISTES DE LA SCÈNE AU
QUÉBEC - ENJEUX ET BESOINS »



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EDITORIAL NOTE

by AUDRAY JULIEN
project coordinator – AFFLUENT

To understand AFFLUENT, one must first understand Confluence - CV.

Confluence - CV is an organization that accompanies performing artists on their professional paths and in all the questions that may arise from this. For some of the artists who integrate one of our programs, Confluence - CV will be the dock, the springboard launching a complete redirection of their careers. For others, the support offered will involve reflecting on their needs and expectations, and welcoming any outcome that will, in the end, correspond to their journeys. From this reflection will emerge decisions that we hope are carefully thought out, informed and centered on a definition of well-being that will be individual to each and every person.

It is with these compassionate intentions in mind that Confluence - CV carries out its work on a daily basis. We would like to share with you these actions and what sustains them; it is our hope to open up to the community and convey what motivates us through a publication that is both stimulating and reassuring.

And thus, here is AFFLUENT.

By definition, an affluent is a stream that flows towards another, into another. In such a sense, we chose this title for our publication because it represents to us a phenomenon of passing on, of transmission, but also of involvement and of reception.

AFFLUENT hopes to be an unassuming space where it becomes possible to share the diverse paths, challenges, achievements, pinnacles and analyses that we observe as an organization at the service of artists. The affluent feeds the river, which will feed the sea. The sea becomes rain and again nourishes the stream. We aspire to act like this water cycle, in harmony with our environment.

As the anchor of our first theme, we chose the study "La Transition de carrière des artistes de la scène au Québec - Enjeux et besoins" conducted by Philippe Barré and his team. This report provides factual support for our activities and roots them in the reality and needs of the milieu. It is therefore essential for us to share these results.

We also invite you to familiarize yourself with the recurring segments that will make up this, and future AFFLUENT issues:

The "Taking a Stand" section is where we lay our foundation. Here, you will find context, as well as any other information necessary to facilitate a good understanding of the theme of each issue. For this first publication, Parise Mongrain, General Director of Confluence - CV will outline the genesis of the research work we are about to share with you.

"Taking the Time" is the segment we allocate to interviews. Take a moment to read this in-depth dialogue between Parise and Philippe Barré and witness their exchanges on the process driving the research.

"Taking Care" presents short pieces, thoughts shared by experts and consultants with whom Confluence - CV collaborates. While extending our collaborators' valuable knowledge to all our readers, "Taking Care" offers a moment of breath, of introspection. For this first issue, Michel Brais has graciously agreed to once again share some of the meditative notes he wrote for us in the spring of 2021.

"Taking Part" brings in partners from outside the Confluence - CV team and aims to include other points of view, to broaden our frame of reference regarding the issues presented. This time around, discover the powerful impressions of Sarah Guillermin (Swiss Dance Transition Organization), Jinny Jacinto (circus artist) and France Vermette (musician).

As a conclusion to the issue, the "Taking the Plunge" segment calls on the calm of the low tide, inviting us to settle down.

Exceptionally, and by necessity, the first poetic attempt to fill this segment is the result of my own work. I therefore warmly invite you to watch for our calls for contributions to the next issue and take the plunge yourself by submitting your own text.

I would like to conclude by thanking all the people who have contributed in making this first experience rich and engaging. You will find their names in the credits at the end of the issue. This volume represents my first effort as coordinator of a publication project. It is the first editorial word for AFFLUENT, but it is also the very first editorial word I have authored. Indeed, first and always, I am a dance artist. Also, for the past few years, I have been writing and performing poems. More recently, my duties as a writer/communications officer at Confluence - CV complement my daily life with meaning and openness. Taking the reins of a publication might seem out of my prescribed fields of activity, and this very fact perfectly sums up the scope and strengths of AFFLUENT. I believe that it is through the creation of such spaces, which offer both confidence and expansiveness, that the audacity which facilitates the blossoming of our capacities to their fullest extent, can be found.

Dear readers, I hope you will travel well across this issue, through the pushes and pulls, the lulls and the realizations.

Sincerely,

Audray Julien
Project coordinator - AFFLUENT

Let's first lay our foundation and look at the context that revealed the need for a study such as the one we wish to highlight in this issue.

