

THE SINGING BODY
MANUAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How to use this manual	3
The project “The Singing Body”	4
The Singing Body – Theoretical foundations	8
The Singing Body – Practical applications	12
Pedagogical principles for holistic voice and movement work with groups.....	12
Exercise series 1: The diaphragm	16
Exercise series 2: The Vocal folds	17
Exercise series 3: The Resonance body	18
Voices from “The Singing Body”	19
Interview with two dance teachers about working with the voice and the body	20
Voices from Participants	26
The participating organisations.....	28

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This manual is designed for you to explore how you, too, can work with voice and movement, singing and dancing, in a holistic way with groups. The presented methodology was developed throughout the project “The Singing Body – Physical Empowerment for European Values”, whose target group were adults. You can try the pedagogical principles and concrete exercises we distilled for you in your own context and make adaptations where needed. The methodology is a result of the exchange of good practice and thus years of work and research by the participating organizations.

This manual guides you through three main sections for integrating voice and movement work:

1. Theoretical foundations – Why combine dancing and singing?
2. Practical Applications – Pedagogical principles for voice and movement work
3. And then three guided exercise series that combine voice and movement

This manual is accompanied by video explanations and demonstrations, which you will find as QR-codes and links in the respective content sections. Let’s start with the introduction:



THE PROJECT "THE SINGING BODY"

In the project "The Singing Body - Physical Empowerment for European Values", five socio-cultural organisations from Germany, Bulgaria, Portugal, Spain and Italy have worked together over the course of 21 months from March 2020 to January 2023: Tanz der Kulturen e.V. (Dance of Cultures), Shevitsa Foundation, Popolomondo, Fundación Escuela de Solidaridad and Cooperativa Sociale IL FARO.

They exchanged and developed good practices for an innovative dance pedagogy with live music that uses embodied voice work for empowerment and community building. The method can be applied in artistic, cultural, educational, and pedagogical contexts and with culturally diverse target groups.

Dancers, musicians, and social workers with different educational backgrounds were brought together in six short term joint staff training events for interdisciplinary exchange (singing, different dance traditions, physical training, theater pedagogy, yoga, contemporary performance art, etc.) and to mutually train each other professionally. Throughout the project, the participants have created an interactive performance with live music and participatory dance and voice elements that can bring the internal learning and creative process of working with dance and voice, both artistically and pedagogically, into the public space. Through public workshops and performances offered by the participants during the training events, a wider audience was reached. The potential for social inclusion, empowerment and group building of dance and voice work was thereby tested on the spot, and teaching skills were

deepened through this direct experience. This skill set of teaching dance pedagogy with live music and embodied voice work in social and cultural contexts has been put into this practice-oriented manual with additional audiovisual material to be available for other actors in adult education across Europe.

The interdisciplinary and holistic approach to dance (pedagogy) at the heart of “The Singing Body” explores a courageous socio-political vision of lived freedom, diversity, belonging and individual responsibility - and how these values can be experienced, expressed and taught through the “singing body”.

THE PROJECT WAS GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

Sustainable **professionalization** of participating staff from interdisciplinary backgrounds and other professionals in adult education and dance: The competencies of musicians and dancers expand into pedagogical areas as well as the competencies of the social work staff are expanded to include creative and artistic approaches of embodiment.

Transformation of stereotypes, clichés and prejudices from the different disciplines and traditions: as these can show up in the creative process during the project, they can be confronted and transformed through the practice of dance pedagogy with voice work and live music for empowerment and community development.

Critical examination of cultural and gender-specific attributions and values in dance (pedagogy), art and social work: Dealing with dances from different cultures enables a playful approach and at the same time creates a space for negotiation processes with regards to “**European**” **values and norms**. The microcosm of shared experience enables a playful approach to the question of how European values can be lived productively in heterogeneous groups.

Social inclusion of marginalized groups: As part of the project activities are implemented in public space or in the direct environment of target groups of the participating socio-cultural organisations (workshops and performances), spaces for empowerment and community development are created.

