

# Astraland

*Choreography and Performance: Luca Seixas and Sarah Fischer Luckow*  
*Camera Direction and Video Editing: Mikael Champs and Simon Hermann*

*Astraland* is a choreographic and video research project centered on playfulness. Over two weeks, Sarah and Luca explored physical and vocal potentials to generate choreographic material. Midway through the second week of residency, Mikael and Simon joined the process. Together, the group explored how to inspire one another, challenge each other, support emerging ideas, and take those ideas to surprising, fun, and exploratory levels. *Astraland* begins from Sarah and Luca's creation of a choreographic-vocal work open to multiple forms. In this phase, the project was realized as a dance video in collaboration with Mikael and Simon.



## WEEK 1.

In essence, play serves no instrumental purpose for the practical world, but offers a release from automatic, operational way of working. With this understanding, playfulness, in this process, became a tool for release, and even for preparing for work. How could they, then, make it concrete, give the work a purpose, when exploration, games, and play, should take the lead?

Play can be light and free, but also serious and limited by rules. It can be chaotic or harmonious, absurd or structured. Play reaches the domain of spirituality, ritual, and ceremony, but also the simple and sheer play of children. It contains contradictions and inconsistencies, but it remained clear that play is expressive, implies an emotional state of being, and carries a meaning in itself. It is a performance of an act apart, with captivating, absorbing qualities, that offers a suspension of the ordinary world.

With this understanding, the outcomes of the process did not arise from fixed plans, but from repeated exploration and by embracing a curious, intuitive, and reflective approach. Sarah and Luca worked on finding a concrete, tangible structure for the work while staying open for new inputs to emerge out of continuous experimentation and fluid set of rules. Further questions emerged: What choices feel more alive? And how could they keep them alive through repetition, while creating a consistent structure for the work?



Sarah and Luca found a state of relaxed-seriousness, a bodily state that is excited but also calm, focused but also open. Facilitating ideas to emerge without second-guessing decisions. It's spontaneous, but centered. Somewhere in the end of the first week, the word *effervescent* appeared as a common understanding of where the body can go in multiple directions. *Effervescent* means for them a state of almost being in love, of being in tension, excitement, aliveness, awakening numbness — fast reactions of the body before the intellect. It's a physical and emotional mode of performing and creating bodily material. It's a state of "perfect choreography" yet a place where we don't hide the figuring out attitude while doing it fully.

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## WEEK 2.

Second week started with more reflections as to how could they structure the work departing from free exploration that, most times, scapes logical understanding? How could they pick and choose what works without pointing anything as a mistake? This again became a method for generating and continuing ideas; "mistakes" leading to new doors, opening to the possibility of a playful attitude.

In the phase of structuring the movement and vocal material, Sarah and Luca found a clearer framework — one that remained flexible and could be adapted to the dance video format. This structure gave them more freedom to see the whole from an outside perspective and allowed them to play and dive into details on a deeper level.

When Mikael and Simon arrived, a new perspective was demanded. It challenged the project and allowed for another eye of observation — the camera lens. When getting into the video part of the residency, new questions arose: What to focus on in different choreographic parts? The eyes? The actions of putting on shoes? Of a belly moving and effecting the movement of the costumes while inhaling to sustain a note/tone for a longer time? The coordinated leg leg entanglement of the two performers? Of taking in the different spaces/landscapes the performers explored in the different outdoor settings? Such reflections led to conversations and artistic decisions on a broader vision

for their project. It made them realise the difference and similarities between a dancer's and a videographer's point of view.

When they arrived to the showing on Sunday, June 1st, the last day of the residency, they had two work-in-progress "products" prepared for the public: A set up of screens showing snippets of the recorded and edited video work, and a live performance that Sarah and Luca had worked on parallel to the video work. They received important and profound input both from the fact that they finally had a group of fresh audiences to play with in the live setting, and from the conversations/questions that followed after. What stayed with Sarah and Luca from the feedback of the audience was for example: What is the difference between play and game (we reflected on the potential necessity to define for further development of the work)? How was it to take the work in the studio to the public spaces (an underlying question of what transforms and what to do with the new information and impressions of an charged, outside world)? What was the idea behind a more serious soundscape for the work and how that seems to be contradicting (we delve into a reflection of how play, in essence, demands serious and concentrated work and how the music supported that idea). The last question reminded the artistic team that there was a search for something very serious and consequential inside the fun and harmlessness innocence of play.



To summarize, it was two intense weeks of work, play, and organization — and of many ideas for how to move forward. With a simple and concrete intention to explore playfulness through a project that unites movement, voice, sound, and video — each with its own unique agency — Sarah, Luca, Mikael, and Simon discovered and explored many directions for continuing to shape the work in future collaborations. The meeting with the audience raised new questions about how the performers not only play with one another, but also with those who join them by observing and taking part. The variety of disciplines they engaged with allowed for a certain sharpness in decision-making, which in turn gave them a humble yet confident sense of how to keep crafting *Astraland*.