THROUGH OPACITY

by PARISE MONGRAIN
General director, Confluence – CV

"The federal government needs to help dancers and other artists, who have only a limited number of years in which to practice their art, to retrain in a related profession that enhances their artistic abilities. All relevant departments - including Employment and Immigration - should be involved in this initiative, led by the Department of Communications."

This is the 41st recommendation from the report of the Study Committee on Federal Cultural Policy (known as the Applebaum-Hébert Report) tabled in 1982. For a long time, artists have been trying to draw the attention of decision-makers to the difficulties that stand between artists and the practice of their craft.

Even today, the narrow understanding is that artists' career transitions are associated with the inability to continue practising due to age-related physical decline. One would therefore practise these professions for "a limited number of years". This would also suggest that this challenge is more likely, if not uniquely, attributed to dance and some circus disciplines.

However, although wear and tear on the body is an undeniable reality for dancers and circus performers (it is, moreover, just as much a reality for other artists such as musicians and singers), the reasons for abandoning a career are more varied and the phenomenon is much more widespread than one would be led to believe.

Is the career transition of an actress, an opera singer, or a conductor an issue? In the eyes of a society that grants artists a special status, yes.

The artist's malaise is an issue. Their under-productivity, chronic pain, their exasperation with being the object of condescending attitudes or being misunderstood, are too. The fact of living out of one's suitcase to the point of losing one's roots, of being constantly subject to the evaluation and approbation of others, of being in a state of almost constant hypervigilance in relation to the management of contracts, copyrights, image rights – all of this is also exhausting.

This seems alarming to you, doesn't it? These are the themes of my daily life. So why am I doing what I do, you may ask? Because these artists are extraordinary in who they are, how they dive into themselves, what they become when they accept help and take the time they need. To be a privileged witness to their transformation is a great honour. What unperceived and revealing talents they have!

A dozen years ago, I discovered the work of French sociologist and professor Pierre-Michel Menger, renowned for his studies concerning artists and what he refers to as the work of the creator. I recognized us, "atypical" workers, "vocational" workers. When I read his work, I saw us for a moment from a certain distance. I saw us entangled in a job that we don't quite consider a job; I saw us as ambivalent, disarmed, confused, but courageous in the face of an impasse. I understood that I had to keep this distance in order to be effective in my actions and to be convincing in my words. I had to put the words of Mr. Applebaum and Mr. Hébert, respectively conductor and writer, back at the centre of my actions. From this recommendation number 41 out of 101, as awkward as it seems in 2022, a principle was born that has survived 40 years of artistic practices and markets: our duty to act.

"(...) the sum of the risk-taking that each [artist] can pay for with a high price, in case of failure or a mediocre professional life, is beneficial for the community, since this equation of professional risk ensures that the worlds of the arts and sciences (or, in the same way, those of politics or business) have an optimal level of development, in tune with the rhythm of evolution of society." (1)

To paraphrase Pierre-Michel Menger's insightful words, we cannot leave artists to bear alone the burden of the risks that creation, innovation and excellence require, since society benefits greatly from them.

For example, can we eliminate these risks—precariousness, job insecurity, dissatisfaction, and loss of self-esteem? Unlikely. Can we try to reduce them or reduce the effects of their occurrence? Certainly. The search for appropriate solutions necessarily involves a recognition and a better understanding of the artist's profession and its possible (dare I say probable?) obstacles. The provision of effective means is imperative to help artists overcome these obstacles and the grief they entail. This is precisely what we are working on at Confluence - CV.

The last three years have given rise to a rich period of trials, reflections and exchanges that culminated in the publication of Philippe Barré and his team's research report, a research that we had requested from the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec in 2017. From this culmination, a new starting point emerged. It was through the development of detailed and informed knowledge of our central issue that we would be able to tackle the task of designing and implementing mechanisms for change with respect to artists' overall well-being (professional and personal). All of this work, combined with the unexpected context of the pandemic, has allowed us to cut through the opacity and finally bring to light a phenomenon that is very present, but hidden: the possible renunciation of artists.

(1) Menger, Pierre-Michel, *Le Travail créateur. s'accomplir dans l'incertain*, Paris, coll. « Hautes Études », Gallimard - Le Seuil, 2009.