A paradigm shift in artistic work towards holistic, empowering practice: The project inspires teaching professionals as well as participants of educational and cultural activities to move away from mere imitation and consumption of “perfect” dance movements and elite standards in dance (pedagogy) towards playful confrontation with one’s own body and voice. In this way, it becomes possible to develop one’s very own dances and songs that strengthen individual and collective identities.

THE SINGING BODY – THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

It is an innate human need to express oneself through voice, movement, and music and thus to convey emotional information. In the West African understanding, music is to be equated with rhythm, which in its subjective perception also includes a melody. The statement "I cannot dance" or "I cannot make music" can be seen as colonial programming and degradation. Religions and sciences have established a system of constant evaluation of performance and devaluation of physicality. This has alienated us from our primordial human physical wholeness and vibrancy.

The innate talent for music is never completely lost and is rooted in all people. The very first thing a human being perceives is exactly that: music. It is the heartbeat, the breathing rhythm of the mother and the embryo's own heartbeat, which it already senses in the womb. The simultaneity of different rhythms remains a fixed constant in human life. Rhythms are the central feature of human physiology. Pulse and breath, wakefulness and sleep, closeness and distance, taking and giving, fusion and dissociation, all these states possess their own rhythm and fundamentally seek a balance between tension and relaxation. In this respect, the human pulse and the pulses in music share the same characteristics. Both are organic and living and oscillate undulatingly between expansion and contraction. In the human pulse, this is the blood pumped by the heart, flowing in the vascular system from the heart like a wave into our veins. In music, it is the sound that undulates from the membrane of the drum to our eardrum in the ear. However, only live music can do justice to these analogies of human rhythms and musical parameters. Because live music is organic,

alive, and individual. It has a harmonizing effect on the entire human organism, while mechanically played rhythms tend to cause confrontation and friction with the fluctuating physical rhythms.

The perception and processing of movement, music and language occur in similar brain regions that cooperate closely with each other. Therefore, moving while singing and singing while moving supports the learning process. Movement, music, and language are connected on a neural level as well as on an evolutionary and traditional level. The way traditionally trained musicians remember rhythms is therefore obvious: Rhythms are first learned through spoken syllables that imitate the sound of their instrument.

Something also happens in my body during the spontaneous use of my voice: sounding, singing, shouting and calling while dancing creates direct presence and intensifies breathing. Depending on the permeability, the vibration of the voice makes the entire body of the dancer vibrate. The head, chest and torso area vibrate, and the channel between mouth and root chakra, between head and pelvis, between mind and body opens.

The use of voice in West African dance goes beyond spontaneous tones. The use of question-answer singing is characteristic of West African musical traditions. As an introduction to question-answer singing, vocal improvisations (the tinting) by theme are excellent. Simple tones by all participants nurture and train the voice, ground, connect, and create a strong energetic tapestry. Imitating animal voices, bird calls and sounds of the jungle energizes and loosens up. Playing musically with the names of

the participants is particularly appealing, because emotional involvement is especially high. This promotes community building and is ego-strengthening.

Recommended for a transcultural dance pedagogy with voice work is the reciprocal structure of a constantly recurring refrain in response to the verses of a soloist. In this question-answer-singing the soloist is free in his musical arrangement during her verse, whereby her rhythmically exact use as well as the duration of the singing are important for the entire energetic power development. In this way, each singer gets the time to sing. In this way, everyone can also take over the role of the questioner and become the lead role and solo voice. This role change is handed over by eye contact or taken over skillfully and confidently by spontaneous assumption. The group repeatedly confirms the questioning solo voice by answering in unison in the constantly repeated refrain, like a group mantra. This mantra has a meditative and at the same time physically energetic grounding and integrating effect on the group. It creates solidarity among all the singers and thus also has a strong community-building effect.

