Henrique Amoedo, artistic director of Dançando com a Diferença in conversation with David Cabecinha, co-artistic director of Alkantara, about the piece *Este Mundo* by Dançando com a Diferença & Bouchra Ouizguen.

Este Mundo premiered at DDD, at Serralves, on 9 April and will be presented at Alkantara Festival 2026, in the Small Auditorium of the CCB, on 19 and 20 November.

David Cabecinha — How did you find out about Bouchra Ouizguen? What drew you to her work and led you to invite her to collaborate with the company?

Henrique Amoedo — When choosing who to work with as a company we're guided by a number of things, from the artist's work to the stance they take publicly and politically regarding that work, and the potential they have to stimulate artistic and technical growth among our cast.
In this particular case, there were characteristics of Bouchra Ouizguen's work that I found especially interesting: the emphasis on each performer's uniqueness, the striking deployment of voices and the use of memories as creative material.

DC — What was the process like?

HA — The process had many phases. Before we even began our collaboration, we had various opportunities to get to know each other and Bouchra demonstrated great interest in understanding all the workings of our organisation, the relationships we have with other artists and, principally, with our performers.

There were shorter gatherings, about a week long, that later evolved into residencies. There were residencies with the full cast of the piece at Calheta, in Porto Santo, and a residency in Morocco with Telmo Ferreira. It's been the longest development period of any piece by Dançando com a Diferença.

During the process, Bouchra emphasised each performer's encounter with themselves, their relationship with the attention they give to time and space. The work done outdoors was then brought into the studio. They had working sessions in parks, in the mountains, on beaches, in cafes and on many, many walks. And during the residency periods they were together all day long, sharing meals, conversation, silences, moments of waiting.

Over the residencies, this daily communal living also strengthened the bonds between everyone and encouraged them to explore conscious decision making, always in a calm, safe and welcoming environment. I believe that this shared life experience is also present in some form in the resulting piece, on stage.

DC — In our previous conversations, you mentioned that Bouchra had studied the company's repertoire carefully and challenged the cast to find gestures they hadn't used before. How did that process play out? What sort of things did she ask and what was it like doing that work?

HA — Looking back at the creative phase, I can see now that by getting to know the repertoire she also got to know each performer a little better. And this helped her to orientate the creative process according

to each of their individual worlds, seeking different pathways than those they had already tried out in previous pieces.
This sense of proximity and presence in the creative process helped the performers get closer to themselves, leading them to rediscover their own gestural approaches, while still acknowledging the experience they had accumulated after years of working with the body.

Another vital element was the consideration given to the creative impulses of the performers, who would present distinct ideas and materials to develop in the work every day. This encouraged a dynamic of authenticity and intimacy between the group. I believe Bouchra's most frequent request was to maintain our attention on the sensations that each proposition would awaken, and to examine how those sensations could be translated, not always linearly, into gestures, expressions and bodily presence. The gestural approach of the choreography is the sum of the approaches of each performer, to the propositions they found interesting but that also challenged them to go beyond their existing ways of being and acting.

This rediscovery and reinforcement of self-esteem can be seen in each performer's composure as they occupy the stage and their mastery of the dynamics of the choreography. Bouchra really encouraged each performer to be present and to listen to each other, without resorting to theatricality.

DC — What was the residency in Morocco like? Why was it that only one performer was involved in the work in that context?

HA — Of course we had to take into account limited production resources, but it was also a conscious decision to provide Telmo with a moment in which he could pause his role as a carer, a role he takes on in the team for both personal and artistic reasons. The Morocco residency was devised specifically so that Telmo could be immersed in the elements he considers fundamental in his life, such as human contact and being in nature.

During their stay in Morocco, Bouchra introduced Telmo to some of the most important aspects of her culture. Different places, flavours, colours, textures, among other things, all acted as stimuli throughout the residency. They also sought connections between the two places: what colours, know-how, settings, ways of being, might bring Madeira and Morocco into contact?

DC — I remember you mentioning that there was a very noticeable shift in the cast members' relationships with their bodies, their movements, their daily habits and with the work itself. Tell me more about that shift.

HA — Yes, some changes really stand out. In the improvisation work, for example, you can see a deeper engagement: the performers draw on the fundamentals they have already acquired, but they don't use as many movements derived from or similar to the repertoires they've performed before.

More attention is given to preparation before the start of each activity. They do everything more calmly, with a greater sense of collaboration between everyone, and they begin the activities with a level of concentration that's quite different to what we've seen before. Certain elements of self-care, which were worked on during the process, were incorporated proactively by the performers in their day-to-day.

This experience also had an enduring effect on the way we work together as a whole company. Today, in rehearsals and in the upkeep aspect of the work, we've applied some of the principles the performers

worked on during the creative process for ESTE MUNDO. This can be seen primarily when preparing the working environment, which should be calm, welcoming, enjoyable and safe, and also in the responsibility that each of us takes towards ourselves.

DC — After watching the premiere, I shared with you my feeling that the piece is a kind of collage of the fantasies of each performer, of happenstance, pleasure for pleasure's sake, plurality and care. Do you agree with that reading?

HA — I agree with the idea of collage, especially if we understand collage not as a random assembling of elements, but as a construction that preserves the origins, identity and singularity of each individual part. I think there's a lot of that in ESTE MUNDO. It doesn't try to impose uniformity on the five performers, or make their bodies respond in the same way to a certain choreographic language. Of course there's a precise structure, but there's space within that structure for chance, individuality, pleasure, play and a kind of freedom. Always present is the pleasure of just being, the importance of each moment.

The starting point isn't a choreographic vocabulary that's then applied to these five bodies; rather, the starting point is what each of these bodies has to offer. This is most evident in the case of Sara. Bouchra told us she wanted to "dance the Sun" and the piece begins precisely with Sara dressed in black, almost swallowed up by the darkness. To reach the Sun one has to pass through darkness. So there was a fantasy or desire on the part of the performer, which was picked up by the process and ultimately took shape on stage. Then there's a whole series of gestures that seem to emerge from the simplest of actions: walking, looking, breathing, touching, falling, getting up, approaching, moving away. Gestures that could belong to the performers' daily routine but which, brought onto stage, take on new dimensions.

To me, the music in the piece seems to perform a similar function. There's no single musical identity. We hear all sorts of worlds, from fado to bells, from references to Madeira and Morocco to the explosive Bollywood finale. Bouchra said something that I think is very important: she wasn't interested in finding what made us different, but what we had in common. The bells we hear every day in Madeira and the call to prayer in Morocco are different, but each is a means of marking time and forms part of the sonic landscape of those communities.

In ESTE MUNDO, we witness moments that might seem absurd or meaningless but which don't necessarily need to be explained. There's pleasure in that. And humour. And fragility. There are images that appear and disappear without having to fit into a linear narrative. Nevertheless, the act of listening is something that runs through the whole work.
Bouchra has been able to transform this very diverse and personal material into a communal work, while ensuring each performer retains the things that make them unique.

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