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN PHILIPPE BARRÉ & PARISE MONGRAIN

collaborative text work by PHILIPPE BARRÉ, AUDRAY JULIEN AND
PARISE MONGRAIN

In 2017, Confluence - CV (under its former name, the Centre québécois de ressources et transition des danseurs - CQRTD) asked the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications to fund research that would guide us in our mission of expanding our support to all performing artists. This research was to inform our decisions at the conclusion of our first pilot project in 2018-2021 on the career transition of these artists. The report of this research entitled « La transition de carrière des artistes de la scène au Québec - Enjeux et besoins » is now public and you can consult it simply by clicking directly on the present page.

It should be noted that this important study discusses the perceived needs of artists, the majority of whom had not yet undertaken a career transition. We know that the factors that will lead these artists to engage in this type of process are highly variable. In other words, the reason that will tangibly steer the artist towards this path is sometimes quite different from what they would have believed beforehand. The same is true for the end result of a reflective process, that is, even if one believes they are beginning a transition, it is not clear that there are other possible outcomes, including the retention/return to their artistic career.

On May 31, 2022, Parise Mongrain and Philippe Barré met by videoconference to discuss the study "La transition de carrière des artistes de la scène au Québec - Enjeux et besoins". Here are some excerpts from that meeting.

PARISE: Let's start with the wording itself: "career transition". What reactions did it create amongst the interviewees and artists surveyed?

PHILIPPE: At first, as a research team, we did not measure the impact of these words. They implicitly presuppose, which is not always entirely accurate, that career transition means doing something else, practising another profession in another environment. However, what artists want in many cases, and this is legitimate, is to continue practising their art, to pursue their careers. It's not necessarily to stop or to transition.

I think that, precisely because the object of our research was explicit, we received such a favourable reception. This was demonstrated by a high response rate to our questionnaire survey. We asked the artists about the possibility of "doing something else" or "practising their artistic profession in a different way", and it was the first time that this essential question was addressed to them. They appreciated, I think, that we asked this question without watering it down.

PARISE: It was probably a good move to offer the option of filling out the questionnaire anonymously. If we had asked a group of people to answer in person, the taboo would have been revealed in all its force, in my opinion... In this regard, could some of the people interviewed have been caught off-guard by the subject matter of the study, because of how off-limits this subject may have been in their environments?

PHILIPPE: The question of taboo is essential and comes up a lot in the survey. The taboo is directly linked to the results of this study and to future research perspectives. What surprised us on this point was not so much the fact that it was a taboo in some circles, but rather a lack of understanding of the transition itself.

PARISE: There were different interpretations of what a career transition process means?

PHILIPPE: I think that in some circles there is a limited understanding of what it means to be an artist, of the work implied. I call it in my research, "the work of the artist". Being an artist is also a job. There are particular components to this work and some people may have a limited perception of what it represents.

PARISE: As a workplace sociologist, how has your own perception of the topic of career transition for performing artists evolved over the course of this work?

PHILIPPE: First of all, what really stood out to the team, was the incredible breadth of this issue in the four professions studied (dance, circus, music and theatre). The results of the survey reveal that 3 out of 4 artists have already considered leaving the profession permanently. Also, according to our results, 4 out of 10 artists would consider leaving their profession permanently within the next five years. These figures are dizzying.

We then tried to explain what is behind these figures, their "why". From the outside, one might think that it would be mainly phenomena related to injuries or the age of the artists. In reality, it is more complex and compelling than that. The "why" of career transition was often expressed by artists as an inextricable knot of obstacles related to the "system" in which artists evolve and which, at a certain point, becomes so invasive that one does not know how to look at it.

Another element of surprise: we wondered if the age of the artists could have an impact on the question of career transition and in fact, it does not. In other words, and this was empirically obvious to us, recently graduated artists are just as affected by transition issues as older artists or artists who are further along in their careers, or even at the end of their careers.

In closing, for me one of the important questions in the questionnaire was the existence of what I would call "institutional responsibility for career transition". Career transition in the arts professions is an issue of sufficient importance and concern that it is a fundamentally public issue that requires a strong political response.

PARISE: It should also be mentioned that the data that you have been dealing with was collected before the pandemic. Therefore, this is data that shows the state of the issue before the situation we are in now, in 2022. I would think that at the time of the survey there was one type of fragility and that has now been replaced by another. There is a labour shortage at the moment, we are looking for technicians, administrators, etc. Other pressures accumulate and it is as if the cultural sector never finds peace. We need to create a context that allows artists to flourish in their professions without being constantly exposed to fragilization.