Whether in West African dance or in meditation: Rhythmic question-answer chants stabilize the breath control. Like mantras, their extended repetitions have a contemplative and trance-inducing effect. Through the constant repetition of certain syllables, as is also done in mantra meditations, the vowels they contain begin to resonate in depth, they have an inward effect. Words are inner sound and through their repetition something like an inner massage. Each vowel has its preferred vibration area (comparable to the sound areas of the drum body and eardrum). Through their different resonance characters, they make the corresponding parts of

the body vibrate and complement each other in such a way that the five vowels together with the breath can supply the whole human body with sound, i.e. with the breath of the feelings.

In the following section of this manual, you are guided through the linked video series of mini-lectures and tutorials for integrated work with the voice and movement to experience these theoretical flashlights in your own body – and together with the people and bodies you are working with.

THE SINGING BODY — PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR HOLISTIC VOICE AND MOVEMENT WORK WITH GROUPS

In the Project “The Singing Body”, we agreed in every workshop and activity on the following ways of working to create a clear and protected space for creative and authentic expression:

RESPONSIBILITY

We follow all instructions in our own responsible way. Active participation in all activities is required. Physical pain is a sign to change something or to stop and participate mentally.

No accusations, no complaints, instead requests and ideas for solutions.

If we feel disturbed by anything or anyone, we communicate it as soon as possible.

There is a time to talk, to listen, to relax and to dance – and when not to.

Everyone talks about themselves. No generalisation. “I” instead of “we”. The more concrete we formulate, the better the listener can understand. No storytelling, no preaching. We describe what we see, hear, and sense. We bring it to the point.

Listening means: No questions. No comments. No suggestions. Only one person is talking and the others are listening.

We respect everyone in their competences, responsibility and role. This creates certain hierarchies and working procedures. We value cooperation in all activities, e.g. organizing working space, preparing chairs and instruments, tables to eat, etc.

TABOO

Individual experience and expression stands for itself. No interpretation, no categorisation, no diagnosis, no comparison, no generalisation. Feelings like joy, anger, fear, shame and sadness are all welcome. We work with feelings in dance and music as an energetic language.

Anything personal that happens in our experimental space, stays in the space. We don't talk about others, we talk *with* each other.

We do not use irony and sarcasm in a multicultural space in order to avoid misunderstandings. This means we do not laugh about the others.

We do not animate, persuade, or grab someone else. Sexual energies may flow but will not physically manifest in this space.

No drugs and alcohol during the workshop.

VALUES

Belonging, appreciation, self-determination, courage, conflict ability, humor, generosity are values that we love and live.

You may adapt the rules for your contexts and target groups. If you present the ways of working to the group, ensure that everyone understands the rules. You can also ask, if there is something missing for someone and if they want to add rules. The ways of working should become a collective agreement and understanding how to interact with each other. To make sure of that, let everyone speak out loud their agreement with these ways of working, e.g. by making a round in the circle and asking “Do you agree?” and the participants say “Yes”. This builds the foundation for collective responsibility of the group to uphold the protected space together with the facilitator.

Learn more here about the principles that guide holistic voice and movement work facilitation from the president of the coordinating organization, Stephanie Bangoura:



EXERCISE SERIES I: THE DIAPHRAGM

Now we start with the first out of three voice exercises connected with movement.

We start with our center of the body, where also is the home of our me, myself, and I - who I am. And here's the diaphragm that needs to be flexible when we breathe, so that the connection between upper and lower body is completely open and all our energies, the breath and feelings can go through.

Watch the video for the full exercise:



EXERCISE SERIES 2: THE VOCAL FOLDS

The next series of exercises is directed to the optimal closing of our vocal folds.

Sometimes when we are excited, we breathe, and we have too much air or we have not enough air. And then in both cases they are not closing perfectly. So there are different exercises to train them that they close completely that we show you in this video:



These exercises are more emotionally sensitive exercise. So we recommend to do it in the end of the workshop to relax, that everybody can maybe even touch. So this is always in the end of the class or when the group already knows each other. Because we need in this moment more soft and sensitive ambience.