In addition to the financial insecurity that weighs on many artists, there are other work conditions that are sometimes exhausting. Faced with these, some remain silent, speaking out can seem risky. So how can we hear the discomfort through these silences? What can we change collectively and individually that would promote better work conditions and perhaps prevent premature or avoidable career transitions? Moreover, from my perspective, I do not systematically consider an artist's career transition as an unfortunate event. Of course, a talent leaves the stage, but sometimes this talent will only be better actualized in a different profession...

You also mentioned earlier that recently graduated artists are just as affected by transition issues as artists who are older or more advanced in their careers. What stands out about this?

PHILIPPE: What emerges from the research is indeed that there are several forms and types of transitions. Even if these transitions have in common that they are recurrent, ordinary phenomena, in the sense that many artists, sooner or later, make a relatively important professional change in the course of their careers, these are not necessarily 180-degree shifts that lead them to leave their milieus permanently. There are established artists who make transitions in the middle of their careers, and others who face this issue at the end of their careers. For the latter, it is often not simply a matter of retiring, but a transition as such, since it is often a question of organizing the transmission of their works, sometimes of the organizations they direct, of the places they are responsible for, etc.

As for the emerging artists, who come out of art schools, for some of them it is necessary to take into consideration that they also begin a process of transition, as such, at the end of their scholastic paths. It is a process of transition into the working environment. Dance artists are relatively prepared for this integration, but this is not necessarily the case for graduates of other disciplines.

We know how much art schools graduates have been impacted by the pandemic. But, independent of the pandemic, we can ask ourselves what support modalities exist today to accompany them in this "transition to the profession".

It's great to see the work that young artists are doing as they strive to take their place in their communities, but we have to realize that more often than not, they are doing it without a safety net.

PARISE: And sometimes they learn the hard way... It's true that many artistic training institutions offer a career management course, but until you've experienced the professional world for yourself, you can't have a clear idea of what it will mean for you. It's only once you're in it that you discover untapped resources or limits in the face of adversity that you might not have been able to grasp earlier.

PHILIPPE: And also, some graduates will choose to do something else quickly afterwards while others, on the contrary, will want to continue to practise their art. In my opinion, once we have trained these young professionals, there is a responsibility to accompany them in the next step, no matter what shape it takes for them.

PARISE: At the same time, I think that for many artists, entering the workforce is an opportunity to measure one's own level of tolerance for uncertainty and to analyze one's needs in order to meet those needs more easily. There will inevitably be choices to be made and these choices can sometimes lead to the 180-degree shifts you were talking about.

PHILIPPE: As soon as we consider more broadly what it is to be an artist, notably the fact that a professional artist is also a worker, we can act upstream on the problems we are talking about here. We cannot reduce artists' professional situations to a single, stereotypical vision of the artists who want to practise their art, whatever the personal cost. Like any worker, an artist must have the fundamental right to practise his or her profession in dignity and in sufficiently protected conditions. The periods when artists are forced to take another path, often in spite of themselves, are numerous and problematic.

Rather than thinking of a career transition mechanism that would lead them to exclusively do something else, we must accompany them throughout their careers. We must commit to being there for them in all their professional bifurcations, in all the twists and turns of their work.

PARISE: Pluriactivity is part of the daily life of many artists. Very often, they hold another job in addition to their practice, which is sometimes described as a "day job". There are several emerging artists who have told me that they want to explore other functions, certainly out of necessity, but also out of curiosity... That since they have to hold another job, it might as well be a compatible and nourishing one that allows for evolution. Evolution of the person which, de facto, will also allow the artist to evolve as well... The socio-economic precariousness of the performing artist is widely discussed in the research. What other conditions or realities of the artist were mentioned by the respondents as provoking a movement towards a career transition?

PHILIPPE: It is certain that economic precariousness occupies an important place in our report, first of all because it is a huge issue. We asked a lot of questions, both in the questionnaire and in the interviews, about the socio-economic conditions of performing artists. We were able to collect a lot of numerical data on the income that is derived from their professional artistic activities or from activities that we would call related (for example, those that they carry out as teachers in their fields of practice, etc.).

We have documented not only their income but also their rhythm of activity: the constancy or inconstancy of this activity and the length of these periods during which artists find themselves without work or between two contracts... These elements are constituents of a strong socio-economic precariousness. It is so immense that it was normal for us to bring it to the forefront, to say it. I don't think that we have made it any bigger than it is, we have only explained its nature and its extent.

If we add up the sum of the incomes that the artists draw from their different professional activities, from their pluriactive work, we can say that they exercise "a work that leaves them poor". This socio-economic precariousness is the first factor of career transition for many artists. It is what makes many of them feel forced to make a transition. We could avoid these transitions, and allow these people to continue to practise their professions if their working conditions were different and their social protections better. I don't think that career transition for artists is something that should be put forward as inevitable, as if everyone would eventually have to leave the profession to do something else at some point.

I think that we should rather allow artists to continue to practise these professions as long as they want to, by ensuring a better work and employment environment!

Among the other factors mentioned are wear and tear on the body and aging, difficulties in reconciling work and family life, occupational accidents and illnesses, but also emotional fatigue. The latter concerns many people. A last factor would be, and it is not negligible, the weight of administrative requirements. In particular, everything that has to do with the constant racing ahead of being forced to repeatedly submit grant applications, in the hope of obtaining funding that will allow the artist to live from their art.

What emerges a lot from the report is the reality that all of these factors are not strictly independent, but that they are "systemic". This brings us back to the inextricable knot I was talking about earlier. It is all these factors that combine simultaneously: living from a job that leaves you poor, having to fight to get a new grant, having to convince... One term that kept coming up was "wear and tear". Wear and tear, a feeling of exhaustion, of having to justify, to show that one has done this or that. This wear and tear leads many people to want to give up everything.

It paints a picture that is a little dark, for sure. These are difficult questions. But in the end, these are also the working conditions of most artists. We simply highlighted them by being as true as possible to the way they were expressed.

PARISE: The report also points out that within what you call the "inextricable knot of obstacles" there is also an "identity" factor that comes into play when an artist is thinking about making a career transition. What did you perceive about this?

PHILIPPE: Briefly, the team sought to increase its understanding of the artistic professions, which are always presented as so-called "vocational" professions. One would practise these professions with an identity attachment that is total or that is supposed to be total and global. We have therefore detailed this type of attachment to these professions. We have highlighted six distinct profiles that reflect varying degrees of attachment to these professions.

PARISE: Is this more nuanced than you expected?

PHILIPPE: Yes and no. The first category we identified, the typical category of so-

called "vocational" work, is the one that involves the highest rate of attachment. It's the category in which the greatest number of artists surveyed are found.

At the other end of the spectrum, in the category of artists who would be considered "disillusioned" or "dispassionate", only 6 to 7% of the artists surveyed are found here, for each occupation. If we were to try and compare these results with some obtained from other professions, vocational or not, I am not sure that we would find a similar distribution. So, we notice that the commitment of oneself to the work remains something predominant among artists.

PARISE: In fact, concerning the category of "disappointed", it is not said that this disappointment translates to a disintegration of identities, especially for those who would have liked to continue...

PHILIPPE: Indeed! For these two profiles ("disappointed" and "without passion"), which are, let's remember, a hyper-minority among the artists interviewed, there is nevertheless an extremely strong attachment to their practice. These artists remain deeply attached to the community and the profession, but feel rather abandoned by them.

What is called in sociology "the identity of the self" merges almost entirely with the professional identity of artists, and is specific to their professions. This is explained in particular by the paths of integration into the artistic milieu. In the four professions studied, we notice that one often starts very young in the profession. Artists go through very selective institutions and when they have the chance to continue, it is a chance they sometimes feel was bestowed on them because they were at the right place, at the right time.

That too was a reason for astonishment as several artists told us that they arrived where they are in their careers a little bit by chance, whereas in reality we are dealing with accomplished artists! They have gone through several stages during which they were selected. These artists are part of an extremely talented group of people! It is clear that one does not easily leave these professions which are a source of meaning, fulfillment and identity.

PARISE: Over time, I have found that when faced with an imposed career transition, some artists are held back by a sense of incompetence, like something passed them by or even, like they have failed.

Given that these artists have spent the last twenty years building themselves around their identity as artists and their practice, they sometimes feel that it will take them just as long to develop in other types of professional activities. This correlation is often not very constructive.

I also hear from many artists who imagine their potential career transition as going from a free and creative life to a 9-5 office job. Fortunately, life is a little more inspired than that! The perspectives are more nuanced, but it is this fear described earlier that surfaces.