EXERCISE SERIES 3: THE RESONANCE BODY

The third series of exercises is directed to our resonance body. We sing with our whole body. And to wake up and to sensibelize our resonance body, we can do different exercises. Watch the video to get into resonance:



VOICES FROM "THE SINGING BODY"

INTERVIEW WITH TWO DANCE TEACHERS ABOUT WORKING WITH THE VOICE AND THE BODY

WHICH ROLE DOES THE VOICE PLAY IN YOUR WORK/YOUR APPROACH (IN TEACHING DANCE)?

Usually I use always voice in my classes: To introduce steps and learn movements we always sing the rhythm that we are going to dance and learn. We sing the rhythms and different melodies of each instruments and also the solist who is doing the calls, apelle, in order to begin or finish or change the steps. This is the first thing using the voice to make the connection between rhythm and steps. We learn also the traditional song according to the rhythm, sometimes I change the sentences to adapt it to the contemporary world. Not always I have permission to change it, so just sometimes I did it. In Mandinka culture is a holistic thing, how you bring this culture to people is through dance, music, singing and little bit theatre. During the class when we already learned the rhythm and dance and song, we are able to dance and sing the whole rhythm and we sing all together. So we sing while dancing the traditional Mandinka songs.

Voice work plays a central role in my dance classes. Voice is the first instrument, a direct means of expression, especially for emotional states. Especially for women it has a burdening due to our history, there is still much to do to raise the voice and to express themselves and to participate. I also notice in my classes that there are a lot of emotions

like "women should not talk so much", on various levels. According to Wilhelm Reich in bioenergetics there is an energetic ring around the throat and neck area, which also comes from swallowing things, not to scream, cry or even laugh. The throat /region of the voice connects the body with spirit, and if the connection is not flowing and free, physicality and spirituality are then also not harmoniously connected. For me, voice work also requires breath work. It is known in all ancient traditions, what an essential meaning it has for our whole lives and also emotionally. Our belly, the voice connects very deeply through breathing the lower body to the earth, our resonant space. Up to the last chakra. Vibration, which is possible through the voice, has a healing effect, if it vibrates freely and vibration can flow through everywhere. This is also possible through movement. Voice is an even finer vibration, which can also be directed. Voice also creates connection among people (sound carpets), and of course without voice there are no words. Even if we don't have a tonal language, more is conveyed to the other person by how we say it than by what we say.

WHICH CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE WHEN INTEGRATING VOICE INTO YOUR DANCE WORKSHOPS?

The most difficult thing is to sing and at the same time doing something else, like singing and dancing, singing and playing an instrument, or singing and clapping hands, and dancing and clapping hands. It is a process and it takes long. Some people have more capability than others, but everyone can do it. I try to let everybody feel comfortable to do both (or more).

Different languages are a challenge for working with voice in my dance classes, especially with African musicians who want to sing their songs. But it has only power if you sing it originally in Yoruba, if you translate it to German, it quickly becomes childish and uncool. Since I work with live music and drums, the drums must actually stop so that it does not become exhausting for the voice. Because it can be harmful to the voice if you overwork it. Be careful not to get into shouting, but to get into subtlety, and silence. It is something very intimate to work with the voice. It is often tainted with shame, so it is very important, do not create situations where someone has to sing anything alone, and keep the voluntariness in the group. Another challenge is that not only teachers or musicians are singing all the time, but also the participants take leading roles in singing. This is very empowering: that the group takes leading roles in singing, not only the singers who can do everything – to transform old beliefs like "I can't sing" with the participants.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM THE TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN "THE SINGING BODY", INCORPORATING VOICE ELEMENTS?