PHILIPPE: Your point also touches on the question of loyalty to their environments. It touches on the issues we were talking about in terms of identity and belonging to a community. A lot of established or older artists who are starting to think that they might want to stop, feel obligated to a whole series of responsibilities that they have taken on. They might be committed to a team or to a project and they feel that they can't let go now, that they can't really leave.

And for artists who don't have all of that hanging over their heads, just on an individual level, they may wonder sometimes, "What if I stop, what happens to all of this creative work?". This touches on a whole range of issues and meanings that require, once again, adapted responses.

PARISE: In closing, what is important for you as a team to take away from this research work?

PHILIPPE: First, we need to consider the magnitude of the phenomenon we have studied. Career transitions can take many forms and involve issues that sometimes vary from one artist to the next, but they affect all artists, whether earlier or later in their professions, and often at several key moments in their careers.

Secondly, I would like it to be understood that on the basis of the detailed diagnosis we have made in our report, there is a compelling need for action on this subject. As I have pointed out, this is a social and political responsibility.

Our research carries within it an invitation to think differently about the reality of artists' work. I would like for us to remember this and to have a vision that is not simply a romanticized or idealized conception of the artist's life. Certainly, it is inspiring, this image of the free artist, of the creator. But there are also the material and personal realities of these individuals that must be taken into account.

I would like for us to think about the place we reserve for artists in our society, the importance we give them, and how we can nourish and protect all that.

What all this mass of data tells us, finally, is that it is imperative to rethink the nature of artistic work and to support it in accordance with the level of importance it represents in our societies.

MOVEMENTS AND TRANSITIONS

by MICHEL BRAIS
psychotherapist and collaborator at Confluence – CV

In the spring of 2021, Confluence - CV shared a series of texts entitled "Michel Brais' notes" on the previous version of its website. Michel Brais is a psychotherapist and trainer at Confluence - CV. His notes, a collection of short texts dealing with the subject of career transition and the creative process, were intended to share his expertise not only with the participants of our programs, but with our entire network.

In a spirit of continuity and coherence, offering a restful pause halfway through this issue, our "Taking Care" segment features an excerpt of these useful tips. Here are selected segments from the second note entitled "No movement without transition", published in April 2021.

1

It is in the natural order of things that every path is strewn with transitions, whether we call them passages, phases, crossroads, calls for change, challenges or crises of all kinds and intensity.

2

Transitions force us to periodically re-evaluate our choices, our goals, our desires, ideally on the basis of our values, our personal and interpersonal resources, our skills and our needs.

3

It also requires us to lucidly assess our tolerance to certain stressors, in relation to our risk and resilience factors, and also to the risk and resilience factors of our environment. We can then restart the creative movement by updating it and transforming the situation into an opportunity, rather than submitting to it.

The diffusion and visibility of the study were central to our decision to make it the theme of our first issue. If the previous segment allowed us to read an in-depth exchange between two people directly involved in the process surrounding the study "La transition de carrière des artistes de la scène au Québec - Enjeux et besoins", what about its reception by the community?

IMPRESSIONS OF A CIRCUS ARTIST

by JINNY JACINTO

Contorsionist, teacher, Compassionate Inquiry intern ®

In 2019, I was privileged to be selected to participate in the pilot project that contributed to the research on career transitions for performing artists in Quebec. I had previously encountered another type of career redirection coaching and the way it functioned left me feeling anxious. The standardized forms that I had to fill out did not correspond to my experience. I had difficulty identifying with the questions that were asked and it created a sense of confusion in me. When I was later introduced to the pilot project, I felt that there was a lot of flexibility in the process, which I liked. The end result of the project may not have been predetermined, but the support I soon observed and the connection I felt with the team, reassured me. I was glad to finally have some help and not feel like I was on my own anymore.

When I read the summary of the study, the ninth point in the highlights particularly resonated with me (Barré et al., p. 8). It mentioned "new self-actualization" and "reinvention of self". When I began to think about a possible career transition, I initially believed that I would have to set aside for good who I was as an artist. Instead, the process of reflecting on my journey as a professional contortionist was welcomed as an extension of what was already there within me. I did not suddenly feel "less than", but in fact I realized there might be even more to me than I had previously envisioned.

I like to compare the career path reflection process to the work one does when learning handstands. If you try to freeze, to fix the position, it leads to a disconnection in the entire body and the balance work becomes less fluid, less organic. You have to trust the micro-adjustments, the recalibrations. I allowed myself to see my identity as mutable, recognizing my needs, my fears and my limits. By reconnecting to myself and rediscovering everything that makes me who I am, it made it possible for me to secure my sense of self, to anchor myself even more.

I was happy to learn that there are programs that help artists reflect on their career paths and that those programs are now made available to circus artists. I believe there are artists who will be happy to have the opportunity to begin nurturing another path that complements their artistic practice. This type of coaching can guide participants towards the realization that their identity is multi-faceted and that all of those aspects are worth cultivating. Ultimately, I believe, this serves the person as well as the artist.

(Collaborative text by Jinny Jacinto and Audray Julien)

IMPRESSIONS OF A MUSICIAN

by FRANCE VERMETTE
Violinist with the Quebec Symphony Orchestra

I had been a musician in a symphony orchestra for 28 years when I hit a wall. No, I was not physically injured. My body was still able to repeat the same gestures, day after day. It was more of a psychological collision – a major demotivation. A modest feeling of having gone around the symphony garden.

But with this realization came a crucial question: who could I confide in, who could I turn to and say that I was tired of playing Beethoven's 5th?

I participated in the pilot project led by Professor Philippe Barré and his team, a project that accompanied the study "La transition de carrière des artistes de la scène au Québec". This study shows, among other things, that regardless of the space in which an artist evolves, the reality is the same when he or she reaches a crossroads. Physical and mental wear and tear, financial precariousness and other factors can lead to the need to make a career transition.

Believe me, it's a challenge to turn thinking into action. There are many obstacles to overcome: fear of judgment from peers, existing financial responsibilities, misunderstanding from family and friends who, without malice, firmly believe that the artist lives from his or her passion, that everything is fine and that he or she is privileged.

To get through this artistic mourning, it is essential to be accompanied in this pivotal stage. In my opinion, the individual experience and artistic background of all those who wish to offer this type of support become precious assets. From my participation in the pilot project, I have retained the importance of having access to decisive tools such as workshops, training and moral and financial support.

This way, the road ahead can take a positive incline while moving forward to the future!

ECHO OF FRENCH-SPEAKING SWITZERLAND

by SARAH GUILLERMIN

General Secretary of the association Danse Transition, Switzerland

Stop dancing? Wouldn't that be a whim, a weakness? Could we narrow down the reasons for a professional reconversion to an injury or a lack of success? After accompanying hundreds of dance artists in French-speaking Switzerland, I share the opinion that neither their motivation nor their specific skills are the primary causes of a career transition. But the wear and tear generated by loneliness, socio-economic precariousness and a mode of operation specific to this milieu are factors that trigger a process of profound questioning.

This sector too often maintains a hypocritical taboo around the issue that motivates us here. Anticipating this phase of life and valuing skills are attributes that are not only necessary but also vastly beneficial. Contrary to popular belief, artists who have been able to define and enter into their professional transition project while dancing find themselves better engaged and for longer periods of time in their work in the studio and on stage. Their careers are not prematurely shortened but often prolonged.

Training and education are essential to equip dance artists in their career management and to reinforce the value of transitions, from school to the stage and from the stage to another professional activity.

The self-limiting belief that many people have about their inability to develop outside the stage is not true. It only slows down the process of (re)building oneself after having evolved from a very young age, primarily in extremely demanding and judgmental environments. It is often months, even years later, before artists can appreciate the value of their careers and the strength of their skills well beyond a stage or a rehearsal room.

I am relieved to see written in black and white in this study the elements that motivated my work at Danse Transition. Specific support, provided by dedicated structures, is necessary and has proven itself over time.

taking the plunge

Poetic conclusion.

More information on the AFFLUENT vol.2 call for text submissions on our website!

HERE #3

by AUDRAY JULIEN
project coordinator – AFFLUENT

here sitting down at the meeting point
of appeasement and doubt
a house
and I watch

questions enmeshed
in the doorway

transformative, these skins
poses, words, postures
old anchors
scrapes now
later perhaps
lullabies

later

and I face myself
as one holds a photograph of
oneself in front of a mirror

taking note of the variations

welcoming what is still here

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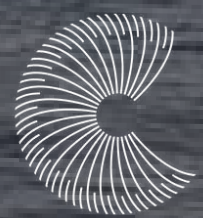
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