I like a lot how we use the voice to integrate every person in the group on the same level. Each person has a relevance as a part of the group. I love singing the names, as we did this with a game and body percussion or just in a circle doing improvisation. I will also introduce this in my classes. Voice improvisation letting you be free and not thinking what you have to do. For me it is breaking a little bit the fear to lead, because everybody has a responsibility. So you have the opportunity to lead. Before opening the circle for the improvisation and individual dance, I like singing and calling the forces and in the moment also to call the names. It takes special concentration because it is the end and the goal of the whole class to be ready to have this circle space at the end to express yourself. Singing and becoming conscious what is inside this circle, love forces, protection, ancestors, music, each person who is part of the circle – this is what I will do now.

The joy of expressing oneself with the voice was immediately there in all participants, the desire to play with it, to make crazy noises. Everyone is confident to improvise in a structured framework and clear guidance, people are totally creative and all without exception and have done crazy things with the voice alone. This is transcultural as we use no particular scales and works for everyone.

HOW IS IT FOR YOU AS A DANCE TEACHER TO PARTICIPATE IN VOICE WORK FACILITATED BY OTHERS?

I like a lot to be in other workshops and being a student. I always consider myself as a student. So when I take the workshops it is really relaxed for me. There is always this taking notes in my brain, this I can use etc., but I always feel comfortable in other workshop about voice or other kinds of workshops.

I'm still afraid when I do not know what the values of the teacher and the approach are. My breath stops, I sweat, and I know that I hit the note only in an relaxed atmosphere. So only then is it possible for me to sing. Working with the voice for me is still a sensitive issue and when it is not handled responsibly and in a protected space by the facilitator, I cannot participate freely.

(HOW) WOULD YOU LIKE TO FURTHER DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS WORKING WITH VOICE?

Me personally, I would like to take singing classes for myself for my voice, this one of the things that requires time, to be honest I am not prioritizing this in my life right now, but I would always like to do it. 5 years ago I took some private classes with a singer, but I'm always open and if I have the opportunity I will go. This is why I like this project the Singing Body a lot, because it was also like singing classes. I know that my weakness is the way I am breathing when I sing. I have been in so many logopedic things because of my voice, not an illness, just something that I can improve. So when I am teaching the songs of course my voice is limited, but anyway I do it.

The more confident I am, also musically, the better I can lead a group in using the voice in a dance class. When a professional leads voice work, the group can go into resonance much easier. This is why I develop my own musicality in private singing lessons.

VOICES FROM PARTICIPANTS

THE PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

TANZ DER KULTUREN E.V.

Tanz der Kulturen e.V., founded in 2018, is an association of artists and educators developing and implementing dance projects with live music in the field of socio-cultural education as well as ritual performances with live music for people of all ages and different social and cultural backgrounds. Tanz der Kulturen e.V. specializes in researching, teaching and disseminating a transcultural and interdisciplinary dance pedagogy. Tanz der Kulturen offers a year-long professional training in ritual dance pedagogy with live music in Hamburg and internationally: Its innovative approach to dance education, in which animistic principles and humanistic psychology merge. With this approach it realises socio-cultural educational projects with international cooperation partners and highly qualified artists and therapists.

With our performance project we also dare to establish the animistic-humanistic dance ritual from the protected workshop space as a public production. The goal of its work is to de-stigmatize African dance forms and traditional dance forms in general, striving for a paradigm shift in dance education towards dancing as a practice to connect with oneself, others and the world and away from dancing as a solely performance-oriented discipline.

www.tanz-der-kulturen.de

SHEVITSA FOUNDATION

The SHEVITSA Foundation* (*the word shevitsa in Bulgarian means embroidery) aims to preserve and promote Bulgarian folklore and the traditional lifestyle in terms of clothing, customs, and dances, and songs. Their work focuses on the establishment and support of Bulgarian folklore communities within Bulgaria and abroad to contribute to significant public affairs of national importance that have to do with traditional dance, song, and music folklore beyond the borders of Bulgaria. The Flagship of the foundation is its ensemble SHEVITSA, whose repertoire includes performances by famous Bulgarian choreographers, as well as their resident choreographer, director, and inspirer Petar Angelov.

Besides, the foundation initiated the School for Folk Dances SHEVITSA, the Children's and Youth Ensemble SHEVITSA, the Female Folk Choir SHEVITSA, and the orchestra SHEVITSA. Numerous performances, concerts, and tours in Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, South Korea, and Indonesia also led the yearly Christmas charity concert named "Sparkles of Light with Shevitsa" to benefit abandoned temples without guardianship. The renovated churches revived the interest in the villages, which increased the flow of tourists and led to new initiatives in the surrounding areas. In their practices, the foundation and its dancers embody patriotism and respect for the Bulgarian cultural heritage, wholeheartedly following their passion by promoting the beautiful dance folklore of Bulgaria, giving back through charity events and representing Bulgaria inside and outside its borders through different dance performances and tours.

POPOLOMONDO

Popolomondo is a non-profit cultural organization dedicated to the production, innovation and research of dance and music and interdisciplinary approaches. The activity is cross-disciplinary and includes a wide range of intercultural training in dance and music, socioeducational training and the promotion of cultural groups, including R&D (Research & Development) activities, cultural events and audiovisual productions. Popolomondo means "people of the world" in Esperanto, a universal language that evolved from several world languages, and is emblematic of the vision of the association's vision of developing a common language out of the diversity of artistic forms of expression, traditions and cultures. With its holistic concept, Popolomondo locates itself at the intersection of art, culture, education, community and health. Since 2010, the association has been working on the research and innovation of transnational cultural education, to bring Portuguese cultural heritage to other countries and to promote cultural diversity in Portugal and to continuously expand its reach through intercultural meetings and awareness initiatives. Popolomondo's work addresses the complexity of Portuguese-Brazilian-African interrelationships and, with its unique perspective, expands the intercultural discourse as an anthropological product. Through collaboration with national and international organizations, the non-profit association contributes to the preservation, appreciation, and dissemination of cultural diversity and explores new ways of communication at the interface and confluence of different artistic disciplines. By organizing cultural conferences, festivals, seminars and educational campaigns, the range is constantly being expanded in this regard.

COOPERATIVA SOCIALE IL FARO

The Italian association Cooperativa Sociale Il Faro has been active in Brindisi and Latiano since 2014 by providing welfare and housing as well as various socio-cultural activities. Their work aims to bridge the gap regarding state aid measurements, targeting pregnant refugee women and mothers who have experienced violence or are in similar distress and creating a place for cultural events and workshops in rural areas that encourage personal growth.

The old factory building La Fabbrica del Farò Il Faro is the association's centerpiece that carries out numerous forms of art in the social field. Surrounded by four hectares of land for permaculture and a year-round operating circus on site, the building contains two huge apartments and 800 square meters of seminar space suitable for experimental cultural activities, where currently a social theater and dance studio are created.

FUNDACIÓN ESCUELA DE SOLIDARIDAD

The Fundación Escuela de Solidaridad is a project that aims to recover the family sense of people who, due to various circumstances, have not been able to and cannot experience it. It starts from a concept of a universal family where any creed, idea, religion or conviction is accepted and fully integrated, with respect as a method of intervention and personal development. With these premises, the Foundation welcomes people living uprooting, social disadvantage, abuse or exclusion into a home: mothers with children in emergency situations, young immigrants, adults and adolescents at risk.

The home is the starting point for personal recovery and in it the key method and training for future integration into society is developed. This idea is rooted in a spirit of non-biological “paternity” or “mothering”. People who are vocationally dedicated to this task act like any father or mother and do not receive financial remuneration for this work. The home is a nurturing space that feeds and promotes learning tasks and where introducing new content is a constant.

The Foundation has a philosophy of openness, of not putting conditions on the people it welcomes at home, except in the case of addicted people (alcohol, drugs, gambling, etc.) who are referred to specialized centers. At the same time, a feedback phenomenon occurs over time. The testimony of the oldest in the home becomes a role model for the newcomers.

